

**Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Education  
at the University of Leicester**

**by**

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**March 2002**

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## **Doctorate of Education**

**OfSTED inspections: do they promote improvement in teaching quality?**

**Glynn Snelling**

### **ABSTRACT**

The inspection of state schools by the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) has been a major and very expensive national undertaking since 1992 and has had a substantial impact on the professional lives of all teachers. Although principally an exercise in accountability, this thesis investigates the other claim of OfSTED, that of improvement through inspection. The focus seeks to examine the effect of inspection on the improvement of teaching quality.

The relationship between OfSTED, local education authorities, schools and individual teachers is examined, applying the Becher and Kogan model for examining structural levels within normative and operational modes.

OfSTED employs a methodology increasingly under criticism from the research establishment and highlights a major difference between England and Wales and other countries. This is especially so in those states in Australia where teachers, local authorities and academic researchers work in true partnership with the central authority in the promotion of quality and school improvement.

The value of inspection in improving teaching quality is demonstrated to be limited, with most teachers believing that the process has little positive impact on them professionally and many, supported by increasing research findings, believing that the process undermines teachers' professionalism and can actually lower pupils' standards of attainment. The stress created by the process is considered to be a major negative factor in the management of the nation's teachers.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am indebted to colleagues in schools, local education authorities and the Office for Standards in Education for their patience and understanding, for setting up interviews and for the distribution and collection of questionnaires. Any research is dependent on the goodwill of such very professional people; I have been overwhelmed by their interest and willingness to participate.

I should like to thank my supervisor, Professor Tony Bush, for all of his help, encouragement and the thoroughness with which he considered each of my draft chapters.

Finally, nothing is possible or worth doing without Anna.

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*As a rule, I got to school about ten with a margin. The children did nothing beyond the rudiments. I finished work by 11:45, went to the Rectory and inspected the garden, or played croquet with the rector's daughters: had a noble lunch; drove back to my inn, marked the school papers, wrote the report and posted it: and then there was a night of arctic winter length and not a soul to speak to. (E. M. Sneyd, Kinnersley, HMI, 1877 - quoted by Brighouse 1995, p.1)*

*The school has made decided progress in Arithmetic, but there is a falling off in Writing and Spelling. Grammar and Geography seem hardly to have been taught above the second standard. The order is satisfactory. The increase in numbers necessitates a further supply of desks. The infants continue to make satisfactory progress. Their needlework is particularly good. (Extract from the Chale Parochial School Inspection Summary Report June 1882 - discovered during the OfSTED inspection of the school by Kensington Education Associates in February 1996)*

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### **The policy context of inspection in England and Wales.**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the changes in government policy since former Prime Minister James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech in 1976, much quoted by writers of educational material (Bolton 1995, p. 22; Bush 1994, p. 309), as the point at which education moved out from the 'secret garden' and became more open to public scrutiny. The political influence on the establishment of the current system of school inspection is traced with emphasis on the strategies employed to improve teaching quality through the process. The final section outlines the purpose of the thesis and identifies the research questions.

## Background

Full inspections by Her Majesty's inspectors have a long history stretching back to the early 1800s. Although acting independently and having considerable influence, full inspections were so infrequent as to have a minimal influence at school level; there were 67 inspectors in 1865 (Lawton and Gordon 1987, p. 163). Although the notorious 'payments by results' must have brought considerable stress to those teachers being evaluated as a result of the *Revised Code* of 1862, during the following 130 years, there was to be no routine, systematic evaluation of the quality of provision in all state schools, and less so on the quality of individual teachers. Wilcox and Gray (1996, p. 26) draw attention to the discontinuity of full inspections during the period from 1944 onwards. The role of H.M. inspectors was to become less inquisitorial and more advisory. Indeed, a Parliamentary Select Committee (DES 1968) recommended that full-scale formal inspections should be discontinued, save in exceptional circumstances, and that a greater share of inspection should be left to the inspectorates of local education authorities (LEAs) and to schools themselves.



LEAs were reminded in 1977, in a government consultative document, of the necessity to assess the performance of schools and, in particular, those which consistently under-performed (DES 1977, para 3.7). Wilcox and Gray (1996, p.27) point out that rather than an increase in inspection activity taking place, a spate of self-evaluation schemes came into vogue. Few of these, however, were mandatory and, overall, they were unsuccessful. The London Borough of Havering, for example, along with many other local authorities, tried to introduce *Guidelines for review and internal development in schools* (GRIDS) (MacMahon 1984) as a scheme heavily promoted at the time (Hopkins 1989, pp. 116-125), but the initiative died on the vine, with schools finding the process cumbersome and ultimately unworkable (Ferguson *et al.*, 2000, p. 137).

The White Paper, *Better Schools* (DES 1986) tried to address the growing concern over educational standards during the mid-1980s. A draft circular followed, which encouraged LEAs to revise the work of their advisory services and consider how the work of schools could be evaluated more formally. Although a final version of the government circular was never produced, it had a significant effect on a number of local education authorities, most notably, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). Hargreaves (1990, pp. 230-9), himself a former ILEA chief inspector, describes how inspectors based in schools (the IBIS project) helped to bridge the gap between the accountability and advice functions of the inspectorate. Despite the fresh emphasis given to evaluation and the inspection functions of LEA teams, in successive government and Department for Education and Science (DES) reports, there was little evidence of the systematic development of school inspection. Wilcox and Gray (1996, p.28) cite the research of Stillman and Grant (1989) who concluded that advisers spent less than 10 per cent of their time on formal inspections.

Perhaps the 1988 Education Reform Act was the major turning point for the position of inspection within the state system. The Act represented a powerful expression of the government's concern for standards and under-wrote the importance of evaluation as a means of providing information about schools. The government needed to know how well all of the initiatives in education, for example, the National Curriculum and local financial management in schools, were being implemented. Considerable additional funds were

pumped into LEAs to boost advisory/inspection teams. Not all of this came from the DES; the then Manpower Services Commission, was piloting the Technical Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) and was appointing its own advisers at national and local level.

## **The Audit Commission**

The Audit Commission Report (1989) was critical of LEAs who did not seem to know how their inspectors and advisers used their time. What evidence was available suggested a considerable imbalance between advice and inspection, with far more of the former than the latter. The report recommended what Wilcox and Gray (1996, p. 28) consider to be a sophisticated monitoring model involving the systematic recording and analysis of information from three sources:

- schools, including the results of self-evaluation;
- inspectors' observations of teaching and learning;
- the LEA and the DES.

Inspectors would systematically record and analyse such information to provide informal feedback to teachers and formal reports to a variety of audiences, including the LEA and governing body of the school. The involvement of the Audit Commission was stated on p. 1:

*The Audit Commission's interest in inspection and advisory services arises from its duty to address the effectiveness of local authorities' operations as well as their economy and efficiency. Successful work by the LEA's own services to promote quality is one of the most important contributions to ensuring the effectiveness of LEA maintained education.*

Sandbrook (1996, p. 11) is typical of a number of researchers indicating the significance of the Audit Commission report and its impact on both HMI and LEA inspectorates. He highlights HMI preoccupation at the time with the implementation of the National Curriculum and with

LEAs trying to implement the recommendations of the report. Although the Audit Commission report did not explicitly state that schools should participate in regular inspections, Kenneth Baker, the Secretary of State for Education at the time, frequently referred to inspection in all its forms - the tone of HMI reporting reflected the recommendations and increasing provision for national assessment. 1988 saw the introduction of the first HM Chief Inspector of School's Annual Report, which summarised inspection findings across the country.

## **The Parent's Charter**

Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister and a former Secretary of State for Education, was replaced in 1990 by John Major. He was to introduce the concept of greater accountability by public services as part of his personal initiative, The Citizen's Charter, in 1991. This set out what every citizen was entitled to expect of public services: publication of explicit standards; openness and lack of secrecy; availability of full information in plain language; choice wherever practicable; non-discriminatory availability; responsiveness to customer convenience; and the means of redress. A key role was to be played by inspectorates. They were to provide:

*value for money and standards of output and performance. However, their central responsibility is to check that the professional services are delivered in the most effective way possible and genuinely meet the needs of those whom they serve.....*  
(Cabinet Office 1991:40).

Wilcox and Gray (1996, p. 29) state that:

*Changes to inspectorates were necessary if they were not to be 'captured by fashionable theories and lose the objectivity that the public needs'. To this end, a number of new measures would be required: lay members would be appointed to more inspectorates; all inspectorates would invite the views of the public; and signed published reports would show the evidence and approach used, and be 'free of jargon'.*

In the case of education, it was argued that parents needed better information on which to base their increasing choice of schools for their children. A review of HMI was promised which would reflect the need for regular, independent inspection based 'on objective inspection and analysis of performance measures' and carried out by teams which included lay members. These proposals were incorporated into the Parent's Charter launched a few months later. The Secretary of State announced the government's intention to establish a new organisation to be led by HM Chief Inspector of Schools, with fewer HMI, but with large numbers of newly trained inspectors. Their work was to be monitored by HMI. Full scale inspections were to be carried out once every four years and the results published in a report; parents were to be given a straightforward summary, accompanied by a clear statement of the school's position in national performance tables. His much quoted speech at the launch of the Parent's Charter in September 1991, contained the statement:

*I intend to take the mystery out of education by providing real choice which flows from comparative tables setting out the performance of local schools and independent inspection reports on the strengths and weaknesses of each school.*

The Parent's Charter did not state that schools were to be given additional funds for inspections, but this had been the intention. This would be funded through reduced revenue to LEAs used to support their inspection/adviser teams. Political distrust of certain LEAs has been a feature of the last decade and continues into the new millennium as the inspection of LEAs is now a prominent part of OfSTED's work; some LEAs are now being managed by privatised companies, such as Hackney, by Nord Anglia Education Services, and Islington, by Cambridge Education Associates.

### **1992 Education (Schools) Act**

The introduction of the Education (Schools) Bill in the autumn of 1991 contained the proposals for a new approach to school inspection. The contents were fiercely debated in both houses and a number of amendments were made, the most significant being the methods to be

employed to engage inspection teams. The original bill allowed governors to engage a team of inspectors in the same way that they might employ a firm of accountants to conduct a financial audit. The outcome of pressure exerted in the House of Lords was to shift the responsibility from governors to HMCi and, in practical terms, this meant that the arrangements for inspection became a principal task of OfSTED. Wilcox and Gray (1996, p. 30) state that:

*in the three years or so from 1988, with a new prime minister and secretary of state in post, the government had moved from a position of advocating 'inspection in all its forms' by LEA inspectors, to one requiring a universal system of full inspection carried out by independent inspection teams. How is this surprising volte face to be explained?*

The 1992 Education Act was solidly placed within the context of the Parent's Charter. That inspection teams should contain a lay inspector - in Sandbrook's words (1996, p.11):

*...someone untainted by professional training would provide a more accessible common sense view of what is taking place within a school, which would provide an insight into parents as consumers*

A further Education Act in 1993 provided direction on the fate of schools requiring special measures.

## **Inspection for improvement**

Within a very short period, 1992-1993, large numbers of inspectors were recruited and trained and the first full independent OfSTED inspections began in the Autumn of 1993. The majority of contracts had been won by existing local authorities, a source of renewed criticism from the opponents of the system. Lawlor (1993, p. 8), Director of the Centre for Policy Studies, considered that:

*future inspection will be undermined by virtue of being run by the same people and inspectorates as managed previous LEA and HM inspections.*

## **Shift in focus**

The inspection of schools in England and Wales is directed and managed through the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED). The first corporate plan was published by OfSTED in May 1993. OfSTED's purpose was described as follows:

*The purpose of OfSTED is to improve standards of achievement and quality of education through regular independent inspection, public reporting and informed advice.*

Perry (1995, p. 35) points out the shift in emphasis of the role of HMI and OfSTED away from advice to politicians on policy formation and their separation from the Department of Education. Until the formation of OfSTED, the inspectorate was an integral part of the Department for Education and Science, where the overall emphasis was on giving policy advice to ministers based on the findings of inspection. The original *Framework for the Inspection of Schools*, (OfSTED, 1993 p. 5), states that:

*The purpose of inspection is to identify strengths and weaknesses in schools so that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils.*

More recently, OfSTED has stated in the revised *Framework for the Inspection of Schools*, (OfSTED, 1995), that the intention of inspection is to:

*...promote school improvement by identifying priorities for action, and to inform parents and the local community about a school's strengths and weaknesses.*

There has been a progressive shift since 1993 in OfSTED's stated purposes for inspection. Clearly, the principal function of inspection was to be a vehicle for accountability. Early advice to training inspectors was unequivocal: the school was to be judged against a set of criteria and feedback to the school and the staff within it was simply to relay the findings or judgements on quality. By 1996, further advice from OfSTED (*UPDATE 15*) states that the Framework aims to:

*make inspection more manageable by inspectors; more acceptable and useful to schools; contribute more effectively to schools' strategies for sustained improvement and to result in better evaluation and reporting.*

The OfSTED report, *Inspection Quality 1994/95* (1995) highlighted the response of headteachers to the process of inspection, which emphasised the opportunity inspection presented for self-review and team-building. Under half the teachers reviewed said that they found the professional dialogue with inspectors to be positive. Class teachers were reported to be less satisfied with oral feedback to themselves than the members of the senior management team, regarding management issues. Again, it is interesting to note that, from September 1997, all teachers must be given a record of the grades awarded to them individually during the inspection and that there is an expectation that all teachers will be offered feedback on the observed strengths and weaknesses of their teaching during the inspection. Further advice and guidance was presented to inspectors in the publication *Inspection '98* and published in August 1998, (pp. 75-76). This is a considerable change in emphasis and approach and makes reference to early work on research into the effects of inspections somewhat problematic; the very nature of inspection is changing.

### **Purpose of the Thesis**

Taking *Improvement through Inspection*, the current OfSTED byword and the importance now attached to giving teachers feedback, as a starting point, this thesis investigates the contribution made to improving the quality of teaching through the process of inspection. The

quality of teaching is judged on a seven point scale and the responsibility of the registered inspector is to ensure that the grading of lessons matches the record (lesson observation sheet) completed by team inspectors. The registered inspector must ensure that the judgements are fair and valid. The quality of feedback to teachers was investigated by Snelling, (1999), who found that teachers generally feel satisfied with the quality of classroom observation and the fairness and accuracy of the judgements made. The recording of data electronically allows OfSTED to compile summaries concerning teaching quality that can be presented in the Chief Inspector's Annual Report. Evidence given by OfSTED to the House of Commons Select Committee (1999) identifies an improvement in teaching quality over the period 1995 -1998.

#### **Comparative quality of lessons in special and mainstream schools**

	<b>1995-96</b>	<b>1996-97</b>	<b>1997-98</b>
<b>Secondary Schools</b>			
Very gd./good	46.2	51.6	55.4
Satisfactory	37.2	36.0	35.8
Unsatis./poor	16.6	12.6	8.8
<b>Primary Schools</b>			
Very gd./good	43.3	49.0	54.4
Satisfactory	41.0	39.6	38.3
Unsatis./poor	18.3	11.4	7.3
<b>Special Schools*</b>			
Very gd/good	40	50	59
Satisfactory	40	37	33
Unsatis./poor	20	13	8

\*All special schools (SLD, MLD, & EBD)

*Source: HM Chief Inspector's annual reports.*

Such improvement is cited by OfSTED as evidence that inspection is improving teaching quality. This claim will be examined in this thesis.



## **Thesis framework**

Becher and Kogan (1980, pp. 11-25) provide a valuable framework for analysing the relationships between various dynamic components in higher education. The essence of the model, with its structural levels, describes the basic units in what they refer to as the normative mode i.e. the individual, the basic unit (department or faculty), institution and central authority. The relationships and responsibilities are formally defined. There is, however, a second tier which they call the operational and this describes how these roles and relationships manifest themselves in real life. Although these two modes interact, the normative/operational distinction can be considered as denoting two aspects of the same state of affairs.

Applying this model to the players in the inspection process, four levels can be identified: the individual teacher; the school as the basic unit and institution; OfSTED organisation representing central authority and the local education authority occupying a position between the two.

The Becher/Kogan model represents a direct link in the chain of authority in the management of higher education in the United Kingdom. The position of the LEA has been consistently diminished and marginalised since the introduction of OfSTED and, particularly, in light of the critical reports on some LEAs by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI). Several 'weak' LEAs were named in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools Annual Report for 1998-99.

This study seeks to investigate the extent to which the four levels of responsibility interact and can be seen to represent a coherent and systematic approach to the inspection of schools and the delivery of successive governments' policies to improve standards. In particular, the study seeks to examine the relationship at both normative and operational levels. The following research questions seek to establish a link between the legislation and practice since the creation of OfSTED in 1993.

The four levels of investigation:

- the national level: to what extent have successive policies and inspection strategies contributed to raising teaching standards?
  - i. can judgement and development exist side by side?
  - ii. what is the rationale behind the view that inspection can improve teaching quality?
  - iii. how does OfSTED use the very large amount of data at its disposal to promote strategies to improve teaching quality?
  - iv. what level of training is provided by OfSTED for its inspectors to be effective classroom observers? How accurate are their judgements?
- the local level: how have local education authorities been influenced by government policies and how do they support schools, both before and after an OfSTED inspection?
  - i. can inspection and advice co-exist within an LEA?
  - ii. what strategies do LEAs have to improve the quality of teaching?
  - iii. how do LEAs use the data provided by an inspection?
  - iv. how are LEA inspectors prepared for classroom observation?
- school level: how does the school prepare for inspection and does the existence of a national inspection framework assist in promoting increased teaching quality; what use does the school make of the data obtained during an inspection?
  - i. to what extent are schools monitoring teaching quality and can those who monitor also offer advice - how extensive and effective are existing systems in schools?
  - ii. what policies and strategies are in place to promote improvement in teaching quality?
  - iii. how do schools use the data provided by an OfSTED inspection to improve teaching quality?
  - iv. what level of preparation do senior staff have for classroom observation?
- teacher level: building on the data obtained from the pilot study, how effective is feedback to individual teachers and to what extent do teachers feel that inspections are making a worthwhile contribution to the improvement of their classroom practice?
  - i. how do teachers respond to feedback from observations of their teaching?
  - ii. do teachers feel part of a national/local/school scheme to improve their teaching?
  - iii. what use do teachers make of the data/feedback they are given?
  - iv. how do individual teachers value the quality of the feedback they receive - do they feel part of a national/local/school scheme?

These are four broad themes, which on translation into the interview and questionnaire questions will support comparative analysis of the four fundamental research questions:

- Is inspection for accountability or advice?
- Are there policies and strategies for action?
- What use is made of collected data and how effective is feedback?
- Is there a systematic approach to improving teaching quality?

## Summary

There have been considerable political influences over the direction and management of state schools during the past two centuries. The purpose of inspection was principally to report on standards and to provide basic information for those politicians and administrators responsible for managing schools. Since the mid-1980s, the involvement of government in all aspects of the state education service has been without precedent. The creation of OfSTED in 1993 sought to match the Conservative governments' promises of greater accountability of those who work in the state sectors. Although fundamentally concerned with reporting on standards, OfSTED had by 1995 began to promote through its literature the notion of improvement through inspection. Specifically, it claims that teaching standards are improving as a direct result of regular inspection.

The thesis seeks to establish the relationship between the four main tiers of responsibility within the state system: individual teachers, schools, local education authorities and central government. A distinction is made between the concepts of normative and operational functions as described by Becher and Kogan (1980). There is no doubt that the public is better informed about the operation and standards to be found in state schools. That the system is promoting improved teaching standards is the fundamental claim under investigation.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature review**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relating to school inspection since the introduction of OfSTED. The first section considers the dual purposes of inspection; accountability and improvement, and the tensions that exist between the two. Before examining the literature relating to these two purposes in detail, the model adopted for analysis in the thesis, based on that of Becher and Kogan, is presented. The final section considers the literature available specifically related to the improvement of teaching quality through inspection. This final section considers not only the theoretical considerations and empirical evidence, but also the widely held view that inspections actually drive down teaching standards and are a major source of low morale, deprofessionalisation and the adoption of a technicist approach. Each aspect is examined under the four structural dimensions identified using the Becher and Kogan model: central government (OfSTED), the local education authority, the school and the individual teacher.

#### **The purpose of inspection**

Successive writers and researchers, such as Earley (1996, p. 2), or Parsons (1998, p. 38), have sought to analyse the purpose of inspection. Coleman (1996, p. 9) is typical of many educational commentators who regard inspection as having two main purposes: school improvement and accountability. The tensions between the dual purposes of inspection have been explored by Earley *et al.*, (1998) and Sandbrook (1996), among others, and it is clear that the question 'can these dual purposes of accountability and development be met within the process?' is still a very significant one (Earley 1998, p. 4). Ouston and Davies (1998, p.20) conclude that some schools see inspection as an audit and a free consultancy - a developmental model - whilst others, considering that they were at risk of failing, view it as an accountability model. They believe that the public face of inspection is one of accountability

and, as such, it is not surprising that many schools see it this way too. What these researchers are introducing is a highly significant variable in the equation - the individual school's unique position and the perceptions of those within the school community to inspection, and how they conceptualise the outcomes of inspection. Some schools, they report, attempted to control the power of OfSTED by presenting a perfect week to ensure that they met the accountability criteria - but this, inevitably, reduced the value of advice about development. Others saw the process as developmental and collaborative. These two opposites are depicted in Table 2.1 taken from Ouston and Davies (1998, p. 21)

Model	Ascribed power	Outcomes
Accountability	Powerful →	School adopts OfSTED model before inspection, over-prepared, anxiety, and stress, cover-up, the 'perfect week', avoided development, may fail or be relieved that they had survived
	Weak ↘	Pleased with confirmation, considered the report seriously, reflected on what is relevant for the school
Development	Weak ↗	made informed decisions about change
	Powerful →	School too obedient, implemented inappropriate practices, regret and 'unpicking' of change

**Table 2.1 Accountability, development, power and outcomes of OfSTED**

Earley (1996, p. 21) and Gray and Gardner (1999, pp. 455-467) are sceptical of the research carried out to date on the efficacy of the inspection process. Much of the information sought from schools relies on perceptions by the headteacher, and Earley claims that considerably more research must be carried out before reliable claims can be made. The responses schools give, in his view, are influenced by at least five factors:

- *the state of education in the school;*
- *the management processes in the school;*

- *the attitude of the headteacher to inspection;*
- *the inspection process, and;*
- *the inspection findings.*

It is clear that research has been limited in addressing the issue of the effectiveness of inspection. As a process of public accountability, the measurement of a school's performance against a set of pre-determined criteria has generated few critics. OfSTED's desire to promote school improvement through inspection, however, remains contentious and, as yet, there is little research evidence to support the claims that it will do so in ways commensurate with the significant amount of public money being invested in the process. Fitz-Gibbon and Stephenson-Forster (1999, p. 115) summarise their research on 159 headteachers by stating that OfSTED's methods have:

- *been amateurish and far from 'state of the art' in that they have failed to meet even the most elementary standards with regard to sampling, reliability and validity;*
- *failed to implement the organisation's own principles, such as separating advice from inspection;*
- *failed to keep abreast of modern approaches to management and to research evidence;*
- *demanding analysis skills from inspectors without having demonstrated that inspectors have these skills to a degree which gives them authority in the interpretation of complex data and research evidence;*
- *confused its mission with that of other bodies;*
- *included methods which have now been quietly repudiated by OfSTED itself, but without apology or compensation made to schools damaged by those methods now admitted to be indefensible.*

The researchers conclude (p. 115) that OfSTED has:

- *failed to win the confidence of headteachers;*
- *caused schools considerable expense which must now figure in value for money studies;*
- *possibly caused schools to spend money to find out how to improve the rating they will obtain in the next inspection;*
- *delivered ratings of schools which are worse for schools in the most difficult circumstances.*

Fitz-Gibbon and Stephenson-Forster (1999) summarise by stating that, because of all these failings, OfSTED may have substantially damaged the quality of education provided by schools causing them to spend time, money and energy unproductively (p. 115).

In summary, Learmonth (2000, pp.10-11), draws on the three most recent, substantial studies on the work of OfSTED, that of the Brunel University/Helix Consulting Group (1999), the House of Commons Select Committee (1999) and the work supported through the Nuffield Foundation and reported by Ferguson, Earley, Fidler and Ouston (2000). In general terms, several consistent conclusions emerge from these studies:

- *there is a consensus that the school system should continue to have a national system of inspection, and that there should be a regular cycle of inspections;*
- *OfSTED's Framework for the inspection of schools was welcome as an open and constructive set of criteria for the evaluation of schools;*
- *the system causes widespread disruption, and often considerable stress, to the normal routine of the school;*
- *there is a lack of confidence in the methodology of OfSTED's collection and analysis of evidence, before, during and after inspection;*
- *the capacity of the school to use an OfSTED inspection constructively is strongly linked to the relationship developed between the particular team of OfSTED inspectors and the school community;*

- *there is little evidence that OfSTED inspection is an effective catalyst for school improvement in the pre-inspection period, or in the post-inspection period;*
- *the feedback given to teachers rarely has much effect on their classroom practice;*
- *inspection does not do enough to foster the growth of skills in self-evaluation;*
- *judgements may be unreliable and yet have serious consequences for individuals;*
- *granted the time, money and personnel involved, an OfSTED inspection gives too little attention to constructive advice (not prescription) about future development, to the 'how' of school improvement;*
- *it is difficult to find clear evidence that the OfSTED system gives value for money in fulfilling what are stated to be its main purposes.*

Before addressing the two major issues of inspection for accountability and inspection for improvement, the following section considers a framework for the analysis of the relationship between the main players within the inspection system.

### **A model for analysis**

It can sometimes be helpful, in explaining complex social and political phenomena, to refer to a deliberately simplified representation of those phenomena (Becher and Kogan 1980, p. 10). There appear to be no obvious rules for constructing such representations of those phenomena and no standard way of checking their validity, only, what Becher and Kogan refer to as a sense of a good fit or logical consistency; a feeling of appropriateness - a shock of recognition. Their model to analyse the relationship between structures in higher education is an attempt to simplify and make them more readily comprehensible while at the same time remaining true to reality. They employ the term 'model' in a non-technical sense, as a straightforward, but necessary and deliberately simplified, set of categories for thinking about



British higher education and examining the relationships between its components. It is the compact summarisation of these in tabular form, which represent the model itself: the presentation of abstract ideas in concrete visual terms.

The structural levels or tiers within the model are identified first; these are designed to indicate discrete clusters of norms and operations which differentiate one stratum of the organisation from another. Although Becher and Kogan (1992, p. 2) identify four elements in higher education, they do recognise the applicability of their model to other settings where a larger number of structural units may be identified. This was the reason for its selection in this study of the major elements in the current national approach to school inspection. The first tier is the central one representing those authorities charged with overall planning, resource allocation and the monitoring of standards. The latter is highly significant when applying this model to inspection. Included within their first tier would be local authorities, as agents of central authority. A local education authority, when applying this model to inspection would need to stand alone as a second tier, such is the nature of its current role and limited powers. The second tier in Becher and Kogan's model is the institution. The basic unit would apply to schools or departments within a university setting. The equivalent would be the school (as a third tier) if applying this model to inspection. The final tier is, in the case of higher education, the teacher or researcher. If the system is applied to inspection, this would remain as the individual teacher.

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Central authority	Institution	Basic unit	Individual
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**Figure 2.1 The structural components of the Becher and Kogan model**

For the purposes of this study, the inspection equivalent will be central government and OfSTED as the central authority; LEAs representing the second tier, schools as the third and teachers as the individuals.

By constructing cells within the model or matrix, Becher and Kogan identify levels of responsibility and activity. The components are separated into two modes, the first of which

is the normative mode, which describes the formal and legal responsibility to monitor and maintain values within the system. It represents, in many respects, the power of the tier of responsibility established by law. When applied to higher education this may also include the articles of government of the institution established over many centuries. Applied to the inspection of schools, recent legislation has made the normative level particularly strong and well-defined in the case of OfSTED, the central authority.

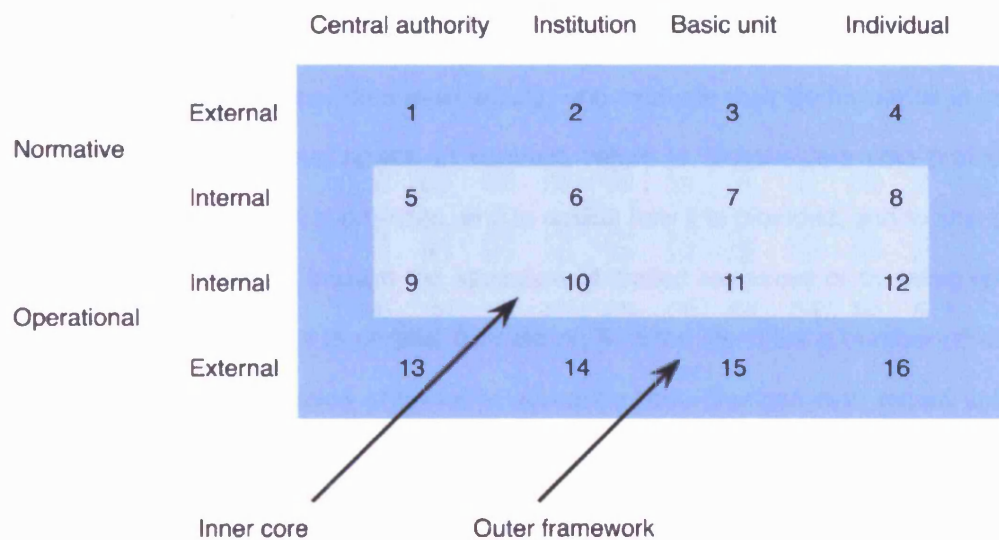
The second mode within the Becher and Kogan model applies to the business of carrying out the practical tasks at different levels within the system. This they call the operational level. Although the two modes interact, their characteristics can be clearly distinguished. The inseparability of the two, however, can be denoted as two aspects of the same state of affairs

*The contrast between the one and the other is related to the difference between what people actually do - or what they are institutionally required to do - and what they count as important. The distinction also has some kinship with the familiar differences between fact and value and between everyday practice as defined by law and ideal practice as defined by morality (p. 11).*

	Central authority	Institution	base unit	Individual
Normative	1	2	3	4
Operational	5	6	7	8

**Figure 2.2 The eight elements of the Becher and Kogan model**

Each mode can be further sub-divided into internal and external dimensions. The internal aspect embodies the features which stem directly from the nature and enterprise of higher education as a whole. The external dimension denotes those aspects which impinge from the outside. In state compulsory education, this would include parents or employers. Thus Becher and Kogan's model now has a sixteen cell matrix.



**Figure 2.3 The sixteen cell elements of the Becher and Kogan model**

Having established this model, it is possible to examine and describe the qualities or attributes of each cell and the relationships between them. Becher and Kogan (1992, p. 17) point out many times that there are other models and that this is not an exclusive one. It shares with others the possibility of exploring related, but complex phenomena in a more tangible way. This is why the model has been selected as a unit of analysis of the school inspection system. Becher and Kogan do not apply weighting to each tier and level, which demonstrate where power and influence are concentrated within the system, although the tensions between each is a recurring theme throughout their work. This thesis will illustrate how the weakness of role definition between some of the tiers of responsibility has widened the gap between the normative and operational levels.

The basic Becher and Kogan model can be supplemented as a unit of analysis by considering more contemporary accounts of power distribution within the state education system. Simkins in Fidler *et al.*, (eds), (1997, p. 21) considers the effects of the redistribution of power brought about by greater autonomy given to schools and the increase in central control and direction. He suggests a useful way forward by making the distinction between 'criteria power' and

'operational power' - a valuable extension to the model of Becher and Kogan. Criteria power refers to the ability of organisational stakeholders to define the aims and purposes of the service, design the overall system within which it is provided, set or influence the performance criteria which providers must satisfy, and evaluate their performance in relation to these criteria. Operational power, in contrast, refers to stakeholders who provide the service itself or decide how it is provided, and to decide how it is provided, and to change the way in which it is delivered, through the allocation of limited resources or by using relevant knowledge and skills. Using this parallel framework, Simkins identifies a number of ways in which the nature and distribution of power in education have changed over recent years (p. 21):

***Central government** , previously limited in power in relation to major aspects of educational policy and practice, has considerably increased its criteria power, so that it is now the key actor in relation to both the determination of policy objectives nationally and the establishment of operational frameworks through which these policies are carried out.*

The level of normative responsibility or power within the Becher and Kogan model is explained by Simkins' description of criteria power. It will be argued later that the stronger the role definition at each level, the closer the normative level becomes to the operational level. Where criteria power is weak, role definition is also weak. Hence, according to Simkins:

***LEAs** have perhaps been the main losers, finding themselves squeezed between an increasingly powerful central government drawing criteria power to itself and developments in relation to local management and grant maintained status, which have transferred operational power to the level of the school or removed schools from the LEA's orbit entirely (p. 21).*

The role of the LEA in the whole process of inspection remains vague as a consequence (Ball *et al.*, 1997a, p. 149 and 1997b, p. 205). It is argued by Simkins (1997) that teachers have lost considerable criteria power as well.

***Teachers** - have lost criteria power, as the influence of the teacher unions on national policy has been all but removed while, at school level, the National Curriculum and testing have limited teachers' freedom in the classroom and LM and GM, through enhancing the power of governing bodies and headteachers, has rendered the role of 'ordinary' teachers in the development of school policy more problematic (p. 21);*

Thus, we have two parallel models which complement one another; one provides a framework for examining tiers of responsibility and the relationships between those at both normative and operational levels while the other provides a complementary framework for the analysis of power bases at each level. For every area of increased power, there appears to be a corresponding area in which additional external controls and constraints have been imposed (Simkins 1997, p. 22). The introduction of such controls includes changing patterns of accountability. The following section examines how OfSTED inspections satisfy some, but not all modes of accountability.

## **Accountability**

The concept of accountability is indelibly woven into today's education system (Burns, J 2000, p. 1) and has been of increasing importance since the 1970s (Fidler and Davies 1998a, p. 157). Traditionally, in education, primary responsibility for determining the core activities has been seen as the domain of the professionals, based on the assumption that quality is best ensured by granting autonomy to teachers, advisers and others who have been trained in, and have relevant access, to professional bodies and act in the best interests of their 'client', the pupil or student (Simkins 1997, p. 22). Simkins argues (p. 23) that such professional accountability was regarded as being so soft as to be tantamount to an absence of any real

accountability and did not respond adequately to the complex demands of a modern economy and society.

The literature on educational accountability written over the past 25 years is full of cautionary notes on the problems of technical definition and the accepted purposes of accountability (Eraut, 1978, p. 152, Munn, 1991, p. 174, Epstein, 1993, p. 248, Simkins, 1997, p. 20, Ouston *et al.*, 1998c, p. 112). Those comparing British systems of educational provision with their own, notably in the US and Australia (Cuttence, 1998, p. 138, Macpherson, 1996, p. 141), point to the prescriptive state legislation in England and Wales, with its harsher forms of centralised educational accountability, such as state testing and school performance comparisons. They imply that accountability within the English and Welsh system is well-understood and universally accepted. Kogan and Maden (1999, p. 139-appendix 1) in comparing the inspection of teaching in continental European countries report that systems vary considerably in the inspection of individual teachers. This has been virtually abandoned in Scandinavia. In Germany, school supervisors assess the work of probationary teachers or those who are looking for promotion or when a teacher is having problems. About half of their time is spent in assessing teachers. There is a shift in France to inspecting schools as a unit, but local inspectorates inspect individual teachers. In Spain and Austria, individual teachers are inspected. In comparison with these countries, the level of teacher inspection in England and Wales is high.

Ouston *et al.*, (1998c, p. 111) highlight the fact that educational accountability has become a widely discussed issue in many countries and that its meaning is often and incorrectly presented as unproblematic. Goddard and Leask (1992, p. 154) were not alone in stating that accountability appears to be a very precise word and, as a principle, it cannot be disagreed with, especially in a democratic, independent society. They go on to state, however:

*In its managerial form, everyone assumes that it is bound to deliver quality, but does it? Is it a single term or multifaceted? How does it contribute to the motivation of the profession?... our continuing concern is that society through its*

*politicians, is pursuing a crude, simplistic and coercive form of accountability that will result in demotivation and the de-skilling of teachers, and thus result in a failure to achieve the goal of improved quality (p. 155).*

The philosophical debate on the concepts and principles of accountability strengthened in the 1980s. Wagner (1989), for example, points out that proposals for accountability often fail to recognise the basic elements and conditions of this concept or fail to consider the full range of implications:

*.....to contend that an individual or an institution ought to be accountable immediately brings to mind the question: accountable to whom, for what, in what manner and under what circumstances (p. 2).*

MacDonald (1979) identifies the 1978/79 'winter of discontent' as the period when growing public cynicism about government and government services created the demand for greater accountability:

*..but at the broadest political level the demand for accountability is a response to a society believed to be both in decline and out of legitimate control. And at the heart of the concern is an argument about the role of bureaucracy (p. 26).*

At this time, MacDonald believed that the state had outgrown its accountability mechanisms, which no longer assured democratic control. He highlighted the conflict between the teacher as executor of the public will and the teacher as the self-evaluating and reflective professional (p. 43). It can be argued (Burns 2000, p. 1) that the Education Acts of the 1980s went a long way in strengthening the profession's accountability to the public, culminating in the publication of the Parent's Charter in 1991, in which the government sought to establish a clear agenda: the setting and monitoring of standards of service, value for money and improvements in quality and service. The accompanying fostering of consumerism was seen to subject public services to market forces. OfSTED was born from such notions and is

central to what Ouston *et al.*, (1998c, p. 117) and Bell, (1999, pp 57-72) refer to as the 'education market place'. This new strand of accountability expected market mechanisms to achieve its impact as schools were dependent on pupil numbers for income, yet this form of direct accountability was clearly aimed at the lay person. OfSTED was to introduce an external professional dimension into the accountability process. OfSTED reports would be available to parents and the local community at one level to satisfy the demands of the market, whilst also informing the government, through the Chief Inspector's annual report of standards in the nation's schools (Fidler and Davies 1998, p. 157).

Kogan's (1988) analysis of different types of accountability provides a useful and often quoted framework for the consideration of accountability in public service. He identifies three main models (p. 139):

1. *Public or state control* - which entails the use of authority by elected representatives, appointed officials, and the heads and others who manage schools.
2. *Professional control*, that is control of education by teachers and professional administrators
3. *Consumerist control* or influence which might take the form of
  - a. participatory democracy or *partnership* in the public sector; or
  - b. *market mechanisms* in the private or partly privatised sector.

These forms of accountability can only be assured if sanctions exist and can be applied in respect of poor performance. Such sanctions would include the public shaming of schools identified as having serious weaknesses or requiring special measures following an OfSTED inspection. Ouston *et al.*, (1998c, p.113) point out that recent educational legislation has the overall aim of improving educational standards through support for, and pressure from, the educational marketplace, commensurate with Kogan's third model: consumerist control to support market mechanisms. Significantly, Ouston *et al.*, (1998c) point out that patterns of accountability in education reflect the political context of public services generally and that the



UK government has moved from being a provider of services to focusing on setting policy and standards of services provided by others. The government establishes regulatory bodies to set and enforce standards of performance to ensure that customers receive a service that meets stated criteria. Thus, OfSTED produces elaborate frameworks and standards for the inspection of schools, colleges and LEAs, to be carried out by contractors competing in the market place for work. Such a model strengthens the state's power and control while reducing its own direct actions, or, as Ouston *et al.*, (1998c) point out:

'centralised decision-making with devolved blame' (p. 113).

Some earlier studies on the effects of inspection on education sought the perception of teachers (Brimblecombe *et al.*, 1995 a,b&c, 1996 a,b&c). Most of the major studies that followed, however, tended to concentrate on the perceptions of headteachers (Brunel University/Helix Consulting Group 1999; Ferguson *et al.*, 2000). It is worth noting that Scanlon (1999) found interesting differences in the perceptions of headteachers and teachers. There are few empirical studies on the issue of accountability. The Brunel Study cited above, however, did seek views of teachers, headteachers, parents, governors and LEA officers on whether OfSTED inspections increase accountability. The study concludes (p. 90-91).

*All those interviewed representing national organisations accepted the need for schools to be accountable. There were serious misgivings as to whether the OfSTED model is the most appropriate one for achieving accountability and transparency. On the one hand:*

- *Accountability has improved in terms of OfSTED having raised the stakes, raised issues of accountability at school level, and the importance of having produced quite a lot of information and data into the public arena and, indeed, into governing bodies themselves, which previously hadn't existed.*

*On the other hand, however,*

- *A punitive model does not seek to explore strengths. It seeks to focus on weaknesses and is therefore not an accurate form of accountability.*

## **Accountability and OfSTED**

There is no doubt that accountability was a cornerstone of John Major's Parent's Charter and derives from the Great Debate initiated by James Callaghan in 1976. The Parent's Charter established a clear agenda for public services and the government's fostering of consumerism was seen to subject public services, such as education, to market forces (Burns, J, 2000, p. 1). The powers accorded to OfSTED through successive legislation were considerable. The criteria for success are clearly defined and centre on successive governments' imposition of targets based on a succession of performance criteria and national expectations for achievement (Flecknoe 2001, p. 224-225). According to Matthews, current head of quality assurance at OfSTED:

*Inspection is designed to assess whether the school successfully meets its targets in terms of learning outcomes and pupil experiences. These lie at the heart of quality assurance in schools. Their evaluation requires an emphasis on teaching and learning, directly observing classes and other learning settings, which is the hallmark of inspection methods in the UK. (Matthews and Smith, 1995, pp. 24-25):*

Matthews and Smith continue to contrast methods of inspection in the UK with those in other countries where the focus tends to be more on management practices and school organisation, rather than the ways these are experienced by pupils in the system. This statement was made six years ago and there is growing evidence that other countries, such as Australia, have made considerable progress in their approaches to accountability. Highett (1998a, p. 3), for example, draws on the experience of OfSTED in the state of South

Australia's emerging debate on the issue. His criticism of the system in England and Wales highlights the following;

- *the use of single indicators resulting in league tables of school performance which demoralise school communities;*
- *lack of efforts to view examination results within the contextual factors influencing individual schools and their students;*
- *reporting which relies on 'raw' results rather than value-added measures (p. 3).*

With the government imposition of targets and standards, the emphasis of inspection becomes increasingly quantitative at the expense of subtler qualitative (subjective) evaluation. It is interesting to note that all registered inspectors must attend a course on national data and school performance interpretation during 2001 or lose their licences, emphasising the government's growing emphasis on statistical data to measure success. Flecknoe (2001, p. 225) establishes what he refers to as the target-setting debate and its lack of understanding by most parents. Most send their children to the school allocated and consider overall attainment to be more significant than progress made over time. If this is so, it weakens the notion of market accountability at the expense of political accountability (p. 225). Macpherson *et al.*, (1998, p. 5) in their international overview of the politics of accountability, conclude that:

*....accountabilities in an international context are characterised by conceptual disarray, multiple form strategies, blunt administrative instruments and plural political cultures.*

The primary finding of their research was that a responsible politics of accountability is needed at all levels to reconnect the processes and criteria of accountability to learning, teaching, leading, and governing.

HMCI's annual report is based on statistical data obtained during inspections. Such data are easily translatable into simple histograms for illustrative purposes (OfSTED 2000). The seven

point scale is ubiquitous throughout OfSTED's judgement grading procedure. In the case of teaching quality, these are reduced to three broad bands for reporting purposes (Fidler *et al.*, 1998b, p. 257). These authors claim that this move to broader groupings, they believe, is to tacitly admit to the less than precise status of the performance grades or ratings. Fidler *et al.*, (1998b, p. 268) argue that the new system may result in the awarding of what they refer to as false positives or false negatives - in other words a serious element of imprecision had entered into the system.

Political accountability at national level, however, is assured by the current system and the statistics derived from the work of both the DfEE and OfSTED are frequently used by politicians at all levels to make statements concerning improvement or otherwise in the education system. Fidler *et al.*, and others e.g. Mortimore, giving evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee (1998) investigation into the work of OfSTED question the accuracy and validity of the statistical data used to make collective judgements about the quality of aspects of education, such as the quality of teaching. Case *et al.*, (2000, p. 610) consider the concern expressed by the Select Committee about the effects of inspection on teacher morale and the low level of confidence teachers place in the process. This view is supported by the work of Maw (1998, p. 151), and Fidler *et al.*, (1998a). Case *et al.*, (2000, p. 607) draw attention to the dominance of bureaucracy and managerialism at the expense of respect for the integrity of the teaching profession.

The accountability of OfSTED to parliament, both in terms of processes and outcomes is evident in the activity of the Select Committees. Committee reports are openly available on the Internet extending this level of accountability to the market place. However, it should be noted that The Select Committee (1999) did conclude:

*...that the accountability mechanisms for OfSTED are not sufficiently robust. Nor do they demonstrate that OfSTED is fully accountable for its work. This is not a criticism of OfSTED itself: OfSTED operates within the statutory framework which*

*Parliament gave it. However, we believe it is in the best interests of education and OfSTED itself, that stronger, clearer mechanisms be introduced (paragraph 196).*

### **Accountability and the local education authority**

Recent legislation has curtailed the roles and influence of local education authorities. Various powers and responsibilities previously held by LEAs have been dispersed to schools, central government and quangos (Radnor *et al.*, 1998, p. 205). These researchers conclude that the whole future of LEAs remains in doubt and local democratic accountability is being diminished and obscured. Similarly, Ouston *et al.*, (1998c, p. 113) conclude that the devolution of funding to schools is a powerful mechanism for forcing schools to be more responsive to consumer needs. As a consequence, the powers and responsibilities of the LEA were reduced, along with those of the elected councillors, whereas the powers of governing bodies and school staff were increased. The GM movement removed schools completely from direct accountability to the LEA, but increased accountability to parents. Elliot (1979, pp. 67-71) highlights the conflict created by the varying views of different audiences with regard to the aims of education. Part of the rationale for the inspection system is the more direct accounting to users of the system (market accountability), which in the case of individual schools are the parents at the school. In view of the stated aims of OfSTED to provide accountability to parents, the Brunel (p. 91) study found that only 28.9 per cent of parents and 2.4 per cent of governors agreed that 'the OfSTED system improves the accountability of schools'. Indeed, 34.7 per cent of parents and 38.3 per cent of governors disagreed with the statement.

The changing role of the LEA has been the subject of research for some time and the 1988 Education Reform Act is signalled as the starting point of the current and increasing demise (Scott, 1994). Scott examines the need for LEAs to adopt a new professionalism that is located more firmly in the market place. He argues that LEAs, as local representatives of the central inspection system, have a major role to play, especially through their regional knowledge and expertise. It is interesting to note that seven years on this new

professionalism is not apparent, with OfSTED inspections of individual LEAs often identifying significant weaknesses (HMCI Annual Report 2000).

The Audit Commission and OfSTED jointly reported on local education authority support for school improvement (2001):

*The overwhelming impression gained from the 91 inspections (of LEAs) conducted to date is one of extreme variability. A majority (59 out of 91 LEAs) are performing satisfactorily or well. An unexpectedly large number of LEAs (17), however, has been found to be performing so large a number of functions poorly as to require some form of intervention by the Secretary of State (p. 12).*

And in the conclusion:

*The relationships between the effectiveness of LEA support and school standards are not consistent or very clear. The analysis shows that there is little or no overall statistical relationship. Even when a specific aspect of support is linked to the closely related school outcome, a consistent relationship is not clearly apparent. The tenuous and inconsistent relationship between the quality of support provided by the LEA and school standards, when compared with the pervasive effect of disadvantage on school standards, highlights the flimsiness of any link.*

The emphasis in the report is one of support, which highlights the dramatic shift from the previous LEA role of quality controller. Radnor *et al.*, (1998, p. 131) examine the subtle differences in approach to accountability by a number of contrasting LEAs. They identify three models determined by the emphasis different authorities place on aspects of the LEA's work.

### High priority

Model 1	Community needs and local political goals
Model 2	Maintenance of service provision and support for schools
Model 3	Cost reduction and performance and monitoring

They quote an LEA with the following statement at the beginning of its development plan ' *An LEA is the only body with the democratic legitimacy to take an overall view of the educational needs in the locality.* This, they say, underlies the continuing commitment to the local historic, political culture, which emphasises the importance of local political accountability as opposed to market accountability. The second model emphasises service provision. Accountability becomes represented in professional and personal terms. In the third model, greater emphasis is placed upon the quality of provision, and business and management models are employed to ensure efficiency, measured by fixed performance indicators. In this latter case, Radnor *et al.*, 1998 p. 133) point out:

*The authority may provide services to schools on a business footing but it does not see itself having a responsibility for offering educational leadership or setting social priorities. The meeting of needs here rests upon the actions of individual consumers (parents/students and schools) and is based upon exchange relationships. Politics and education are commodified.*

### Accountability and the school

The Parent's Charter (1991) makes it quite clear that parents will receive at least five key documents to promote knowledge of standards at an individual school (Ouston *et al.*, 1998c, p. 117). These are:

1. an annual report about their child, which includes national examination and test results, attendance, and attainment in non-tested subjects and other activities;

2. regular reports from OfSTED-registered inspectors (These reports are available on the Internet and must be supplied by a school on request);
3. performance tables of national test and examination results, which are published annually;
4. a prospectus or brochure about the school, which is prepared according to national statutory guidelines;
5. an annual report from the school's governing body.

It is interesting to note that this list goes a long way to answer the fundamental questions put by Eraut (1978, p. 155):

1. What kinds of information might be included in a school's account?
2. How much of this information should go to governors or to LEAs, under whose auspices and under what conditions?
3. How can this information be used and what are the policy consequences at LEA and DES (DfEE) levels?
4. What is implied by accountability to pupils and their parents?
5. What is the relationship between agreed policy and action at classroom level?

Maintained schools, as publicly funded institutions answerable to a variety of interests, are subject to at least three forms of external monitoring and evaluation which complement internal procedures such as school self-evaluation and staff appraisal (Matthews and Smith 1995, p. 24-25). Such external mechanisms include not only the regular inspection of schools, but also the reporting formally required of schools and governors to the parents and others and regular financial audit. Inspections are designed to see whether or not a school is meeting its targets for improvement and how the school has progressed since the last inspection.

Simkins (1997, p. 25) cites Kogan's (1984) research on governing bodies, which concluded that governors generally played a very small part in school accountability. He highlights the clear expectation of governors now to assume a monitoring and evaluative role. This is a fundamental responsibility to be examined by inspectors as stated in Section 7 (How well is



the school led and managed?) of the current handbook (OfSTED 1999, p. 86) secondary school edition:

***Inspectors must evaluate and report on:***

- *how well the governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities and accounts for the performance and improvement of the school.*

***In determining their judgements, inspectors should consider the extent to which:***

- *there is rigorous monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching*

Simkins (1997, p. 26) points out that although these new powers are *de jure*, it does not follow that these will be fully exercised *de facto*. In reality he states:

*..even in relation to the accountability role, the way in which a governing body conceives and plays its role is a matter of considerable choice. How far, for example should governors initiate policy and how far should they act as validators of policy that are designed primarily by the head and the staff of the school. The factors which influence the role which a governing body actually plays include the types of individuals who are elected and co-opted to it, their expectations about what they should do and how they should behave, and the kinds of pressures which governors face from inside and outside the school.*

Earley (1997, p. 391 & 2000, p. 204) highlights the variation in levels of understanding of their role by governors in relation to monitoring and evaluating progress. The confusion that can reign when these responsibilities are misunderstood or abused was clearly illustrated at Stratford School in the early 1990s (Snelling 2001). The governors in this school took the concept of local management to its extreme, and as a consequence, resulted in the appointment of additional governors by the DfEE, including Eric Bolton, an ex-HMCI.

With market accountability, the model is not concerned with the rearrangements of roles and power within the school system, but is concerned with the creation of a competitive environment in which schools are forced to respond to the wishes of their customers through the operation of market forces (Simkins 1997, p. 26). Ultimately, the parents at Stratford School ousted the wayward governors, but only with substantial backing from other powerful external agencies, including the law courts. The influence of inspection was clearly another powerful influence. The inspection of Stratford School (OfSTED 1993) placed the school in special measures and the school remained under close government supervision for two years, again with the appointment of additional governors,

The Secretary of State for Education and Employment has considerable powers to intervene or control the market through the allocation of funding or the granting of special status to a school. The market is therefore a highly regulated one.

The effects of OfSTED inspection in generating change within a school have been investigated since the first inspections began in 1993. Hargreaves (1995, p. 119) places the effects of inspection in evolutionary terms:

*...inspection exposes bad schools to the social Darwinism by which they wither away as parents choose alternative schools.*

There has been little research on the effectiveness of school inspection (Earley *et al.*, 1996, Chapman, 2001). Most of the research in recent years concentrates on the effectiveness of inspection as an agent for change rather than its role in accountability. Nevertheless, Ferguson, Earley, Fidler and Ouston (2000), following substantial research, conclude that:

*The inescapable and in some ways rather obvious conclusion is that the prime purpose of OfSTED inspection is to make schools accountable to government and, by proxy, to the taxpayer and the nation at large. In this view it is important not only to be assured that most schools are meeting national expectations and*

*represent 'value for money' but also create a mechanism for exposing those that are judged unsatisfactory. Inspection is, therefore, a mechanism for ensuring that schools are made aware of their responsibilities to seek improvements and play their part in raising standards. The first round of inspection was successful in achieving this aim and reinspection, it might be argued, now has the rather limited intention of providing a warning to schools that need a further reminder of their obligations (p. 147).*

These researchers point out that the introduction of short inspections for successful schools in 2000 emphasises the real purpose of inspection, that of accountability, for if it were to help with further improvement, all schools would require a full inspection.

### **Accountability and the individual teacher**

Sockett (1980, p. 12) asks three central questions in delineating forms of accountability:

- is the school or teacher accountable?
- to whom should the school or teacher be accountable?
- for what is the school or teacher accountable?

Individual teachers are regarded as the units of account and Sockett (1980, p. 14) lists those to whom they are accountable:

- individual pupils and parents;
- pupils and their parents as part of the community;
- the teachers' employers;
- the providers of the resources, both LEA and government;
- professional peers inside and outside of school;
- the public;
- industry, including the trade unions.

Teachers are accountable for both outcomes and the processes leading to these outcomes. The OfSTED model of inspection clearly examines both.

Classroom observation and feedback to teachers on their performance had been a generally private affair until the introduction of Performance Management, the successor to schoolteacher appraisal, in September 2000. Performance criteria are now more clearly defined (DfEE [Hay/McBer study] 2000), although heavily criticised in some quarters as being overly simplistic (Davis 2001 p. 4-9). The current situation, however, contrasts markedly with Tickle's observation (1992, p 94-95) that appraisal (as it was then) lacked agreement, tacit or otherwise on the criteria for judging teacher qualities (competencies). The current process is clearly one of professional accountability, with teachers setting targets for development based on their discussions with the headteacher or senior delegated staff. The link with performance related pay, however, indicates the incorporation of market accountability (Bubb and Hoare 2001, p. 3). Teachers wishing to cross the threshold to obtain a higher level of remuneration must organise a portfolio to demonstrate to an external assessor that they have exceeded certain standards determined by the DfEE (DfEE 2000). The purpose of performance management is stated by Bubb and Hoare (2001, p.3) as :

*...a system for reviewing and agreeing priorities within the context of the school development plan. It may be described as a pyramidal hierarchy of objectives: for the institution, for the management and for the teachers. In this sense, it is the mirror-image of target setting for pupils. Its objective is to improve the match between the offered and the received curriculum.... There are links to the discretionary pay awards that governing bodies now make.,*

It does not take much imagination to see how this particular initiative increases teachers' accountability within the general educational market place. Headteachers are similarly brought to account during their annual review with representatives of the governing body and an external adviser paid for by the DfEE, but appointed by a private company, Cambridge

Education Associates. Burns (2000, pp. 10-21) concluded that teachers did not see appraisal schemes meeting the needs of accountability, but this research was prior to the introduction of performance management with its added external dimension. As with other researchers, Sandbrook (1996, p. 18) concluded that teachers readily accepted the notion that they were and should be fully accountable for their work. The disappointment so often expressed by teachers was that the experience of inspection did not help them to improve their practice: Whilst concluding that some feedback to teachers was better than none, Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1996a, p. 351) also reported that only a third of the teachers surveyed indicated an intention to change their classroom practices as a consequence of the inspection. The Brunel University/Helix Consulting Group research (1999) also concluded that teachers were amongst the wider group of players who believed that schools should be accountable (p. 105):

*There was total consensus that schools as a public service should be accountable for their work and for the resources made available for that work, but there were differences in the extent to which OfSTED school inspection was seen as contributing to greater accountability.*

### **Improvement through inspection**

There are problems with defining school improvement. It is a very flexible concept, as it may mean different things to different schools (Chapman 2000, p.58). Chapman believes that the key principle to school improvement is that improvement is generated from within, and is not a top-down approach to change. It is this very principle that has prompted other researchers to promote self-evaluation and assisted self-inspection as an alternative to the current dominance of OfSTED procedures (Wragg and Brighouse 1995, Webb *et al.*, 1998, Cullingford *et al.*, 1999, Ferguson *et al.*, 2000) within England and Wales and other countries, and notably in Australia and New Zealand (Highett 1998b, Codd 1989, 1994, and Hopkins, 1995). These notions, however, are not new; Simons (1981, p. 117) was reviewing self-assessment schemes twenty years ago.

The International School Improvement Project (van Velzen *et al.*, 1985, p. 48) defines school improvement as:

*a systematic sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions, and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively.*

The definition implies a high degree of consensus and mutual understanding about the purposes of approaches to school improvement. The holistic view promoted by Davis (2001, p. 7), which emphasises the need for a greater understanding of conceptual issues, highlights the need for a greater understanding of where OfSTED fits within the whole concept of school improvement.

Lonsdale and Parsons (1998, p. 110) pull few punches in the title of their critique of OfSTED: *Inspection and the school improvement hoax*. They question the ability of OfSTED to fulfil its mission of 'improvement through inspection' and offer three grounds for making this assertion and the intentional lack of transparency as justification for calling it a hoax.

*...First, the position occupied by OfSTED in the educational administrative and political structures in England and, with small differences, Wales, and the remit given it by the DfEE, render the inspection process illegitimate and disqualifies the agency itself from playing a supportive and developmental role. Secondly, the content of reports and the reporting requirements, as set out in the handbooks for inspection, are oppositional in character despite their claim to represent best practice and high standards. Thirdly, the stretched chain of responsibility - from national government to school - and the purposely emasculated mediating potential of the LEA make the exercise of school inspection one of improvement through threat and fear, an intentionally disciplining role. (p. 110)*

Improvement is generally associated with the efforts of an individual institution, relying on the professional experience of its teachers and other staff to identify a focus for improvement for that institution (Bush and Coleman 2000, p. 53). It identifies closely with the teacher as researcher and has encompassed projects related to self-evaluation and review; tending to focus on change to processes rather than directly on outcomes.

School effectiveness is defined by Creemers and Reezigt (1997, p. 401) as:

*...all theories and research studies concerning the means-ends relationships between educational processes and outcomes, in particular student knowledge and skills... aiming at explanations for differences in student achievement between schools and classrooms.*

It is clear that effectiveness tends to look at outcome measures even if some account is taken of a range of factors which influence these such as local social conditions (Sammons *et al.*, 1994, p. 4). The separate traditions of school effectiveness and school improvement are tabulated by Bush and Coleman (2000, p. 53):

<b>School effectiveness</b>	<b>School improvement</b>
Focus on schools	Focus on individual teachers or groups of teachers
Focus on school organisation	Focus on school process
Data driven, with emphasis on outcomes	Rare empirical evaluation of effects of changes
Quantitative in orientation	Qualitative in orientation
Lack of knowledge about how to implement change strategies	Concerned with change in school exclusively
More concerned with change in pupil outcomes	More concerned with journey of school improvement than its destination
More concerned with schools at a point in time	More concerned with schools as changing
Based on research knowledge	Focus on practitioner knowledge

It might appear that the OfSTED slogan *Improvement through inspection might* be better described as *increasing effectiveness through inspection*. Nevertheless, the issue of whether or not school improvement results from OfSTED inspections is highly contested (Cuckle and Broadhead 1999).

For those who believe that OfSTED inspections are a lever for school improvement at all levels, Chapman (2000, p. 57) offers the following reasons why the belief is flawed:

- *It uses only methods relying on pressure, giving very little support;*
- *It is threatening and judgmental in nature;*
- *It is conducted over a short period of time once every six years therefore not giving a fair representation of long-term teacher performance.*

Chapman argues that school improvement must be directly linked to professional development and that an alternative and supportive inspection needs to be part of an integrated, widely understood and accepted approach to raising standards.

The following four sections will examine the literature and research on school improvement related to the four levels identified in this study.

### **National level**

The claim that the public audit and bench-marking of educational quality upon a national throughput model can and should promote much needed school improvement has become central to political rhetoric and the very existence of OfSTED (Cromey-Hawke 1998, p. 126).

The focus of this investigation is to determine the extent to which inspection impacts on school improvement rather than the initial issue of inspection for accountability. It may be that the tension between inspection and advice cannot be resolved within the rigid bureaucratic and centralised approach of OfSTED. As a vehicle for accountability, that is



judging a school against a set of national criteria and producing a clear report as a result, inspection is clearly understood and arguably effective. The move towards giving schools guidance and expecting improvement through the process, however, is more complex (Ferguson *et al.*, 2000 p. 147; Grubb, 1999, p. 82 ; Thomas, 1999, p. 136).

Earley (1996, p.12), states that:

*Improvement through inspection has to include both what happens at the individual school level and in the education system at large as a result of inspection... disentangling the effects of inspection from the myriad of other changes affecting schools over recent years is, however, one of the difficulties facing researchers.*

Matthews and Smith (1995, p. 29) suggest that there is growing evidence that the introduction of the inspection system, together with post-inspection action planning, is making a major contribution to school improvement. They quote from a number of surveys undertaken by OfSTED and claim that the major benefits of inspection include:

- *the value of having an external audit of achievements, strengths and weaknesses, providing information for parents and accountability for the expenditure of public money;*
- *the growth in confidence and morale resulting from affirmation of a school's quality and direction;*
- *the major impetus provided to focus thinking on aspects of the school which did not meet the Framework criteria and its power to act as a catalyst to accelerate policy review and staff development;*
- *the identification of areas for improvement, although some inspection reports still need to make these more clear.*

It is their assertion that the main platform on which developments will take place is seen largely through the identification of the 'Key issues for action' and the subsequent 'Action Plan' that must be produced by a school's governing body and published within forty working days of the receipt of the report, identifying the action to be taken by the school to address the issues identified by the inspection team. Whether or not a school's action plan coincides with the inspection team's Key Issues for Action is another matter (Broadfoot *et al.*, 1996 & 1999, Earley *et al.*, 1995).

Russell (1994, p. 58) recognises the potential of action planning for achieving significant change:

*...it holds within it the seeds of successful improvement. Pragmatically, and not inappropriately, the process of action planning deals with issues one at a time, and sets out the actions to be taken by individuals and small groups....It can increasingly become one where the culture amongst staff supports reflection and the improvement of teaching skills; one where people can be open about successes and failures; one where concerns and complaints can be raised...sometimes the mere process of inspection brings staff closer together and begins to make changes.*

It is clear from the research undertaken by OfSTED itself, (1995b, p. 3), that most schools made a very positive response to the key issues for action stated in the inspection report. The 1995 survey indicated that the majority of schools had:

- *addressed all of the key issues for action from the report (96%);*
- *made adequate preparation for their action plans (91%), which in a third of schools enabled work to commence on the plan before receipt of the published report;*
- *set out a clear timetable and identified the person responsible for each aspect (74%);*

- *and made discernible progress at an early stage in tackling some of the key issues in a way that was leading or likely to lead to improvement, by taking measures to improve teaching, raise expectations, address under-achievement or ensure that pupils had more positive attitudes to their work (61%).*

Interestingly, at that time, the report was stating that few schools were setting targets for the improvement of achievement; developing criteria or indicators against which to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed action plan in terms of raised standards; or assessing the full costs of resources to implement the plan. There has been considerably more emphasis by OfSTED on these issues over the past two years and a national approach to target-setting for improvement.

Thomas (1999, p.140) refers to the findings of the National Union of Teachers' survey in 1998, which concluded that:

*..Overwhelmingly, head and deputy headteacher members rejected the statement that OfSTED inspections led directly to schools improving. Two-thirds of respondents did not believe that inspections helped school improvement, whereas only 17 per cent agreed with this statement.*

Within 24 hours, OfSTED released the findings of the MORI Poll it had commissioned (Thomas, 1999, p. 140), which demonstrated that:

*Four schools in five were satisfied with the way the inspection was conducted, with more than two in five being very satisfied (OfSTED 1999).*

Thomas goes on to point out that the MORI survey also contained some negative points:

*Opinion was divided over whether the benefits of inspection outweighed the detrimental effects, with 35 per cent of schools thinking they did, 37 per cent reckoning there was a balance between the two and 27 per cent thinking inspection did more harm than good (page 1).*

Cullingford, Daniels and Brown, (1998, 1999), claim that inspection is pushing standards down. They contend that pupils are more likely to achieve five or more high grade GCSE grades in years in which their schools are not being inspected. It was reported that, on average, 40% of pupils achieved this benchmark in schools that had been inspected during their GCSE year. In schools that had not been inspected, the average was 52%. The researchers, who monitored 47846 pupils in 426 secondary schools, also claim that inspections carried out between March and June have a particularly damaging effect on the school's GCSE results. Inspections carried out at the beginning of the Autumn term had less impact on GCSE results.

If further research supports this, then inspection can be viewed as a hindrance rather than an active participant in the process of school improvement, although it does not exclude longer term improvement arising from the inspection and the Action Plan.

### **The local education authority**

The increasingly marginalised position of the local education authority (Evans and Penney 1994, p. 519-520) is a recurring theme throughout this study and this is reflected in the paucity of literature found on the role of the LEA in supporting school improvement. The Brunel University/Helix Study (1999, p. 131) concluded that there remained a need for further LEA support, especially in primary schools, but that 'fair-funding' policies had given them even less leeway for schools contending with inspection. They become limited to helping schools assimilate new government initiatives, action plans and focussed support for those schools requiring special measures. Even though LEAs frequently help schools to prepare for an inspection, there is increasing emphasis on supporting them after an inspection (Wood

1998, p. 38). The White Paper *Excellence in Schools* (DfEE 1997) describes a new and constructive role for LEAs:

*The role of LEAs has changed dramatically over the past decade. It is no longer focused on control, but on supporting largely self-determining schools. LEAs must earn their place in the new partnership, by showing that they can add real value...The leadership function of an LEA is not based on control and direction. It is about winning the trust and respect of schools and championing the value of education in its community (p. 69).*

Wood (1998, p.44) identifies seven major aspects of the LEA role:

- proceeding from shared values and established ways of working;
- stimulating and fostering a development culture;
- strengthening and sharpening the focus on improvement;
- nurturing and enabling a wider strategic view;
- a source of specialist advice and quality-enhancing strategies;
- promoting a synthesis of targets for action and promoting evaluation; and
- helping to take the strain.

It is not always easy to see where improvement in the quality of teaching fits within this framework; it is only towards the end of Wood's analysis that she highlights the value of feedback on classroom observation by a link inspector ' helping them to reflect on their practice and to formulate targets to effect necessary improvement in their skills as practitioners' (p. 49).

It is within the broader role, assisting with post-inspection support, that most LEAs now concentrate and it is within this area that most research has taken place. It is interesting to note, however, that most current research concerning OfSTED inspections and development planning (Cuckle *et al.*, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1999) emphasises the importance of the LEA in

developing strategy, yet are unable to identify any substantial action on the part of inspectors in helping to improve classroom practice. Indeed, the position of Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1995a p. 313) has changed little since this early research, when teachers felt increasingly side-lined by the inspection process and the support given by the LEA in preparation for it. Brimblecombe and her co-researchers (1995a, p. 313) report the stress induced by superficial one-day preparatory days given by the local inspector.

It is quite clear from the research of Aris *et al.*, (1998 p. 76) that LEA support should be decisive and interventionist and should focus on all levels in the school. But it should especially seek to improve the quality of teaching by working with managers to improve their monitoring and with teachers to improve their teaching.

### **The school**

Recent research into aspects of OfSTED inspections (Chapman, 2001) highlights the need for more research into the claims of *improvement through inspection* and echoes the conclusion of Earley *et al.*, (1996a/b). Whether or not such improvement occurs as a result of inspection is a highly contested question (Chapman 2001, p. 59). The substantial research of Ouston *et al.*, (1998) produced similar conclusions. These researchers saw the main impact of OfSTED as encouraging the implementation of changes which were already seen as desirable. Headteachers used the inspection as a tool to facilitate change both during the preparation phase and in the year afterwards (p. 78). Headteachers were reported as being reluctant to pursue recommendations that were not existing school priorities. Most significantly, Ouston *et al.*, (1998a p. 78-79) outline the variables which will influence the impact an inspection will have on individual secondary schools. These are summarised under the following headings:

Before the inspection is announced

- school culture, values and philosophy;
- the school's confidence in itself, its staff and its professional practice;
- the school's views of its own strengths and weaknesses;

- the state of the school before inspection, for example its position in the examination league tables and in the local education marketplace;
- its history of innovation before OfSTED and its position in the 'cycle of change';
- the school's relationship with its LEA;
- the role of the headteacher and the number of years he/she has been in post;
- its style of management, autocratic or collaborative, established or new;
- the quality and commitment of the staff.

#### Before inspection

- the school and its teachers' attitudes towards inspection, and whether it was seen as primarily for accountability, or to support development;
- the extent to which these meshed with OfSTED's values;
- the extent to which it felt under threat of 'failing';
- the length and use of the preparation period: perfection or good enough?
- the extent to which the school was proactive in contributing to the inspection agenda.

#### During the inspection

- the quality, and perceived quality, of the inspection process and the inspection team;
- the advice and support provided by the inspectors.

#### After the inspection

- the extent to which the report was seen as accurate, fair, comprehensive, justified by evidence and relevant;
- whether issues that were important to the school were appropriately commented on;
- the extent to which the key issues were achievable;
- the extent to which addressing the key issues was under the school's control;
- whether financial and other resources were available to support change;

- less controllable aspects of school life, such as staff turnover, funding, and changes in legislation.

As the researchers conclude, these are complex issues but were found to be consistent across the schools investigated. Many are reported to decrease in significance as schools become more confident with the inspection process. Ouston *et al.*, (1998a, p. 80) conclude that OfSTED inspections do make a contribution to school development, but that its effects are very dependent on both the school and the inspection team. Significant numbers of headteachers believed that OfSTED inspections made little impact on school improvement - ranging from 16-21 per cent, depending on the aspect under consideration.

The value of this research is the synthesis of factors exhibited by schools able to make the most of inspection as a guide for others. These are identified as:

- maintained a professional confidence and did not allow the inspection to intimidate them;
- established a good relationship with the registered inspector (RgI);
- understood about the twin purposes of OfSTED: accountability and development;
- ensured that they met the accountability criteria;
- used the opportunity to improve practice without creating excessive stress for teachers;
- noted poor inspection practice and brought it to the attention of the RgI;
- challenged the report if it was inaccurate;
- were realistic in deciding what should be done as a consequence of an inspection;
- made informed and strategic choices about actions to be taken;
- integrated plans resulting from the inspection with their previous plans;
- used the OfSTED report as a lever for change within the school and outside;
- assessed what was feasible;



- made professional judgements about what was right for their school at that time.

This key piece of research concludes that OfSTED inspections do have a positive impact on schools, but questions whether there are other more effective ways of helping schools to improve their practice and outcomes (p. 80).

If the above findings are superimposed on models of school culture, such as those described by Hopkins (1994 p. 15) or Hargreaves (1997, p. 241), the analysis and management of change for improvement becomes even more complex. The impact of inspection is thus modified by a range of factors (Bush and Coleman, 2000, p. 56).

### **The teacher**

It will be argued in later chapters that, without a commonly accepted framework of what constitutes effective teaching, the validity of judgements about classroom practice will always be problematic. It would seem that education now has a number of national models, which define the qualities of effective teaching:

- the competencies defined by the Teacher Training Agency;
- the OfSTED Framework (1999, effective from January 2000);
- the DfEE Framework produced by Hay/McBer, and effective from September 2000.

The very high cost of OfSTED was considered earlier, but the *Times Educational Supplement* (16 June 2000) estimates the budget for the DfEE commissioned Hay/McBer teacher competency exercise at £4M. The summary released to the press during mid-June 2000, states that effective teachers:

- *have high expectations;*
- *plan lessons well;*
- *use a variety of techniques to engage pupils;*

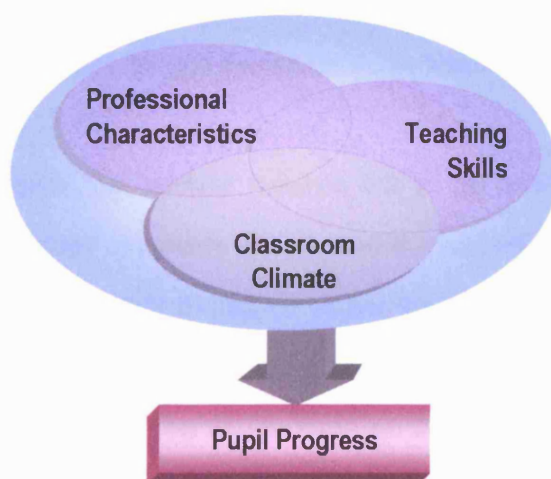
- *have a clear strategy for pupil management;*
- *use time and resources wisely;*
- *use a range of assessment methods;*
- *set regular homework. (TES 16 June 2000, p. 5).*

It is interesting that the summary of the key findings states that the research confirms much that is already known about the attributes of effective teaching. It goes on to state that it adds some new dimensions that demonstrate the extent to which effective teachers make a difference to their pupils. The authors claim to have found three main factors within teachers' control that significantly influence pupil progress:

- *teaching skills*
- *professional characteristics; and*
- *classroom climate.*

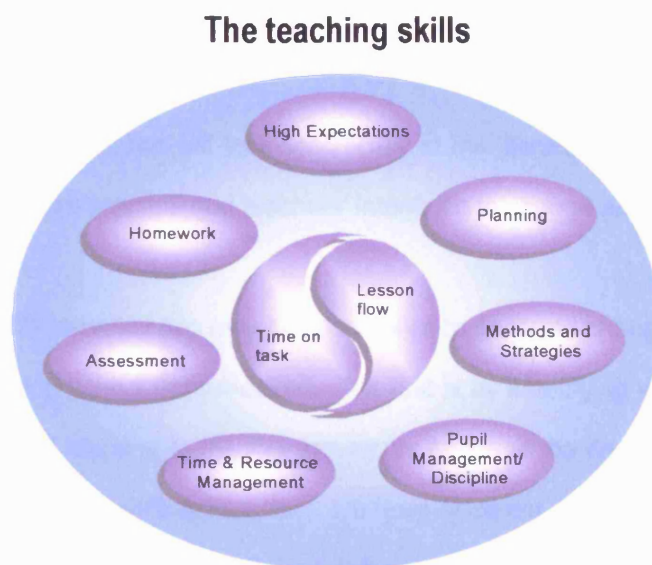
In case the reader did not quite understand that the three are inter-related, the following diagram in full colour is provided to help:

### The measures of teacher effectiveness



**Figure 2.4** Hay/McBer measures of teacher effectiveness

They refer to teaching skills as "micro-behaviours" and quote Reynolds' (2000 p. 9) 35 such skills contributing to the study's clustering of these under OfSTED's seven inspection headings:



**Figure 2.5 Hay/McBer Teaching Skills**

This is the only reference to OfSTED's criteria, but it establishes some link with existing frameworks. In addition to the micro-behaviours under the seven inspection headings, teaching skills can be observed in terms of the way the lesson is structured and flows, and the number of pupils who are on task through the course of the lesson (Hay/McBer 2000).

Davis (2001, p. 4) believes that political fortunes are to be linked to the viability of a commonly accepted technology of practice and he sees the teaching styles recommended by the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies as just the beginning of state influence on classroom practice. Essentially, the inability of most classroom observers to distinguish between performance and context lies at the heart of Davis' rejection of the Hay/McBer model. Nevertheless, inspectors do make judgements against a far simpler set of criteria and these form the basis of the reporting mechanisms devised by OfSTED.

Linking such complex sets of criteria to the variables identified by Ouston *et al.*, (1998b), and outlined above, could be used as a powerful argument for dismissing the whole notion of consistency when making judgements of quality within a standardised national system. Gilroy and Wilcox (1997, pp. 22-37) take the debate even further by applying a Wittgensteinian critique of OfSTED's claim to objective judgement. They argue that the social conditions being judged are so complex that consistent objectivity is impossible.

The remaining part of this section will look specifically at the literature concerning the impact of inspection on classroom practice and teachers' intentions to change as a consequence.

Chapman (2001, p. 59) identifies two major opportunities to generate change in the classroom which might impact upon school improvement. The first is by identifying whole school issues concerning teaching and learning in the Key Issues for Action at the end of the report as this should be reflected in the school's action plan. He does point out, however, that the absence of reference to teaching in the key issues does not mean that teaching is not a concern, only that it has not been identified as a serious concern. The second opportunity concerns constructive feedback to the teacher and the capacity this has to promote future improvement.

As an example of the first condition, Aris *et al.*, (1998, p. 69) when describing the recovery of a special school after inspection, describe how the staff reacted to the Key issue for Action: *Improve the quality of teaching and learning particularly in English and mathematics and raise teacher expectations overall*. Not surprisingly, teachers felt that they had not known what was expected of them during inspection and concluded that they needed a teaching policy - not a highly polished document, but one that would enable:

- teachers to analyse their teaching and set targets for improvement;
- the support team to make judgements about the quality of teaching against a set of criteria which teachers recognised as their own;
- teachers and evaluators to agree on the findings.

The basic eight OfSTED criteria were selected and teachers set about stating what characteristics they needed to exhibit to meet these. The answers enabled the teachers to:

- *know what was expected of them;*
- *begin to realise the things they did well;*
- *recognise the things they needed to improve;*
- *begin to acknowledge that they held some responsibility for the school's failure.*

The teaching policy proved to be a powerful tool in bringing about recovery and setting targets for improvement. This case study provides a valuable practical guide to improvement, which is not apparent in so much of the literature reviewed. Indeed, very few references could be found relating specifically to the impact of inspection on the improvement of teaching through the identification of key issues for action, although Hosker and Robb (1998) describe how the governors and staff of a recently inspected school began to target the improvement of teaching as the main priority in the school as a direct outcome of the inspection.

### ***Classroom observation***

The majority of the inspectors' time in school is concerned with lesson observation, yet the amount of training inspectors receive is minimal. For the most part, training involves the examination of video-taped lessons, the subsequent completion of observation forms and group discussion of the findings. All primary phase inspectors had to undergo distance-learning training in preparation for the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy during the Spring and Summer of 1999. The completion of a lesson observation form was the final exercise and this was graded by the examiner. Very little has been written concerning teachers' experiences of lesson observation, but letters to the TES and authors, such as Sandbrook (1996, p. 42), frequently point to the credibility factor involving inspectors' phase experience and their classroom demeanour. Teachers were more comfortable when they felt that the inspector 'blended into the background', that is, kept disruption to a minimum and

spoke with the children at appropriate times. Cullingford (1998, p.1) describes his research, demonstrating the negative effect of inspection on raising standards.

The evidence base for the attainment of the children, their progress and response to the lesson and, finally, the quality of the teaching is recorded on a lesson observation sheet. Inspectors comment on a range of teaching competencies, and judgements are based on the extent to which teachers (primary):

- show good subject knowledge and understanding in the way they present and discuss their subject;
  - are technically competent in teaching phonics and other basic skills;
  - plan effectively, setting clear objectives that pupils understand;
  - challenge and inspire pupils, expecting the most of them, so as to deepen their knowledge and understanding;
  - use methods which enable all pupils to learn effectively;
  - manage pupils well and achieve high standards of discipline;
  - use time, support staff and other resources, especially information and communications technology, effectively;
  - assess pupils' work thoroughly and constructively, and use assessments to help and encourage pupils to overcome difficulties;
  - use homework effectively to reinforce and/or extend what is learned in school.
- (OfSTED Handbook 1999 p. 46)

Limited guidance on using the criteria is given in the OfSTED Handbook.

The registered inspector maintains a record of inspectors' comments. It is part of her/his function to monitor the quality of the lesson observation forms. They form the focus of an HMI visit to an inspection during a routine monitoring visit.

The grades are fed back to teachers by way of a short de-brief at the end of the inspection week, although on-going dialogue with teachers is encouraged. The reporting of the quality of teaching in both the full report and the summary is prominent, with the percentage of satisfactory and unsatisfactory lessons being clearly stated. When the percentage of unsatisfactory teaching reaches ten per cent or more, the school may be in difficulty.

*Teaching overall is likely to be unsatisfactory if more than approximately one in ten lessons are so judged. If these contain poor or very poor teaching, or the proportion is higher than one in eight, you will need to consider whether the school has serious weaknesses. Once the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching reaches one lesson in five, it is very likely to be in need of special measures. If almost all of the teaching in the school is good, with much of it very good or better, and there is no unsatisfactory teaching, the overall quality of teaching could be judged very good because of the consistently good or very good teaching. (OfSTED 2000, p.48)*

In a small school, the absence of a good teacher replaced by a weak supply teacher during the week of the inspection can have a devastating effect on the teaching profile and raise enormous difficulties for the reporting inspector.

### **Feedback**

The quantity and quality of feedback vary from team to team (Grubb, 1999, p. 76, Chapman 2001, p. 69). Now that teachers are offered feedback on their lessons, it raises a significant issue regarding lessons where the quality of teaching is borderline between satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Before 1997, teachers were not given their individual grades. Ferguson *et al.*, (2000, p. 47) describe this as a serious omission causing confusion and resentment amongst staff. Inspectors must now make it quite clear why a lesson is graded as unsatisfactory and it is possible that the benefit of the doubt might be extended under such personal circumstances.

Feedbacks are offered to teachers at the end of the inspection week regarding the subjects/aspects for which they are responsible, along with the profile of the strengths and weaknesses of their own teaching during the inspection period. Although this should now be standard practice, Kent (2000, p. 30) describes how this did not occur for all staff during the recent inspection of his own primary school in south London. A written statement is provided within two weeks of the end of the inspection. Early research by Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1996a, p. 351) indicates the importance teachers attach to feedback. Similar findings were reported by Fidler *et al.*, (1994) and confirmed by Dean (1995). The present system of feedback with its accompanying practices has not yet been evaluated (Chapman 2001, p. 61), although Ferguson *et al.*, (2000, p. 48) describe teachers from their case studies reporting that feedback was usually insubstantial and failed to meet their expectations. It is evident that OfSTED has been striving to encourage better feedback: this is reflected in the latest guidance for inspectors (OfSTED 1999, p. 127)

*You (the inspector) should offer feedback to every teacher observed. The objective is to improve the teacher's effectiveness. You should try, whenever possible, to give first-hand feedback on the lessons you observe. The purpose is to let teachers know your perception of the quality of the lessons and the responses of the pupils: what went well; what was less successful; and what could have been done more effectively. Feedback should, therefore: identify the most important strengths and weaknesses in the teaching observed; provide clear reasons for what you judged to be successful or otherwise; ensure that points for development are identified.*

Ferguson *et al.*, (2000, p. 49) highlight the concerns of teachers who find the banding of good and satisfactory grades together unhelpful. Overall, their survey findings (p. 49-50) conclude that teachers appreciated feedback. Little research has taken place with regard to the validity of the grading system, especially since the issues were clearly raised by Fidler *et al.*, (1998b). This research was directed mainly at headteachers during 1996/7, at a time before formal feedback for all teachers was introduced in September 1997. The study did indicate that the



preparation for inspection contributed to school development (p. 259). Fidler *et al.*, (1998b) argue that there must be a *prima facie* case that the observations by inspectors should be of value to headteachers and teachers, but that the limited amount of observation time (to be even shorter in short inspections from January 2000) upon which teachers are to be judged suggests that reports need to be treated circumspectly. The researchers introduce the notion of false positives and false negatives which can arise when very brief observations lead to misleading and totally inaccurate judgements.

Lonsdale and Parsons (1998, pp. 110-125) describe a three year research project into the effects of inspection on school improvement and reach somewhat negative conclusions and, like Sandbrook (1996), see inspection in legal terms. They describe the very architecture of inspection as being like a criminal trial without counsel for the defence and where the best hope is for an acquittal. Of the reports examined, very few references were found to relate to the quality of teaching. At best, they report the nature of a report as 'empowering'; it helped the school to justify its existence to the wider world and the LEA. In many cases, teachers talked to them of the 'off-the-record conversations' that were reassuring and built self-esteem.

Lowe (1998, p. 97) introduces the notion of the effects of various discourses on influencing teachers' responses to inspection recommendations. He describes a discourse as 'all that can be said or written about a particular area of school activity'. The employment of a discourse enables the speaker to deploy knowledge in such a way which claims to be the truth according to its own criteria and it becomes the means by which power relations within a school, and between the school and external agencies, can be established and maintained.

*In this way central government is seeking to 'colonise' schools' discourses with OfSTED's view of school, based on the notions of standards, quality, efficiency, value for money and performance that are contained in successive OfSTED handbooks and inspection frameworks. (Lowe, 1998 p.97)*

Lowe (1998, p. 98) notes that discourses can originate from a number of sources and that this may generate tension. He concludes, as a consequence, that this must bring uncertainty into the implementation of inspection recommendations which impinge on teachers' core educational beliefs, such as recommendations concerned with teaching and learning.

The implementation of inspection recommendations concerning pedagogical issues appear to be the most problematic. Lowe (1998, p. 104) highlights the reluctance of headteachers to become involved in both monitoring and advising on teaching quality. Thus, recommendations, such as:

*use a wider range of teaching styles to encourage students to think for themselves;*  
*provide more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning;*  
*increase the monitoring of the work of teachers in the classroom....to identify good practice.....identify weaknesses..*

become extremely difficult to implement.

Teachers can be very anxious that false impressions might be gained of their work and this is probably the greatest cause of concern (Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1995b, p 59). Evidence by Fidler *et al.*, and Mortimore and Goldstein, to the Parliamentary Select Committee (1999) suggest the unreliable nature and consistency of inspectors' judgements. The research of Fidler *et al.*, (1998b, p. 264) discovered widespread discrepancies between inspectors' gradings and the schools' own judgements. The researchers, however, are quick to point out that inspectors' judgements are made under different conditions from those made by the school. The criteria for making judgements are not necessarily the same. Millett and Johnson (1998a&b), for example, have demonstrated the tension between experience and expertise in the approach of mathematics inspectors; do they bring what the authors describe as 'baggage' with them?

It is worth quoting the findings of Chapman (2001, p. 65) for they represent teachers' perceptions during the period 1999-2000, at a time when all teachers had been receiving feedback for a number of years and all schools were being inspected for the second time.

- 55 per cent of teachers perceived the feedback given by inspectors on their teaching performance to be useful;
- 25 per cent responded neutrally suggesting a modicum of ambivalence;
- 15 per cent thought the feedback unfair;
- about 50 per cent perceived it as a positive experience;
- there was considerable variation in the quality of feedback received;
- about 20 per cent felt that their practice would change as a result of feedback;
- some teachers felt that feedback had given them increased confidence.

The extensive research of Ferguson *et al.*, (2000) arrives at similar findings, even though their research was prior to the new regulations for giving feedback. The views of registered inspectors were also sought during this research. Only 50 per cent of registered inspectors thought that feedback was effective, with many of the comments emphasising that there remained limited time for feedback and that there was insufficient time to analyse and prepare feedback before the end of the week. They conclude that inspections were intense and busy times for inspectors, yet feedback requires detailed planning and the appropriate atmosphere for teachers to gain most from it. This is difficult to achieve during an inspection week. (p. 49). Whilst recognising the many achievements of OfSTED inspections, Ferguson *et al.*, (2000, p. 141) list 6 major imperfections in the current system:

- inspection is not an effective catalyst for school improvement in the pre-inspection period;
- inspection is not an effective catalyst for improvement in the immediate post-inspection period;
- the apprehension that inspection creates in schools causes many heads, teachers and governors to react inappropriately;

- the feedback given to teachers rarely has much effect on classroom practice;
- inspection does not do enough to foster the skills of self-evaluation;
- judgements may be unreliable and yet have serious consequences for individuals.

The advice of Earley and Fidler (1999, p. 61) was that feedback could be enhanced by greater opportunities for self-assessment and peer review. The creation of such opportunities, they argue, would be an effective approach to monitoring teaching quality, which is being encouraged by OfSTED, but found to be problematic by heads and teachers.

*If teachers kept a record of evaluations of the quality of their teaching, supplemented by notes from peer review sessions and a variety of other evidence, it would be possible for inspectors, during feedback sessions, to react to the results of self-assessment in light of their own observations.....Primary heads and coordinators monitoring visits to classrooms should be just one element in the larger programme of appraisal, peer review and self-assessment.*

The fact that this would be of use during an inspection is viewed as an incentive to teachers and, as the researchers point out, it all links with professional development and the self-monitoring of teaching quality against a set of criteria necessary to meet such mechanisms as threshold assessment introduced in 2000.

### ***Teachers' intentions to change their practice following inspection***

Chapman (2001) is one of the few researchers to report on the impact of OfSTED inspections on classroom practice and on teachers' intentions to change their practice, specifically since the earlier work of Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1995a p.13). Further studies by Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1996a) indicated that about 40 per cent of teachers intended to change their classroom practice as a result of inspection. It must be borne in mind, however, that there was little direct feedback to teachers at that time. Similar research by this team (1996b) indicated that men were more likely to intend to change their classroom practices than women. It should be

pointed out that intentions to change do not always equate with actual changes. The work of Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1995, 1996a/b) looked specifically at the intention to change at the teacher level, which contrasts with similar work (Fidler *et al.*, 1994-1999) that tended to concentrate on the views of headteachers and the intention to change at school level.

Chapman (2001, p. 69) concludes that positive attitudes to inspection on the part of a school and individual teachers are most likely to result in teachers accepting the feedback and using it to promote change in their classroom practices. In Chapman's study, 91 per cent of teachers stating that they would make changes in their practice, did so as a result of lesson feedback. Clearly, if feedback is so important in facilitating improvement, then greater attention should be paid to the quality of the experience. It is clear from this study that there is considerable variation in the quality of feedback, with most being short, non-formative positive reassurances of teaching quality, with few teachers receiving in-depth professional guidance.

### **The effects of stress**

The effects of the stress generated by inspection have been well documented (Wilcox and Gray 1994, p. 250-251 and Thomas 1996, p. 364). Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1995, p. 59-61) were among the first researchers to describe how stress can have a major impact on the experiences and outcomes of inspection and can also have far-reaching effects on teachers and the school as a whole. It is interesting that Male (1999, p. 256) refers to teachers suffering from the mythology of inspection rather than the actual experience itself. From her study of inspection in special schools, it appears that staff in special needs schools regard an OfSTED inspection as more stressful than those in mainstream schools. Her study shows that intense stress was suffered by 91 per cent of the teachers surveyed in the week before the inspection, but this dropped to 49 per cent during the actual week of the inspection. Even in those schools which were confident of a positive outcome, stress levels remained high. Case *et al.*, (2000), report high levels of increased illness associated with the stress caused by OfSTED inspections, both before, but particularly after a week of lesson observations. Jeffrey and Woods (1996, p. 353) refer to teachers' dehumanisation and deprofessionalisation

caused by OfSTED. Case *et al.*, (2000, p. 613) point out that the notion of deprofessionalisation is not simply a structurally useful explanatory concept. It is acknowledged as part of the contemporary teacher's day-to-day experience and is reflected in phenomenological accounts of their working lives. At this level, they conclude, deprofessionalisation covers a range of symptoms:

- *the removal of discretionary power in the area of pedagogy;*
- *constraints imposed on teaching practice by having to meet the exacting bureaucratic criteria of OfSTED in the area of school development plans, policies, schemes of work, planning documentation, benchmarking and so forth.*

The research of Case *et al.*, (2000) and others (Greenhalgh, 1996, Jeffrey and Woods, 1996, 1998, Woods and Jeffrey, 1998, Ferguson *et al.*, 2000 and Chapman, 2001) all conclude that OfSTED inspections result in teachers feeling that their professional status is under threat. They also see the new managerialism as the introduction of a set of alien values that conflict with their own (Case *et al.*, 2000 , p. 613).

## **Summary**

This review has sought to examine the literature available on the twin purposes of inspection: accountability and school improvement. The current position of inspection, as a facet of market accountability, emerged from Kogan's description of contrasting models of accountability. A review of the current literature revealed that the effectiveness of inspection for accountability purposes was generally accepted, but that the concept of improvement through inspection was largely unproven. Indeed, there are many critics who believe that inspections have a negative effect on standards. The claim of improvement of teaching through classroom observation and feedback was also unproven, yet research evidence suggested that when a school was receptive to inspection, teachers adequately prepared and having confidence in the team who gave them substantial and unhurried feedback, they were

most likely to make beneficial changes to their classroom practice. The detrimental effects of stress induced by inspection in teachers are supported by considerable empirical evidence.

The model of Becher and Kogan (1980) has been described in some detail, as it is used in the thesis to analyse the position and relationships of central government (OfSTED), the local education authority, the school and individual teachers as the four levels tiers of responsibility within the national approach to school inspection. Simkin's (1997) construct of power distribution has been added as a complementary framework to support the Becher and Kogan model.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

#### Introduction

This chapter outlines theoretical considerations and the role of research in education. Approaches to research are examined and the rationale explained for selecting surveys and documentary analysis for this investigation. The research instruments, details of which can be found in the appendices, are questionnaires, interviews and documentary analysis: the appropriateness of these is discussed. The chapter describes the framework of the investigation and the multi-level approach chosen to examine the inter-relatedness of the four tiers of responsibility within the process of inspection. Finally, consideration is given to ethical issues, and especially those of 'insider research'.

#### Research paradigms

Cohen *et al.*, (2000, p. 3) describe the concern of men and women to come to grips with their environment and to understanding the nature of the phenomena it presents to their senses.

*The means by which they set out to achieve these ends may be classified into three broad categories: experience, reasoning and research. Far from being independent and mutually exclusive, however, these categories must be seen as complementary and overlapping.*

The limitations of drawing only on our own immediate experience or from that of a considered expert are transcended by reference to a more scientific approach. Scientists, we are told, approach their problems in a more systematic way; hypotheses must be tested empirically. Burns (2000, p. 4) points out, however, that:

*Research in professional social science areas, like research in other subjects, has generally followed traditional objective scientific method. Since the 1960s, a strong*



*move towards a more qualitative, naturalistic and subjective approach has left social science research divided between two competing methods: the scientific empirical tradition and the naturalistic phenomenological mode.*

These two paradigms, the scientific and positivistic methodologies and the naturalistic and interpretive methodologies, are now supplemented by a third dimension, that of methodologies derived from critical theory. This third paradigm, recognises that education, educational research, politics and decision-making are inextricably linked. This study contains elements of both the scientific and phenomenological approach. For example, many of the research findings are quantifiable and can be represented arithmetically or graphically. Teachers' views on the effectiveness of the inspection process, however, necessitate a broader and more qualitative approach.

### **Approaches to research**

Considerable changes have taken place over the past twenty years in the ways in which researchers have sought to pursue plausible and objective explanations of problems or in addressing issues of current concern (Verma and Mallick, 1999 p. 3.). Johnson (1994) identifies a number of approaches to research, including surveys, case studies, documentary research, the experimental approach and non-reactive research. The following brief definitions are offered by her (pp. 13-35):

**Surveys** - eliciting equivalent information from an identified population

**Case studies** - an enquiry which uses multiple sources of evidence. It investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

**Documentary research** - relies primarily on the use of documents as a source of evidence. All documentary evidence is to some degree retrospective.

**Experimental approach** - the researcher puts forward an hypothesis of causal relationships between variables, that is, it is predicted that a change in one thing will bring about a change in another thing.

**Non-reactive approach** - is the exact opposite of the experimental approach. Instead, of the researcher seeking to 'plan experience in advance', the intention of non-reactive research is to use as data experiences and behaviour which are totally undisturbed by the research act.

### **Selection of approach**

This study seeks to investigate the extent to which the four tiers of responsibility, individual teacher, school, LEA and OfSTED, interact and can be seen to represent a coherent and systematic approach to the inspection of schools and the improvement of teaching quality. In particular, the study seeks to examine the relationships, at both normative and operational levels, using the Becher and Kogan model described in Chapter 2.

The research objectives seek to answer the following questions:

- Is inspection for accountability or advice?
- Are there policies and strategies for action?
- What use is made of collected data and how effective is feedback?
- Is there a systematic approach to improving teaching quality?

The research questions have been designed to inter-relate and test the existence of a common approach and accepted rationale for improving teaching quality through the process of inspection across all levels of the educational system. Does the rhetoric match the reality? The broad common areas identified in Chapter 1 have been sub-divided to probe more deeply into the initial generic questions. (See Appendix 2).

The results of the questionnaire from the pilot were considered alongside those of the final investigation to increase the sample number further where the questions were identical. Thus, the maximum number of teachers receiving a questionnaire was 394, of whom 231 responded (59%) (a detailed breakdown is given in Chapter 7). This meets the observation of Johnson (1994, p. 17) that surveys, using a standardised instrument, make it possible to reach a wide population.

Surveys and documentary research were considered the most appropriate approaches for this investigation. Surveys seek to elicit information from population samples from which generalisations can be identified, or trends established. Documentary research seeks to identify and analyse stated national and local approaches to the improvement of teaching through inspection. These two approaches contrast the normative and operational levels referred to above.

## **Research methods**

### **Documentary research**

Scott (1990, p. 112) defines a document as *any artefact which has as its central feature an inscribed text*. Such documents may provide information from the distant or more recent past. Johnson (1994, p. 25) describes how most documentary research relies on printed sources. Scott (1990, p.112) classifies documents according to whether they are personal or official and how they may be accessed i.e. closed, restricted, open-archival, or open-published.

Documents produced by governmental authorities, such as OfSTED or the DfEE, both at national or local level, comprise the single largest class of documents available to most researchers. Clearly, this study will draw heavily on the documents produced by OfSTED.

State documents encompass all the official publications, such as Acts of Parliament and the reports of House of Commons Select Committees.

## **Surveys**

Surveys have been in common use for most of the twentieth century. It is impossible not to be pursued by researchers in one guise or another at some time during the year, be it through television polls, product development, feedback on holidays, and so on. The information sought from a survey may be straightforward facts, attitudes or opinions at the time of the survey. Hoinville and Jowell (1978, p. 184), however, point out that:

*Surveys are not a reliable guide to the future. They should be regarded essentially as a means by which we can document, analyse and interpret past and present attitudes and behaviour patterns. By exposing trends, they will certainly provide clues about the future, but they are only clues.*

Most survey designs target a particular population. A census targets the whole population, whereas a survey seeks information from a sample, as in the present research.

## **Advantages and disadvantages of surveys**

Johnson (1994, p. 17) highlights the strength and popularity of surveys as being the value of designing a standardised instrument with which it is possible to approach a relatively large number of respondents. Survey findings can be generalised to a wider population, if probability sampling has been employed, or to identify trends when the sampling has a purposive element, as in this study. Surveys can produce very large amounts of data, which can be cross-tabulated in many ways to produce a large volume of description.

Weaknesses include the capacity for superficial response and the difficulty in probing a subject in depth. As questions must be unequivocal in meaning, responses will be fitted into a

limited range. Sensitive issues may generate a nil or veiled response. Survey interviews or questionnaires do not allow for the encouragement of reluctant participants. The scope for bias is wide if the sample is flawed.

The surveys produced a wealth of information, and trends were clearly identified through the quantitative data obtained. Many of the written responses in the questionnaire and interview schedule were considered superficial, with an 'axe-grinding' element frequently perceived. As all respondents were volunteers, it was not possible to assess the views of the potential, but reluctant participants.

### **The strengths and weaknesses of the documentary approach**

Johnson (1994, p. 26) summarises the advantages of the documentary approach as:

- *relatively low cost;*
- *brings together previously unrelated material;*
- *enables enquiry into past events/issues where there is no access to contemporary participants;*
- *increase knowledge by bringing to light material which has not previously had wide circulation;*
- *be an unobtrusive method of research;*
- *be of value in supplementing data collected by other means.*

Of these advantages, low cost was a relevant factor, with much material being readily available on the Internet, such as the report of the Select Committee, or individual school inspection reports. The analysis of the content of OfSTED policy documents could be related to the content of published school reports. The identification of the apparent mis-match between the stated aims of OfSTED (in its publications) and the perceived role of the system by the government (Select Committee Report 1999) became clear through this approach. The approach clearly supplemented the data collected through questionnaires and interviews.

Johnson (1994, p. 27) lists the weaknesses of the approach as:

- *documents and records are unlikely to have been prepared for purposes similar to those of the researcher;*
- *the acceptability of a document as a source of evidence cannot be taken for granted. It is essential to appraise the authenticity, credibility and representativeness of any document used in research;*
- *it may be difficult to establish the principles underlying classifications in official documents;*
- *administrative documents are not neutral reports of events. They are shaped by political context and cultural and ideological assumptions. (p. 27).*

It is true that the documents examined were not necessarily produced for the same purpose as this investigation, although successive HMCI reports refer to inspection improving the quality of teaching over time. Government documents are more likely to be representative documents in comparison with some of the teaching policy documents produced by schools and local education authorities. The political context and ideological assumptions were perceived to be present in a number of government reports examined. For example, HMCI has written - 'the proportion of lessons where teaching was good, very good or excellent has risen from 43 per cent in 1993/4 to 67 per cent in 1999/2000 ' (Tomlinson, 2001, p.10). As the figures are based on two different systems of evaluation under two *Frameworks*, such comparative figures are highly contentious, yet are offered as *de facto* in an official publication.

The following sub-sections outline the research methods and instruments selected to investigate the research questions within each tier (national, local, school and individual teacher).

**National tier:** As the national case has been promoted through the publications of OFSTED, such as the *Framework for the Inspection of Schools* and the *Annual Reports of Her Majesty's*

*Chief Inspector of Schools*, a documentary analysis approach was considered to be the most appropriate mode of investigation at this tier of responsibility. Essentially, this approach is at the normative level, using Becher and Kogan's model. One hundred reports from the four selected LEAs were examined and analysed in relation to their content on teaching quality. A semi-structured interview with a senior HMI was selected to provide an operational perspective. This also created the opportunity to link some of the themes being investigated in the other tiers of responsibility, such as OfSTED's use of the data collected on teaching quality during routine inspections.

**LEA tier:** This aspect of the research seeks to examine the role played by LEAs in the inspection process and its contribution to raising teaching standards. The investigation looked closely at how the information gathered from inspections was used to influence strategies for school improvement. The principal research instrument was an interview schedule, reproduced in summary in appendix 4. The documentation produced by four LEAs to guide schools, and the advice and support given to individual schools, were evaluated. The level and quality of support given to schools before, during and after the inspection were also evaluated. Interviews took place with the senior inspectors of the four selected local authorities. Documentary analysis of available LEA documentation took place.

**School tier:** Again, the approach is similar; documentation available for analysis was sought in an attempt to investigate the normative level. Interviews with members of the senior management teams of the ten sample schools supported the survey approach to provide data which linked to questions being asked within LEAs and OfSTED itself in an examination of the operational level. In the primary schools, this was always the headteacher, but in the secondary schools the interviews were a mixture of single interviews with up to four members of the senior team or, in one case, a panel comprising four senior teachers. This variation was due to the insistence by some secondary headteachers that at least four members were seen individually or together. All of the schools had been inspected by one inspection company and supporting data were available. Cohen *et al.*, (2000, p. 103) might consider this as purposive sampling, where the researchers handpick the cases to be included on the basis of their

judgement of their typicality. One hundred reports have been examined and an analysis made of Key Issues for Action relating to the quality of teaching as well as those relating specifically to the ten schools under detailed consideration. These ten schools were all selected from the four LEAs being investigated and the larger number selected to broaden the sample and give the outcomes greater significance. The interview schedule seeks to examine senior management teams' views on the effects of inspection on improving teaching quality. Similarly, the investigation seeks to determine the use the school makes of the data obtained from the inspection.

**Teacher tier:** In order to obtain a wide sample of teachers' views and experiences, a survey approach was considered the most appropriate. As Johnson (1994, p. 17) has pointed out:

*because the survey approach is standardised, there is little opportunity to explore subtleties of meaning.*

To counter this, interviews were sought with teachers selected from each of the ten schools. This section builds on the pilot scheme, which sought teachers' views on the value of feedback concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching in the observed lessons during the inspection. It probed more deeply into teachers' experiences of the process and effectiveness of feedback at an individual level. The principal instrument is the questionnaire, a copy of which is produced in appendix 3b. As with the pilot investigation, interviews were sought with teachers from each school as methodological triangulation with the results of the questionnaire.

## **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are frequently used as a survey tool. Johnson (1994, p. 37) describes the questionnaire as follows:



*The essence of a questionnaire, as a research tool, is that it is in the hands of the respondent and is completed by him or her.*

Youngman (1984, p. 156) points out that:

*Questionnaires are probably the most common method of collecting information. They are cheap to administer, can be sent to a large number of subjects and, provided they are well designed, are relatively easy to analyse. However, questionnaires are difficult to design. Finding the right words, the best layout and the method of distribution most likely to yield a good response is skilled work.*

An important feature of the questionnaire is its empowerment of the respondent who can choose whether or not to answer a question. The length and depth of the response is also in their control. This can have both advantages and disadvantages, especially when open-ended questions are set. Both Cohen *et al.*, (2000) and Johnson (1994) list other advantages of the questionnaire, including:

- they tend to be reliable as people are more likely to be honest when anonymous;
- economical of the researcher's time;
- can be mailed;
- easy to arrange and allow access to large geographical areas as the researcher does not have to be on site.

Disadvantages include:

- low percentage of return, typically 50-55%;
- respondents may interpret questions differently;
- questionnaires can be filled in hurriedly, therefore reducing the usefulness of the information;
- there is a tendency to use closed-questions for ease of analysis.

In this investigation, interview follow-up may not only reinforce the data obtained from the questionnaires, but offer a form of triangulation. It also allows the pursuit of more open-ended questions.

## **Interviews**

Wragg (1984, p.177) sees the major advantage of interviewing as its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up leads, probe responses, investigate motives and feelings, which a questionnaire can never do. He points out, however, that interviewing is the oldest and yet sometimes the most ill-used research technique in the world. Pitfalls include: interviewer bias, where the interviewer leads the respondent in the direction he/she consciously or unconsciously wants them to go; sample bias, where the sample is not random or representative; hired interviewers can fake answers; racial bias, where black students are claimed by Wragg (1984, p. 178) to respond differently to white or black interviewers; straightjacket interviews, which are too tightly structured to permit any latitude; and, respondent bias, where a particular view of a representative group is being promoted at all costs, rather than the views or experiences of the respondent.

In his description of political interviews and the politics of interviewing, Ball (1994, p. 96) warns of interviewees not always going along with the researcher's programme. He states that they try to carve out space for themselves, they push against his goals, his intentions, his questions and meanings. Similarly, Kogan (1994, p. 67) describes how difficult it was for him and Bush, his co-researcher, to keep control when interviewing powerful people (Bush and Kogan, 1982).

Cohen *et al.*, (2000, p. 268) describe the interview as serving three main purposes. First, it may be used as the principal means of gathering information having a direct bearing on the research objectives. Second, it may be used to test hypotheses or to suggest new ones; or as an explanatory device to help identify variables and relationships; and thirdly, the interview may be used to follow up unexpected results, for example, or to validate other methods, or to

go deeper into the motivation of respondents and their reasons for responding as they do.

Cohen *et al.*, (2000, p. 269) go on to describe four kinds of interviews:

- the structured interview - where the contents and sequence are determined in advance;
- the unstructured interview - an open situation, allowing the maximum flexibility and freedom;
- the non-directive interview - where control is placed in the hands of the respondent;
- the focused interview - focuses on the respondent's subjective responses to a known situation in which he/she has been involved and which has been analysed by the interviewer prior to the interview.

Salmon (1992, p. 12) concludes that answers can only be as good as the questions to which they were addressed. In research, it is the nature of the issues posed which governs the quality of the work's outcomes.

The interviews throughout this study are semi-structured; the sequence was determined in advanced, but a degree of openness allowed for some flexibility.

## **Sampling**

Blalock (1970, pp. 51-58) describes the concept of probability sampling. The procedures involved attempt to ensure that the sample obtained is representative and sufficient to validate the final conclusions.

The simplest kind of probability sample is the 'random' sample, where all combinations of persons have an equal probability of being selected. This means that the process of population selection must be particularly precise. It would be extremely difficult in the survey of teachers' response to feedback to meet this requirement in such a small-scale investigation.

Stratified sampling involves a random selected sample within each strata or group of individuals. This allows for comparisons between groups. In the case of this investigation, to compare the reaction of teachers within areas of responsibility or years within the profession might have been helpful.

The third type described by Blalock (1970) is referred to as cluster sampling and he states that this is the most practical one in large scale surveys. The process incorporates the random selection of populations identified within the stratified sample described in the previous type.

The method of sampling selected was a combination of those described. Completely random sampling was impossible due to the very large numbers of schools available and the limited resources of one person working alone. Using the purposive sampling technique, an element of randomness was used to select from the data available from one inspection company (over 250 inspections). Nevertheless, selection was guided by school and LEA type to ensure a more even representation, that is, cluster or quota sampling (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p. 101).

Teachers were selected on a volunteer basis and the aim was to interview at least two from each school. The headteachers were asked to seek volunteers and found no difficulty in finding willing participants. Although this might be regarded as convenience or opportunity sampling (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p.102), as teachers were being interviewed in their own time, willingness to participate was regarded as the most important factor in identifying interviewees.

### **Pilot study sample**

The sample selected for the pilot study was determined by the readily available data from the thirty-five schools inspected by one inspection company, Kensington Education Associates, during the Summer and Autumn of 1998. As the schools had been allocated by OfSTED, in the first instance, it could be argued that an element of randomness existed. Although this does not meet the strict requirements described by Cohen *et al.*, (2000, p. 90), the selection of sixteen schools from the thirty-five based on geographical distribution was considered to be

both representative and manageable. This was not totally arbitrary, as some schools were known to be uncooperative, whilst others were considered to be sympathetic to the concept of research. One secondary school, for example, had been placed in serious weaknesses by the company and had become hostile to the inspectors involved. Another had received a good report and its senior staff had been following a school-based MBA programme. The potential for bias is, therefore, clearly recognised. The survey participants in each school were volunteers, selected by the headteacher.

### **Final investigation sample**

The sample was selected on similar principles for the final investigation. Again, the selection was from schools inspected by the same company across four LEAs. Two of the LEAs were amongst the largest in England and Wales. This final study included interviews with senior local inspectors. In the case of the two large authorities, inspectors are responsible for very large numbers of schools, and the contrast with schools selected from two other smaller LEAs was considered valuable. The two small LEAs comprised one from an established large outer London borough and the other a new, but small, unitary authority. Thus, the sample was considered to be a small cross-section, not totally representative of all schools, but varied enough to meet the resources of an investigator working alone. In all, ten schools were selected from the four LEAs. These were selected by a disinterested third person (office secretary) to avoid 'insider bias' by the researcher. The reason to reduce the number of schools was due to the increased amount of investigation in each institution: this would now include follow-up interviews with more staff, including the senior management team and a representative from each of the four LEAs.

### **Sample size**

Cohen *et al.*, (2000, p. 92) emphasise the need to ensure that the sample size will actually represent the population under survey.

*Where simple random sampling is used, the sample size needed to reflect the population value of a particular variable depends both upon the size of the population and the amount of heterogeneity of the variable within the population. Generally, for populations of equal heterogeneity, the larger the population, the larger the sample that must be drawn. To the extent that a sample fails to represent accurately the population under survey, there is a sampling error.*

Clearly, it was very difficult to sample a sufficiently wide enough population to draw generalisable conclusions regarding the efficacy of feedback in such a small scale survey as the pilot and final study. Nonetheless, it was possible within this limited sample to indicate trends.

## **Research instruments**

Verma and Mallick (1999, p. 199) define research instruments as:

*Any technique or tool that the researcher uses to determine a value in terms of quality or quantity is called an instrument, for example, a questionnaire, an interview schedule, attitude scale, or achievement test.*

The final investigation will use questionnaires, interviews and a review of documents and data produced by OfSTED, local education authorities and schools.

## **Preliminary research design considerations**

The pilot programme was planned in late November 1998 and several draft questionnaires were trialed amongst ten volunteer teachers. These questionnaires were considered to be too long and the consensus was that it should be made as brief as possible, limited to one side of A4 and allow room for extra comment on the reverse of the sheet.

The one page questionnaire (appendix 3a) sought a limited response and the questions remained mostly closed, although space was given for qualifying comment. The comments would inform the construction of the interview questions in the follow-up to the questionnaire.

The final questionnaire (appendix 3b) to teachers draws on the experiences gained from the pilot:

- the initial questionnaire was cramped and has been extended to two sides;
- one or two ambiguous questions have been clarified.

An example of this was found in question v. The trial showed that *not applicable* was not understood and it was necessary to add some explanation; so that:

v. Was it made clear to you if a lesson was considered very good or better or less than satisfactory? Yes or No or not applicable. Please circle. Comment \_\_\_\_\_

became,

v. Was it made clear to you if a lesson was considered very good or better, or less than satisfactory? Yes or No or not applicable (not applicable means that the lesson was satisfactory or good). Please circle. Comment \_\_\_\_\_

### **Piloting of interviews**

Interviews were established with teachers in each school. At least two were interviewed in each, the maximum number being four. Because the interviews had to be after school in many cases, all of the staff concerned were volunteers. An element of skewing towards those who have an 'axe-to-grind' was inevitable and raises an important issue highlighted by Wragg (1984, p. 181). The self-selecting or opportunity sample, to use Wragg's term, is valid as long as the investigator states clearly the circumstances that led to the selection. In this case, the headteachers sought volunteers from the staff. It appeared that most had a particular point to make, indicating a measure of bias.

In order to widen the review of inspection reports across the four LEAs, a total of 100 were selected randomly, from a list of schools on the OfSTED inspection database accessible through the Internet. The selection was made by an independent third person. Included within the sample were the ten schools selected for questionnaire and interview survey.

### **The pilot study**

The following information was sought in the pilot study:

- length of service - to test whether experience was a factor in determining teachers' receptiveness or the value they derived from the process;
- phase and subjects taught - to test whether the process is considered to be more effective in primary or secondary schools and within specific subject areas;
- the options open to teachers when offered feedback;
- how well teachers were prepared for the process;
- the effectiveness of the organisation of feedback;
- the effectiveness and value of the feedback and did it set an agenda for improvement?;
- how the process could be improved.

### **Pilot study findings**

Fifteen schools were selected, two of them secondary, the others, primary. They were selected from a broad geographical area in the South of England. They were chosen from 80+ schools inspected annually by Kensington Education Associates. The number of primary schools was greater due to their smaller size. The total number of teachers in each phase was approximately the same. A questionnaire survey (see appendix 3a) was selected as this was considered to be the most effective way of collecting a large amount of data with the minimum amount of disruption. Interviews were sought with a sample of teachers from each school to provide methodological triangulation.



The questionnaire produced a very large amount of data and was, therefore, considered to be a valuable tool for making a preliminary investigation into teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of feedback. Overall, some feedback was generally considered to be better than no feedback and this was, therefore, an improvement on earlier inspections. The problem of sample size, examined by Cohen *et al.*, (2000), would need to be considered before a wider sample could be sought, although, on this occasion, the amount of data retrieved was considerable and the response rate of 54.8% (despite the questionnaire being sent out in December) was in line with expectations cited by Johnson (1994).

The context questions confirmed that the sample covered the breadth of teacher background. The process questions produced useful data. For example, there was general satisfaction that the process had been explained and was well understood by most teachers. Teachers, overall, felt well prepared for inspection and for receiving feedback.

The value of the process, however, drew the greatest variation in response, with considerable differences between teachers in the two phases, with 73% of teachers in primary schools and 55% in secondary schools believing that the process helped them to understand their strengths and weaknesses; clearly there is a problem with those who did not. The proportion is high and worthy of further consideration. Similar figures reflect those teachers who thought that the process was clear and analytical. Of the overall value of feedback, 26% of teachers thought the process very valuable and almost two-thirds, of some value. There were clear indicators of areas where improvements could be made.

The study overall, generated a greater understanding of research techniques and the difficulties of analysing a large amount of data. The interviews confirmed the conclusions drawn from the questionnaire, and established a greater understanding of the process and value of triangulation. It was, however, a very time consuming exercise.

Some of the views of teachers regarding the process and value of feedback are very negative and indicate that considerable refinement of this aspect of inspection is necessary if the practice is to continue.

The methodology employed highlighted a number of areas for improvement. The sample size was sufficient to indicate trends. Youngman's view (1984, p. 156) that large amounts of data can easily be collected through questionnaires is valid, although the problem of ambiguity noted by Cohen *et al.*, (2000, p. 249) was experienced in one or two of the questions. The interviews were extremely time consuming, but did support the information gleaned from the questionnaire analysis. It also gave the opportunity for teachers to expand on several of the questions. The selection of the teachers in the final sample needed to be better controlled. Many who volunteered had specific and mostly negative points to make and this raises issues of representativeness.

Overall, teachers found the feedback to be of value, but not of high value. Too many of the comments were negative, the overwhelming limiting factor being one of time. If the process is to be more than tokenistic it requires considerable investment in inspector training and the addition of extra days during the inspection to debrief teachers fully.

Analysis of the interview responses supported the findings of the questionnaire evaluation. It was possible to probe certain areas more deeply, however, for example how the process could be improved. The following points were raised:

- feedback overall was too brief;
- it was insufficiently analytical;
- too much variation in the ways inspectors approached feedback;
- main points were lost in general discussion;
- no overall strong view that feedback has helped to improve teaching.

Details of the findings of the pilot study will be presented in the ensuing chapters alongside the final study findings.

## **Reliability, validity and triangulation**

Validity, in the sense of research design, is essential to demonstrate that a particular instrument does in fact measure what it purports to measure. As this study has both qualitative and quantitative aspects, the issue of validity is significant. Qualitative data always contains a measure of standard error and it is impossible for 100 per cent validity to be achieved (Cohen *et al.*, 2000 p. 105). Validity was strengthened through the refinement of the questionnaire after the pilot study and the extent to which interviews were conducted to support methodological triangulation. Throughout the study, the extent to which respondent bias and the researcher's own objectivity contributed to the validity of the findings was a constant consideration. The validity of the quantitative aspects of the investigation can be established through the cross-match of questionnaire data with that obtained through the interviews.

The reliability of the exercise was considered during the comparison of data obtained from the pilot and the final study. The use of open-ended questions can give the respondent a way of demonstrating his/her unique view of the world, but they are prompted by the form of the question and the context in which it is given. Oppenheim (1992, p. 96-97) suggests that bias during interviewing is a major contributor to unreliability. During the construction of the instruments and the following interviews, care was taken to: avoid biased sampling; establish good relationships and rapport with the respondents; keep to standard wording during the interviews; avoid biased prompting; not altering the sequence of questions; code the responses consistently; and, avoid leading questions, which put words in the respondents' mouths.

## **Ethical issues**

Care was taken that participants were fully aware of the nature of the investigation and what contribution it sought to make to an understanding of the effects of inspection on improving teaching quality. In other words, they had given, what Cohen *et al.*, (2000, pp. 50-51), refer to as informed consent. Although it was necessary to gain the confidence of the headteachers

of the schools selected in the first instance, governing bodies were not involved and, in ethical terms, this may be considered an oversight. In practical terms, however, the amount of time involved in seeking an understanding by governing bodies, would have been excessive and possibly unproductive. The senior officers in each local education authority were aware of the aims of this investigation, but were not involved in the selection of the schools.

All participants were offered complete anonymity and were given assurances that the information they provided would be treated in the strictest confidence. It was stressed that the investigation was part of the researcher's higher degree studies and that schools would receive a summary copy of the final report and access to the full study should they wish when the study was complete. All participants were assured that this exercise was an attempt to explore a particular aspect of educational management and make a contribution to the understanding of the effects of inspection on school improvement.

Half of the schools surveyed had been inspected during the preceding two years by a team of inspectors led by the researcher. In this respect, it might be considered that this was 'insider research' as there was considerable prior knowledge of half of the schools involved in the study. The problems associated with insider research are considerable (Bell 1987, p. 42), but by developing the sensitivities outlined by her, many of the pitfalls were avoided, such as: ensuring that the head teacher was very clear about the purposes of the investigation and that the school would receive a summary copy of the final report; strict confidentiality and anonymity were assured; that the outcome of the investigation would help to improve the inspection practices and contribute to the wider debate on inspection effectiveness. Johnson (1994, pp 9-11), highlights a number of advantages of insider research, including:

*You already have a colleague relationship with some of the people involved in these management issues, whether they are on the receiving end of hierarchical management edicts, drawn into decision-making on a collegial basis, or fulfilling an unequivocally executive role.*

This classification is only partially appropriate to this study, as the researcher did not have a close on-going relationship with any of the schools after a brief period of intense involvement (the inspection). The term insider research is usually applied to that carried out by teachers within their own institutions; they are, therefore, much closer to their colleagues. Anderson, *et al.*, (1994) use the term 'practitioner research', that is, insider research being done by practitioners working in educational settings. The position of this research possibly lies somewhere close to the two. Having some knowledge of the institutions under scrutiny was an advantage, but the possibility of subjectivity is clearly an issue.

It was essential that reassurance be given to those concerned that the prior knowledge of the researcher would not prejudice the investigation. This did not appear to be a problem, but it was felt that some of the teachers interviewed exhibited a certain deference and an apparent desire to give what might be considered favourable responses. It was as if they were being inspected again, rather than their views sought to aid a piece of research. In a sense this highlights the tension associated with the whole inspection process, teachers being unable to disassociate themselves mentally from the stress of inspection, which was possibly re-generated during this research. To the teachers concerned, the researcher was still very much the outsider and representative of a judgmental hierarchy. Nevertheless, many of the schools were developing what Harris, (2001, p. 262), refers to as the building of an internal capacity for change and development. She emphasises the importance of the external change agent in applying both pressure and support to promote school improvement. Teacher collaboration is at the centre of school improvement (Harris, 2001, p. 262) and, to a degree, this investigation made a small contribution in helping to promote teacher understanding of the inspection process.

## **Summary**

The framework of the investigation relates to four tiers: national, local, school and individual teacher.

Of Johnson's (1994) described methods, the questionnaire used in the pilot study did produce a very large amount of data and was, therefore, considered to be a valuable tool for making a preliminary investigation into teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of feedback. It has been extended and adapted to suit the current investigation.

The problem of sample size, considered by Cohen *et al.*, (2000), has been reviewed and a wider sample sought, although, in the pilot investigation, the amount of data retrieved was considerable and the response rate (despite the questionnaire being sent out in December) was in line with expectations cited by Johnson (1994).

In the main investigation, which draws on the experiences gained during the pilot study, the case has been made for selecting surveys and documentary research as the two appropriate approaches. Questionnaires to the 394 teachers in 25 schools have provided data for a substantial analysis of teachers' responses to OfSTED's claim that inspection improves teaching quality. Interviews with teachers provided further data to triangulate the outcome of the questionnaire survey. Interviews and documentary analysis were selected to investigate the levels of responsibility of senior management teams, local authorities and OfSTED itself.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Presentation of findings - National tier.**

#### **Introduction**

A review of current literature relating to inspections (Ferguson *et al.*, 2000 and Cullingford *et al.*, 1999) indicates the extensiveness and scale of the national system of school inspection. Ferguson *et al.*, (2000, p.11) highlight the fact that there are more than 18600 state funded primary schools, around 1000 special schools and over 3600 secondary schools in England, and between September 1993 and July 1998 all were inspected using the common framework available to schools. Their research demonstrates that the majority of schools were satisfied with their inspections and believe that the process has helped them to improve. This chapter complements the outline of the major government policies reviewed in Chapters 1&2. It looks specifically at the reports produced by OfSTED and how these might influence the improvement of teaching quality. The outcome of an interview with a senior HMI provides evidence at the operational level.

#### **Government policy and a review of current national strategies.**

#### **Inspecting teaching quality**

The review of the literature indicates that teaching quality is to be judged against a set of criteria outlined in the three *Frameworks* 1993, 1995 and 2000) published by OfSTED to date. Implicit in each of these is the presumption that inspection will improve the subsequent performance of teachers.

The following extracts indicate how these criteria have developed over the past seven years.

## **OfSTED Frameworks**

Teaching was regarded as a contributory factor to the overall quality of education provided by a school. In a sense, it underplayed the importance of teaching. Inspectors were trained to emphasise during the early inspections that the focus of classroom observation was the attainment and progress of the children and not the teaching. (Source - training material produced for initial cohort of inspectors 1993).

Thus, the hastily produced first Framework, under Section 7.1 Quality of Teaching, Evaluation Criteria, teaching quality was said to be judged by the extent to which:

- teachers have clear objectives for their lessons;
- pupils are aware of these objectives;
- teachers have a secure command of the subjects;
- lessons have suitable content;
- activities are well chosen to promote learning of that content;
- teaching methods engage, motivate and challenge all pupils, enabling them to progress at a suitable pace, and to be aware of their achievements and progress.

Apart from lesson observation, additional evidence was to be sought from: documents related to the planning of work; forecasts; lesson plans and individual notes; teachers' records of work done by pupils; the nature and contribution of homework; role(s) of special support assistants; input from visiting specialist teachers; individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

The report should include:

- the quality of teaching provided and the effects of its strengths and weaknesses on the quality of learning and standards of pupils' achievements;



- the effectiveness of lesson planning;
- teachers' knowledge of the subjects;
- how well the work is matched to pupils' attainments and abilities;
- whether teachers' expectations of pupils are appropriately high.

Further guidance is offered in another section entitled: *Amplification of evaluation criteria*.

The *Framework* was extensively revised in 1995 and the quality of teaching was placed in a more prominent position under Section 5: *The quality of education provided*. Further guidance was offered and there was some expansion to the previous criteria for making judgements.

By January 2000, the Framework had been revised yet again, with strict guidance on what constitutes success and failure. In the past, 90 per cent of lessons with satisfactory or better teaching was considered satisfactory overall. Prior to the new 2000 *Framework*, an unsatisfactory teaching percentage of more than 15 per cent across a school was considered a factor in judging the school to be failing or having serious weaknesses. Successive HMCI annual reports indicate that teaching standards are rising (source 1998/99 report), but standards of achievement, as measured by standard tests at the end of key stages 1-4, are still below government targets. This has raised a paradox: How can teaching standards be satisfactory overall and rising, yet standards of achievement fall below government targets? Is it because government targets are becoming too ambitious or unrealistic?

The 2000 *Framework* states that;

*Teaching overall is likely to be unsatisfactory if more than approximately one in ten lessons are so judged. If these contain poor or very poor teaching, or the proportion is higher than one in eight, you will need to consider whether the school has serious weaknesses. (page 48).*

The 2000 *Framework* draws similar conclusions with regard to the consistency in reporting two other related areas, teaching and leadership and management. Excellent leadership and management, for example, do not sit comfortably with teaching which is simply satisfactory with a few good lessons (page 48).

#### **Interview with Head of Inspection Quality - OfSTED - March 2000**

**To what extent has OfSTED shifted its position on the purposes of inspection i.e. accountability v. improvement? What is the latest position/view. Is the shift reflected in the new *Framework*?**

The position was stated to have changed little since the first *Framework*. The first purpose is to inform parents and those who make policy. The Mori survey in 1998 indicates that feedback on teaching has been welcomed and that teachers feel that the process is helping them to reflect on their work. (In fact the survey concluded p. 13:

*....few see inspection as providing a means of improving teaching).*

**To what extent does inspection improve the quality of teaching and what evidence does OfSTED have to support the claim: *improvement through inspection*?**

HMCI reports each year an improvement in teaching standards. The data collected from schools is extensive. In the Chief Inspector's report for the Year 1998/99, it was stated in Annex 1 (Inspection evidence), that there were 4520 inspections - although no official figures could be obtained, based on approximately 100 lesson observations per school, this gives a total of over 45000 grades from which to determine that teaching standards are rising. It is not unreasonable to conclude that the inspection process is raising teaching standards.

**The New Framework contains significantly more guidance on what to look for when assessing teaching quality - what influenced the expansion of this aspect?**

OfSTED needed to be increasingly precise in its guidance on measuring teaching quality. We now have a tried and tested model of what constitutes good quality teaching and what are the characteristics of unsatisfactory teaching. The examples are considered to be useful to inspectors, but are also invaluable to schools in determining the criteria for measuring quality. The movement is clearly towards more self-evaluation using common and shared criteria. The Teacher Training Agency has 286 competencies and this is a very large number to be used for monitoring purposes.

**Is OfSTED guided in the choice of criteria by a model of teacher competencies and will there be a move towards a national model?**

The new Framework criteria represent a national model. OfSTED believes that the clarity of the section on inspecting teaching quality will become a benchmark for both external and internal evaluation of quality. Its use by LEAs is still patchy, but will be central to the new approach to school self-evaluation.

**Apart from informing HMCI's annual report, where overall grades are reported, what other uses are made of these data?**

Much of the data is used to inform the answers to parliamentary questions. The data are used to inform the selection of schools for short inspections. The data are available to the Teacher Training Agency. (It did not appear that the data were used in any other published format. It was said that OfSTED makes its database available to researchers, but no records could be produced to substantiate the level of use).

**The NQT's place of initial training is recorded on each lesson observation form - how is the data obtained on teaching quality used? Is the data used to measure ITT output quality?**

An answer to this question was not readily given. It would seem that the Research and Statistics section at OfSTED might be able to answer this question, but none was forthcoming.

**Is training for would be inspectors more rigorous than it was in the past? Is it possible to train inspectors adequately in such a short space of time?**

Training provision has been monitored very closely for many years and standards are considered to be good. There has been some emergency training, but the number of qualified team inspectors remains at about 8000. Market forces have selected the better quality inspectors; the weaker ones are not re-employed by inspection contractors.

**What confidence is there in the present system of monitoring the grades awarded by team inspectors? How rigorous are HMI monitoring procedures?**

An increasing number of monitoring visits takes place and much time is spent checking that lesson observation sheets are completed correctly. The registered inspector is given feedback on the overall quality and whether or not the text entry matches the grade given. OfSTED hopes to monitor one in three inspections in the future. The registered inspector and contractor are expected to monitor their own inspectors in a rigorous manner and OfSTED looks for evidence that this is taking place.

**What was the outcome of the voluntary dual lesson observation project. Was it reported?**

This is a controversial question and one which opponents of OfSTED seize upon when questioning OfSTED methodology. (For example, Fitz-Gibbon {1998, p 202} questions

whether inspectors can *independently* arrive at the same set of judgements - as inspectors rate lessons numerically, can we know the inter-rater reliability? Schagen and Weston (1998, p.344) raise the same issue. No further comment was offered by the HMI.

## **House of Commons Select Committee**

Interestingly, the issue of judgement reliability and validity in the previous section was raised by the House of Commons Select Committee, and reported by the Education Sub-Committee (Fourth Report 1999 paras. 125-129):

*The difficulty of ensuring the validity, reliability and consistency of judgements made by a large number of individual observers across a national system should not be under-estimated.....The point of reliability was considered in some detail by OfSTED in the research they undertook in 1996, in association with the Dutch inspectorate of schools (Matthews et al., 1998), into the reliability and validity of judgements made by inspectors in their observation of lessons.... The research addressed i) the extent to which pairs of inspectors observing the same lesson agree about the grade to be awarded to the teacher ii) how well do teaching grades awarded by inspectors match their recorded evidence. The research found that that in 33 per cent of cases, the pairs of inspectors awarded different grades after observing the same lesson. In the majority of cases, the pairs of inspectors arrived at judgements which were one grade apart, for example, one grade a lesson '3' another '4'. However, in 3 per cent of cases, the difference was 2 grades. The statistical correlation between the two sets of inspectors was  $r=0.81$ . The research describes this level of correlation as 'reassuringly high'.*

Mortimore and Goldstein, both of the Institute of Education, University of London gave evidence to the Select Committee. Mortimore did not support the view that the level of correlation was high. Goldstein highlighted that at the boundary between grade 4 (satisfactory) and 5 (less than satisfactory) - in his words, the failure boundary - only two-

thirds of inspectors in OfSTED's research arrived at the same judgement. He concluded that on this crucial point OfSTED's judgements were not very reliable.

The Select Committee concluded, after hearing the evidence, that more research was indeed required to establish the reliability and validity of lesson observation data. Currently, OfSTED has no plans to conduct this.

### **The annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI)**

As mentioned previously, the statistics fed into the OfSTED mainframe computers, appear to be used principally to inform the HMCI's Annual Report and answer parliamentary questions. Other than in OfSTED publications, little other use was found for the data, especially by academic researchers. Reference to the most recent HMCI's Annual Report (1998/99), published in February 2000, indicates that references to the quality of teaching are limited.

### **Summary**

Teaching quality in individual lessons is judged against a set of national criteria stated in the current Framework for the inspection of schools. Although these are not competency based, as are qualities defined by the Teacher Training Agency, they become regarded as such because of their status within a national system of inspection. The considerable amount of data on teaching collected by OfSTED is used to inform Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools' Annual Report and meet the requirements of parliamentary questions. Little evidence was found that indicated their application elsewhere. Although the HMCI's reports indicate that the quality of teaching is rising each year, schools are failing to meet national targets for improvement in pupils' performance. The most recent *Framework* (2000) emphasises weaknesses that render teaching unsatisfactory even though most of the other success criteria are met.

Evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee by Mortimore and Goldstein (1999) suggests that the reliability and consistency of inspectors' judgements regarding the quality of teaching is suspect. Substantial research evidence to support OfSTED's claims is not available, the last being commissioned by OfSTED itself and reported in 1998 (Matthews *et al.*).

## **Chapter Five**

### **Presentation of findings - Local tier**

#### **Introduction**

The role of the LEA has undergone considerable change over the past ten years, with a reduction in central funding for its inspection and advisory services. Many are under attack from politicians and some, having failed OfSTED inspections, have had to employ external agencies to improve the services they offer to schools (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1998/9). Documentary evidence concerned with the improvement of teaching was sought within four LEAs, but none was made available. The documentary evidence in this chapter is drawn from OfSTED reports. Interviews with four senior LEA inspectors, chosen as they had been linked to the schools selected for the investigation, and drawn from two large shire authorities, a well-established outer London borough and a new unitary authority, provided most of the other evidence presented.

#### **OfSTED's recent reporting of LEAs**

Between September 1998 and September 1999, OFSTED, with the assistance of the Audit Commission, inspected 29 local education authorities, by virtue of HMCI's powers under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. By September 1999, 25 reports had been issued and four were pending.

The conclusions drawn by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, in his Annual Report 1998/99, demonstrate that the support given by LEAs to schools is varied. So far, four LEAs (Hackney, Islington, Liverpool and Leicester City) have been failing to such a degree in the performance of their functions that the Secretary of State has intervened. A further 12 have



received critical reports, requiring urgent action. The report states that the other LEAs are giving effective support to schools.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 laid on LEAs a duty to discharge their functions with *a view to promoting high standards*. This gives legislative force to the Government's intentions for LEAs set out in the White Paper *Excellence in Schools* (1997). The LEA's role is to challenge and support them in setting and attaining high standards. The evidence before OfSTED leads the report to conclude:

*There is, as yet, no sign that LEAs are directly responsible for an overall rise in standards. (para 378)*

The report goes on to state:

*The largest single factor influencing the effectiveness of LEAs in support of schools was the variable quality of inspection and advice services. In half the LEAs inspected the quality of inspection and advice provided was deemed sufficiently weak to justify a specific recommendation. This was true in some high performing LEAs, such as Newham. (para 381)*

There is no evidence in the report that any one LEA is providing a systematic analysis and accompanying support system for the improvement of teaching quality in any of its schools. In fact, the annual report refers to weaknesses in about half of the LEAs' capacity to challenge schools in any meaningful way. More frequently, particularly in secondary schools, advisers lack management experience at a sufficiently senior level to carry conviction.

## **Findings from interviews with four senior LEA inspectors.**

**To what extent has the LEA shifted its position on the purposes of inspection? How influential has OfSTED been?**

All four inspectors described the dramatic effect the introduction of OfSTED had on the local inspection and advisory service. As one senior inspector put it:

*As soon as OfSTED announced that the four year inspection cycle was to begin, our local inspection programme ended immediately. (Inspector, shire county)*

Most had not recovered since the effects of 'top-slicing' government grants to LEAs to finance OfSTED, which began in 1993. The effect of top-slicing was to undermine the inspection and advisory services of many LEAs. The remaining staff were under pressure to qualify as registered and team inspectors and undertake inspections, most frequently in other authorities, in order to maintain and develop their professional status. In one LEA, a separate unit was formed to generate income from inspection.

The senior inspectors all referred to the constant pressure they felt they were under. The inspector of one large shire county reported that he was personally responsible for over forty schools, several of which were in special measures and required constant and time-consuming support. They were all struggling to meet what they describe as the ever-demanding requirements of the DfEE and OfSTED.

They felt that OfSTED did, however, offer a national framework for monitoring quality.

*OfSTED has offered us a framework and set of benchmarks which help us to give better advice and support. (Inspector, unitary LEA)*

All had adopted the *Framework* and this was used by all link inspectors/advisers.

There was regret that local inspections of schools by the LEA were no longer possible, or were limited. They felt that much of their time was now spent on helping schools to prepare for an inspection and assisting them with the action plan when the inspection had been completed. Nevertheless, they all emphasised the limited amount of time they had available to do the job properly. The LEA was forced to concentrate its efforts on schools with problems. As one senior inspector commented:

*I spend a considerable amount of my time supporting weak schools at the expense of those receiving satisfactory or good inspection reports. (Inspector, shire county)*

They reported low morale within local support services and the feeling that they were often made the scapegoats of the system. They did not feel supported by OfSTED and felt that there remained considerable political pressure to limit the influence and work of LEA support services.

Increasingly, they felt able to communicate with inspection teams through the registered inspector or contractor and all gave examples of times when they intervened in difficult situations.

*I found it necessary to contact the contractor when a registered inspector was clearly creating a number of problems within our local schools. I am glad that I did, as matters started to improve in subsequent inspections. (Inspector, outer London borough)*

**To what extent can the members of an inspection team be both judges and advisers.**

**How has the LEA overcome this conflict?**

Conflicts between the two functions existed in all the authorities questioned. It was natural to offer advice and that inspectors/advisers needed to understand which hat they were wearing. They did not feel that schools suffered from confusion or resented the dual role.

*Conflict between the two functions does exist, but our natural instincts are to give advice.* (Inspector, shire county)

There is a tension between judging a school and seeking information to support and help it develop. For example, the school should divulge information about management concerns, in order that the representative from the LEA can understand the problems and help to facilitate a solution. This is perceived by schools to be problematic if the adviser will then use this information to make a judgement about the aspect of school life under consideration, such as leadership and management. (The same tension exists during an OfSTED inspection).

Schools still regard the LEA as a critical friend and source of support, especially at senior staff level, during periods of difficulty. All interviewees described the over-dependence of some headteachers with regard to the support they sought.

Mention was made of the variation in the quality of OfSTED inspection teams.

*In our experience, as LEA advisers, inspection teams vary widely and some make very harsh judgements.* (Inspector, outer London borough)

Overall, all four inspectors thought that inspection and advice could co-exist if certain sensitivities were applied. That Barking and Dagenham advisers bid for the inspections of their own schools was quoted by two of the interviewees. They did not consider this to be a healthy situation, as the inspectors were evaluating the outcomes of their own advice. One senior adviser was quite adamant:

*Although we tender for inspection contracts, we never inspect in our own authority; our schools would find this unacceptable.* (Inspector, shire county)

Another inspector pointed out that the LEA had a policy not to bid for contracts or join teams inspecting their own schools. They generated income for the LEA and professional experience for themselves by leading inspections for other contractors, usually private companies.

**How has the composition and function of the advisory/inspection team altered during the past ten years?**

The influence of OfSTED is but one of a number of factors. Local financial management is another, and schools now have service agreements with the LEA. They are able to select other support agencies should they lack confidence in what is on offer locally.

The LEA advisory services have undergone considerable contraction and have lost their traditional power base. They must consult schools more fully and respond to the demands for a more streamlined and effective service.

Considerable uncertainty for the future was expressed and much of this, it seems, stems from scepticism about the political designs for LEAs.

**Does inspection improve the quality of teaching and what evidence in general does the LEA have to support OfSTED's claim of *Improvement through Inspection*?**

The general view was that the quality of schooling had improved considerably since the central influence of OfSTED had been established. That there are now national benchmarks for measuring performance outcomes (national assessments at the end of key stages 1-4) was regarded as a substantial move forward. Inspectors felt enabled to measure performance more accurately and comparatively. Although comparisons with similar schools, using the free school meals index, was still a crude benchmarking device, it was considered to be the start of a more systematic approach.

Similarly, it was felt that the national system of measuring overall performance through the use of increasingly sophisticated, yet comprehensive, national instruments (the *Framework* and guidance given by OfSTED), supported consistency across the whole system of public education.

*Our schools are measuring themselves against national benchmarks and we are all able to relate to these. It has become a major factor in convincing under-performing schools that they need to review their practices.* (Inspector, unitary LEA).

The move towards self-evaluation, promoted through the new Framework (January 2000 edition), was further evidence of the comprehensiveness of the national approach to monitoring and evaluating quality, and in this sense, OfSTED's claim of improvement through inspection has some justification.

*Now that performance management and threshold data are available, we can use this with the OfSTED criteria to help school's improve.* (Inspector, unitary LEA)

Local inspectors could have an important part to play in assisted self-review, as they do in some Australian States, such as Victoria.

The data used by OfSTED were considered to be empirically based and this increased its validity and value. At the same time, these senior LEA inspectors were critical of the methodology employed by OfSTED to validate its own processes and procedures. Most research was conducted by OfSTED itself.

Overall, the consensus was that inspections had brought about improvement. Whether the amount was sufficient to justify the enormous expense and energy involved, was another matter.

**What does the LEA do with reports it receives on schools? What does it make of the data on teaching quality? Is it used to inform development needs/strategies for improvement?**

Subject inspectors use the reports on teaching to determine the support required for individual schools and across the LEA in general. They plan future courses to meet the identified weaknesses.

Two inspectors stated that subject inspectors are expected to feed their recommendations into the LEAs' development plans. Certain areas, for example, information and communications technology, are considered to be national weaknesses as well as local ones and have become priority areas.

In only one LEA was an annual commentary on teaching quality written by the most senior inspector. This was not the practice in the others.

Reports are generally considered on an individual basis with each school. The LEA tends to concentrate on those schools with a high level of unsatisfactory teaching, especially if the school has serious weaknesses or is identified as failing to provide an adequate level of education.

All four inspectors expressed the view that the report was rarely referred to again after the inspection apart from reference to the key issues for action and how the school was responding to them.

There was a general feeling that most of the reports tended to sound the same and that the restrictions placed on the registered inspectors writing them limited their value.

The overall view of the inspectors interviewed was that the reports did provide a useful overview, with some discrete data, which could be used to inform future planning for improvement.

**How does this fit in with the LEA approach to appraisal and continuing professional development?**

The universal view was that schoolteacher appraisal had withered on the vine and that this was a missed opportunity. However, the government's performance management initiative and the new legislation to re-establish performance review has been catalytic in renewing interest. Current practices for monitoring and evaluating performance were developing, although this is still on an ad hoc basis. No whole LEA approaches were identified.

One inspector believed that performance management would revive the concept of continuing professional development and even saw the re-introduction of competency based professional portfolios as a distinct possibility.

Although there was considerable optimism, it did appear that each LEA lacked a formal and publicised approach to performance management beyond an early response to government initiatives.

**What part does the LEA play in preparing a school for inspection?**

Although OfSTED does not promote the preparation of schools for inspection, it was common practice to give each school a 'health-check' some time before the inspection begins and to help with the completion of pro-forma and other documentation:

*Although OfSTED has frequently stated that it does not approve of 'dry-runs' or over-preparation, schools almost beg for it and we feel obliged to meet this demand. (Inspector, shire county)*



If a school is known to have weaknesses in teaching, it may be given additional support and advice. As the LEA is aware of the national criteria, it should be able to offer systematic advice, but this is very time-consuming and rarely possible owing to over-stretched resources.

Time is always offered to a consideration of a previous report. This is especially so for a school which has previously been identified as having serious weaknesses.

The quality of support offered by individual subject inspectors is very varied.

Overall, a picture does not emerge of strong, systematic and rigorous support.

**When the inspection is over, how does the LEA help the school to respond to the key issues for action and other areas highlighted for improvement, especially in improving the quality of teaching?**

One of the inspectors responded by suggesting that the OfSTED inspections were very expensive and time-consuming and actually got in the way of on-going school improvement. Although the data are useful, they rarely tell the LEA what they did not already know and usually in less detail. One inspector added:

*We have a very sophisticated local database of all our schools, and this is far more useful than the data provided in an OfSTED report. (Inspector, outer London borough)*

Schools were visited on a regular basis after inspection and a number of meetings take place, especially with the governing body. The support procedures were becoming more standardised, but could still not be described as systematic.

There was considerable criticism of the key issues for action, which were described as vague and too general. Only aspects of teaching appeared and the comments lacked rigour.

*Our elected members, however, take key issues for action very seriously and want to know what support we will be offering to rectify the situation. (Inspector, shire county)*

Again, inspectors were reported to be over-stretched and unable to spend the desired amount of time with each school. The link inspector/adviser arrangement had lapsed in three LEAs and where it existed, the number of assigned schools was too large to be manageable.

#### **Do LEA inspectors/advisers receive on-going training in classroom observation?**

Most inspectors reported some kind of programme of on-going training, but this was not systematic. Most inspectors were accredited OfSTED inspectors and would have received recent training in evaluating the teaching within the National Literacy and Numeracy Projects. LEA inspectors do not generally receive comprehensive training in classroom observation. One LEA reported the existence of a two-day training programme for all new inspectors. No formal strategies to improve the quality of teaching could be identified in any of the four local authorities investigated, by the inspectors interviewed.

### **Summary**

The support given by LEAs to schools before, during and after inspections is clearly varied and, in most cases, dependent on local team strength. It is evident that most local inspectors/advisers carry too heavy a workload to give individual schools the level of support they need. None of the LEAs researched produced a comprehensive summary of the findings of local inspection reports on the quality of teaching or had a comprehensive policy to improve it.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Presentation of findings - School tier**

**An examination of the effects of inspection on the improvement of teaching quality in schools.**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter reports on the findings of an examination of one hundred recent inspection reports, including an analysis of the content of both the report on overall teaching quality and key issues for action relating to the improvement of teaching quality. The outcome of this investigation will be analysed in chapter eight. This chapter considers the response of the ten selected schools to advice and support from the LEA and to the final report. Members of the senior management teams in the ten schools were interviewed and the outcomes are reported in the second part of this chapter. The questions link with those posed to the LEA and reported in the last chapter.

#### **Teaching quality as reported in 100 inspection reports.**

One hundred primary school inspection reports were selected from the period July 1998 - December 1999 from the four LEAs being investigated. The number identified was considered to be substantial enough for significant trends to be identified. In addition to the ten schools chosen for close examination, the remaining 90 were selected randomly by a third person from those reports posted on the Internet by OfSTED. The sections on teaching quality were analysed in both the main reports and the summary reports for parents.

## **The section on teaching quality in the main reports**

The length of the reports ranged from 620-1355 words. The average was 900.

Each gave an initial summary paragraph in terms of overall quality. The following are typical examples:

*Overall teaching standards have improved since the last inspection, with the teaching in all lessons observed being judged to be satisfactory or better. Of these, 4.9 per cent were judged to be excellent, 16.4 per cent very good, 47.5 per cent good and 31.1 per cent satisfactory. Overall teaching quality is higher in the Reception classes than at Key Stage 1, but is well above national averages in both. (Infant School no. 46)*

*Overall, teaching standards have improved since the last inspection, with the teaching in 94 per cent of lessons observed being judged to be satisfactory or better. Of these, 1 per cent was judged to be excellent, 21.9 per cent very good, 36.8 per cent good and 34.2 per cent satisfactory. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 5.3 per cent of lessons seen and poor in 0.9 per cent. Overall, teaching quality is higher in the Reception classes and Key Stage 1, where no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The less than satisfactory lessons were in Key Stage 2. In 1995, 5 per cent of lessons at Key Stage 1 and 15 per cent at Key Stage 2 were judged to be unsatisfactory. Currently, the teaching in three-quarters of lessons seen in the Reception classes and at Key Stage 1 was judged to be good or better. This compares with a half at Key Stage 2. Nevertheless, overall standards are high in comparison to national averages and teaching quality is a strength of the school. (Infant and Junior School no. 22)*

These are factual statements based on the data collected, mainly from the grades entered by individual inspectors on lesson observation forms. There is some attempt to be comparative

- for example, *overall teaching quality is higher in the Reception classes and Key Stage 1.*

These blunt and unambiguous statements are encouraged by OfSTED.

The one hundred reports contained judgmental material in the main. They were further examined to identify the extent of comments or recommendations that might aid further development and improvement.

An assumption is made that positive comments do not aid development. For example, the statement:

*...the teaching of children under five is good. The lessons are well planned with daily routines which help children to feel welcome and confident (primary school no. 30),*

may be accurate and praises a successful feature of under-fives teaching, may reassure parents and governors, and may raise teacher morale. While meeting the demands of inspection as an exercise in accountability, it cannot be described as a development point or an aid to school improvement, whereas the judgement:

*In lessons where teaching is not as effective, teachers' planning does not always allow enough scope for more able pupils to progress at a fast enough pace. This does not mean that pupils are not given enough work; rather they are not always given work that will stretch them fully. (primary school no. 17),*

identifies weakness and areas for future development.

The following negative/development points are selected from the 100 reports categorised according to OfSTED's reporting criteria.

## **Knowledge and understanding**

*Teachers have secure knowledge of most subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Some lack confidence in developing pupils' thinking in mathematics and are less well informed about the teaching of information technology and some aspects of science. (primary school no. 4). Or*

*In music, teachers lack confidence in the subject and there is no pianist on the staff. (primary school no. 7). Or*

*In art, although the teaching seen was satisfactory, some teachers' lack of subject knowledge has a detrimental effect on the overall teaching of skills. (primary school no. 10)*

## **Expectations:**

*Pupils capable of higher-attainment are not always sufficiently challenged and assessment is not used consistently to identify the needs of these pupils. (primary school no. 5). Or*

*.....however, staff underestimate what pupils can attain and too little is expected in terms of standards and progress. (primary school no. 18)*

## **Planning:**

*The planning for the higher attaining pupils in the foundation subjects is less secure, plans do not sufficiently differentiate for these pupils and in some cases, they are not adequately challenged. (primary school no. 20). Or*

*Termly planning, undertaken in year group teams, supports daily planning, although this sometimes lacks sufficient detail. (primary school no. 40).*

#### **Methods and organisation:**

*Weaknesses in teaching are found in the lack of formal, day-to-day assessment to help with planning, and overlong expositions which result in a lack of pace. In physical education, there is too much emphasis given to managing activities rather than teaching skills. (primary school no. 11). Or*

*...teachers do not give sufficient attention to clarifying their objectives to the pupils. (primary school no. 16).*

#### **Management of the pupils:**

*In the small number of lessons where teaching is less than satisfactory in the lower school, teachers sometimes lack strategies for managing challenging behaviour. As a result, a minority of pupils, predominantly boys, causes disruption to lessons. These difficulties are exacerbated in some cases by the grouping arrangements, when all the pupils presenting difficult behaviour are seated together. (secondary school no. 21).*

#### **Assessment:**

*Assessment is not yet a strong feature in teachers' planning and insufficient use is made of day-to-day assessment to inform future teaching. Across the school, marking is inconsistent and seldom informs pupils sufficiently about how to improve their work. (junior school no. 40)*

The frequency of positive and negative statements has been calculated and the findings presented in the following sections.

## Frequency of positive and negative statements - findings

1. In the 100 reports examined, approximately 3000 positive statements were made about aspects of teaching in the overall teaching quality section, which do not aid development or improvement.
2. In the same 100 reports, 136 negative statements were identified which could promote improvement.
3. The ratio of positive to negative comments is approximately 22:1
4. In the 100 reports on the quality of teaching, 19 contained no negative comments at all.

The following, not atypical example, illustrates the balance of positive to negative comments - for ease of identification, positive comments are highlighted in green and the negative ones in red. The school was a junior school inspected in March 1998.

*The school benefits from high quality teaching, which is satisfactory or better in 97 percent of lessons. Teaching is predominately good or better. In 68 percent of lessons observed, teaching was good or better and in 20 percent of lessons, it was very good or better. Excellent teaching was observed in one lesson in key stage 1. Unsatisfactory and poor teaching was observed in a very small minority of lessons.*

*The teaching of children under five is good. The lessons are well planned with daily routines which help children to feel welcome and confident. There is good emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills and the children are encouraged to ask questions. Early literacy skills are established using a range of structured activities which promotes the understanding of letter names and sounds. Very good use is made of the nursery nurses not only to support the full range of activities, but also to take direct responsibility for a group of pupils. The skilful questioning that they use and their very good rapport with the children promote the learning opportunities available.*

*In 76 percent of lessons at key stage 1, teaching is good or better with one lesson being outstanding. In all lessons, teachers have clear objectives and resources are prepared and used well. Where teaching is good, lessons are well planned with clear learning outcomes. Work prepared for the pupils reflects their abilities and stages of development. During the lessons, teacher intervention is positive and responsive to the pupils' needs. Pupils' interest is maintained. In 6 percent of lessons, very good teaching is characterised by the good subject knowledge of teachers. They plan an appropriate balance between whole class, group and individual activities in order to meet the needs of the wide range of attainments amongst the pupils. Excellent teaching has these characteristics and in addition, the teacher managed to successfully plan, and ensure implementation of, a range of activities. Her introduction to the lesson held the pupils spellbound. In all lessons, discussion and questioning is thorough, ensuring that pupils understand and reflect on teaching points.*

*In key stage 2, 68 percent of teaching is good or better. Very good teaching was observed in 18 percent of lessons. In all lessons, subject knowledge is appropriate, lessons are well planned, explanations are clear and pupils are challenged. Where teaching is good, similar features are seen as in key stage 1. Lessons that are very good have a brisk pace, high expectations of pupils' behaviour and teachers are skilful at asking open ended questions. In very good lessons, teachers have very high expectations and targets are set for future learning. There is constant questioning to hold pupils' attention and provoke their response. There are secure links between subjects, such as design and technology and history; pupils are encouraged to use precise technical terms, for example in science, which promotes their interest and confidence with*



language and in the subject. Teachers involve pupils as partners in the learning process in a way which improves their understanding. This is frequently observed when pupils are brought together at the end of a session to reinforce learning points. These characteristics were seen regularly in Year 6 lessons.

In lessons that are less than satisfactory, too much work is planned and the focus is lost. This leads to some confusion as to the expected outcome of the task by the pupils. Homework is used at this key stage to reinforce and extend what pupils are learning in school.

Teachers are committed and conscientious. They have established a range of common approaches which promote good standards of behaviour, although these do vary between key stages at present. This has a positive effect on pupils' progress. Relationships are good and in all lessons there is a purposeful atmosphere which is conducive to levels of concentration that are maintained and hard work. The effective use of support staff and their good intervention with pupils is a contributory factor to effective teaching.

Teachers assess pupils' work during lessons through the questioning techniques that they apply and through discussion with the pupils. However, there is no evidence of the use of assessments to constructively inform planning. They know their pupils well and check on their progress informally in English, mathematics and science. Systems for assessing pupils' progress in all subjects are being developed. The marking of work is generally good, but sometimes lacks consistency in setting targets for pupils' development.

The teaching of literacy is becoming increasingly effective as the development of reading strategies, put in place to improve standards, is being implemented. Pupils' skills are frequently under developed on entry. In the early years, they are systematically taught skills which help them to know names and sounds of letters and to recognise words in isolation and within text. By the end of the key stage, the number of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment in the national tests is not significantly different from the national average. By the end of key stage 2, teaching raises pupils' attainment to levels that are at least in line with national expectations and often above. Good use is made of fiction and non-fiction books which is supported by the use of a variety of reading scheme material. Use of the home and school reading link has a positive effect on pupils' attainment; records are maintained of all reading opportunities. Where pupils have a limited experience of language, teaching extends their experience of words in order to develop their confidence in oral and written work. In written work, teachers place a great emphasis on neat presentation and joined script is becoming more consistently applied as the scheme is implemented. Teaching of spelling is given appropriate attention and this contributes to the levels attained by the pupils.

Throughout the school, teachers allocate some time to developing numeracy skills, in addition to other strands of the mathematics curriculum. Levels of questioning promote pupils' interest and confidence in tackling calculations, particularly in Year 6. In key stage 1, teaching is led by a published scheme that is restricting progress rather than supporting it. The implementation of a new scheme in key stage 2 is encouraging teachers to present the subject in line with the draft proposals of the National Numeracy Strategy.

Pupils with special educational needs are integrated into all aspects of classwork. However, the targets on their individual plans lack sufficient focus for learning outcomes to always be at the appropriate level. Individual support is often available during lessons and pupils are also withdrawn for focused activities on areas of language development. Programmes of work in the classroom are planned to balance the time spent with a support assistant on individual work, and supported group work. Work within the class is selected by the class teacher, sometimes in liaison with the special needs coordinator. This is reviewed and evaluated weekly. Records are detailed and there is regular assessment of pupils' progress which is used to set new targets for them, agreed by the class teacher and the special educational needs coordinator.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good and coordinators provide additional expertise when required. Staff support each other effectively to assist in lesson planning and use of resources. Each coordinator reviews planning for their subject and practice is monitored through informal arrangements. Samples of pupils' work, to assess the effectiveness of planning and to judge pupils' attainment against National Curriculum standards in order to evaluate progress, are reviewed regularly by coordinators.

In this particular example, there are approximately 62 positive comments and 4 negative ones, giving a ratio of 16:1.

The developmental points/negative comments of the 100 inspections have been grouped into categories to match the OfSTED criteria - see Table 6.1.

	Appearance	% of total
Knowledge and understanding	16	12
Expectations	12	9
Planning	15	11
Methods and organisation	55	40
Management of pupils	16	12
Use of time and resources	0	0
Assessment	22	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 6.1 Classification of development/negative comments found in 100 OfSTED reports.**

## **Key issues for action**

The weaknesses identified in the text of the report may become key issues for action. An analysis of the 100 reports revealed the frequency with which an aspect of teaching became a key issue.

In 54 of the 100 reports no key issue for action relating to teaching appeared.

Some are particularly vague, for example,

- *Continue to incorporate more diverse teaching approaches to ensure that the full needs of all pupils are met. or*
- *Focus on improving attainment and progress in French by: supporting teachers in the classroom by sharing ideas for teaching and learning. or*
- *Raise teachers' expectations of what children can do and help them to use a wide range of teaching strategies and to ensure a better match of work to the abilities of the pupils. or*
- *Improve the standards attained by pupils in science by ensuring teaching is of a consistently high standard. or*
- *Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 1.or*
- *Ensure that appropriate action is taken to address the issue of unsatisfactory teaching.*

A number concentrate on management issues connected more with management process than direct pointers to improve teaching practices, for example,

*Improve the quality of teaching in the very few instances where it is unsatisfactory by: ensuring that teachers' plans show precisely what the pupils are going to learn in the lesson, and how it is to be achieved; improving the quality of classroom management and discipline. (primary school no. 58), Or*

*Rectify all the unsatisfactory aspects of teaching by: ensuring teachers use data and knowledge of students' prior attainment effectively in the planning; introducing a coherent system for assessing and reporting attainment which relates to national standards and measures; setting and reviewing regularly targets for students in all subjects from joining the school in Y7 until completing their studies in Y11; raising the expectations held by staff of students' potential (primary school no. 27).*

The 46 key issues identified in the 100 reports and relating to teaching are grouped according to their relationship to the OfSTED criteria - see Table 6.2.

	Appearance	% of total
Knowledge and understanding	3	6.5
Expectations	5	11
Planning	6	13
Methods and organisation	11	24
Management of pupils	1	2
Use of time and resources	0	0
Assessment	7	15
Vague statements	5	11
(Monitoring teaching)	8	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 6.2 Classification of comments made on quality of teaching in OfSTED reports**

## **Costs involved - an indication**

Using the costs per inspection calculated by Cullingford (1999, p 23) of £26020 for a median size primary school, the hundred inspections cited would have cost in the region of £2,600,000. Although commentary on value for money is beyond the scope of this investigation, it is interesting to note how few and unconstructive the 46 comments - examples given on pages 110-112 - are when the overall cost runs into millions of pounds.

## **Interviews with senior management teams**

Interviews took place with representatives of the senior management teams at all ten schools from within the wider sample of 100. The headteacher was present at all interviews. Summary responses are given in the following text.

### **What arrangements does the school currently have in place to monitor teaching quality?**

Most senior teachers stated that subject coordinators or heads of department monitored teaching quality. When this did not occur on a regular basis (in primary schools) the head or deputy head said they took on the responsibility. Most stated that it was a very time-consuming exercise and was not always a priority. Primary schools stated that monitoring of the delivery of the national literacy and numeracy strategies was a priority, however, and this did involve the monitoring of some teaching. This was not on a planned, regular or systematic basis. As one senior teacher remarked:

*We are only just beginning to address rigorous monitoring of teaching quality across the curriculum - the experience gathered from the numeracy and literacy initiatives has been invaluable (headteacher-primary school)*

All said that newly qualified teachers were monitored on a regular basis. One secondary school stated that a plan for regular observation would be in place in the coming September.

The two secondary schools applied the OfSTED model and completed standard lesson observation forms. Neither school had a planned programme in place and described their systems as 'ad hoc' or an 'as needs arise system'.

Most senior teachers (7/10 schools) stated that most staff did not feel trained or competent to make judgements about the quality of teaching of colleagues:

*Our heads of department are expected to monitor on a regular basis, but most lack training and confidence.* (headteacher-secondary school)

#### **Is there a policy?**

No school had a written policy to inform a system of regular monitoring of teaching quality. None used a record system. As appraisal had lapsed in every school interviewed, no records, even confidential ones, were kept.

Several senior teachers referred to the existence of a teaching and learning policy, but none of these contained details of the criteria upon which lessons were being observed. One said:

*the policy had been produced to satisfy what was perceived as an OfSTED requirement* (deputy headteacher-secondary school).

No teacher could report a system whereby staff had been consulted on a regular basis in the interest of even beginning to produce such a policy.

### **What criteria are used when judging teaching quality?**

As mentioned above, no schools approached monitoring teaching quality in any systematic way. Apart from references to the OfSTED criteria, no other system was in existence. Most schools were not aware of the content of the revised *Framework 2000*. The secondary schools were waiting for training in performance review and would revise their plans in light of this. Most reported that they were part of a systematic monitoring of the teaching of newly qualified teachers, using the appropriate scheme.

### **How useful is the *Framework* in helping you to judge teaching quality and making improvements?**

Most stated that the *Framework* was invaluable in helping them to prepare for the inspection, although advice from the LEA and colleagues in other schools was equally helpful. They felt that they knew what the inspectors were looking to judge. They did not use the *Framework* in any systematic way, however, to prepare themselves. None of the schools were familiar with changes that had taken place recently. As one primary headteacher said:

*We have not looked at the new Framework as our inspection took place in 1999 - we have been far too busy with other things since then.* (headteacher-infant school)

The senior staff at three schools talked of their plans to use the self-evaluation procedures being advanced at the meetings they have been attending on performance assessment being organised by the government.

One headteacher talked of her plans to incorporate performance review into her school's proposed scheme for demonstrating value for money.

Overall, no school could demonstrate current application of the *Framework* of any kind - apart from plans for the future.

**In what ways has the school responded to the OfSTED report with regard to teaching quality?**

The senior staff at four schools talked of the way in which a favourable report on teaching quality had raised morale. One talked of it lowering morale. Teachers practising in socially challenging areas frequently reported appreciation of the recognition of the context in which they worked.

*It was so important that inspectors recognised the social problems of our children  
- teaching can be good even when children are challenging and disruptive  
(headteacher-primary school)*

Most schools felt that the proportion of satisfactory or better teaching at over 90 per cent in most cases had been 'good enough' and they could often account for weak teaching being outside of their control, such as a poor supply teacher, or a teacher with a poor record who they have been trying to oust for some time.

Where the report on teaching had been good, some schools used this in promoting the school in their brochure. As one teacher put it:

*the head used it as propaganda. (deputy headteacher-infant school)*

The secondary schools reported that they had used the report to ease out two weak teachers. From the above comments, it is quite clear that schools are not putting feedback on teaching to any sustained and structured use.

### **Is the report seen as the basis for improvement? How valuable was it to the SMT?**

The most frequent comment was that the report did not tell them anything that they did not already know (a common statement made in respect of many different aspects of a report).

As one teacher said:

*The report verified what we thought we knew.* (deputy headteacher-secondary school)

Two senior staff stated that they had already started to disseminate good practice, but it was difficult to get them to explain precisely how they did this. It was clear that some internal discussion had taken place.

It gave legitimacy to the development of a number of key areas, such as improving assessment and routine marking.

### **What use has been made of the data resulting from the inspection?**

There had been a modicum of discussion with staff, but on the whole there seemed to be a mistrust of the numerical data obtained.

Overall, very little use has been made of either the numerical or textual data to be found in the report. One senior teacher said that they were not impressed by the grades given and the staff had agreed not to open their envelopes (each teacher must be given a confidential statement containing the grades awarded to the lessons observed).

As many teachers felt that the banding of grades together for good and satisfactory was unhelpful, and that printed grades did not always match what had been said during the verbal feedback - for example, an inspector was quoted by one teacher as saying, *I could not find fault with this lesson* - but it was graded as satisfactory/good - there was almost a corporate rejection of the data.



Most senior staff were honest enough to say that the grades and the report have not been referred to for a considerable period of time.

**What training has taken place for senior staff to help them observe and guide teachers on improving teaching quality?**

There had clearly been some input from the LEA, but on closer examination, this was very limited. Most reported the current training (Spring 2000) for performance review and this had involved some input on monitoring teaching quality. Three senior staff reported that they hoped to develop their skills further as they moved towards school self-evaluation.

One senior teacher reported that he had undergone OfSTED assessment and was a registered team member, but this had been three years ago and he had not participated in a school inspection since qualifying.

Overall, no formal training has been taking place.

**How was the LEA involved? Has support been offered since the inspection. Have you been guided by an LEA policy or strategy?**

The degree of LEA support for schools varies very much between authorities and between individual assigned advisers, where they are appointed.

In some cases, schools were not visited by a representative of the LEA during the ten months after the inspection. As one headteacher commented:

*We had a good report and have been left alone since - I was disappointed not to receive any comment from my LEA. The teachers were disappointed too.*  
(headteacher infant school).

Most senior staff reported some pre-inspection advice being given by the LEA, but most of this concentrated on process preparation, rather than advice to teachers on lesson observation. Two schools had paid consultants to prepare teachers and help them make a success of the experience.

There were no written LEA policies available during the interviews and none were referred to.

**Do you feel part of a local/national scheme to improve teaching quality?**

That OfSTED had provided a universal *Framework* and guidance for the inspection of schools was considered to be a national approach. Other than this, there remained a feeling of isolation. Half the schools commented on weak support from the LEA.

As far as inspection is concerned, schools felt that they knew the rules of engagement and this was helpful; they did feel part of a national and local approach. However, as far as any local or national approach to improving teaching was concerned in particular, this was not the case. The answer may lie in the national approach to performance management and the revised proposals for teacher appraisal.

*Our LEA is very involved with performance management and is running a training programme organised by Hay/McBer. (headteacher-infant school)*

**Overall, do you feel that OfSTED inspections are making a substantial contribution to improving teaching quality?**

A common view was that schools did need a shake-up. Inspection does make teachers sharpen their performance and reflect on their practice. Indeed, the whole process of inspection, even with the limited amount of feedback to individual teachers, was good in the short term in improving teaching quality.

The data were considered to be useful in that comparisons could be made with other schools. In essence, the common view was that while inspections have some impact on improvement, it did not make a substantial contribution to improvement.

*OfSTED has made some contribution to school improvement, but nowhere near as much as the government thinks. We were lucky and had a good report. I know colleagues in others schools who had a terrible time and the process has put them back.* (headteacher-secondary school).

In the long-term, however, most respondents agreed that inspection has put improvement back on the national agenda.

### **In what ways could the system be improved?**

As an exercise in accountability, schools have little problem with OfSTED inspections, they approve of the system, with teachers believing that they are and should be accountable. They believe that improvement through inspection is marginal. The main points can be summarised as:

- If there is a supportive aspect, then it is under-developed and not well understood. (raised three times) - illustrative comment:

*The supportive side appeared to be 'off-the-record' - we would have preferred it to be an integral and recognised part of the process* (headteacher-secondary school).

- Verbal feedback should be less rushed and more comprehensive. (raised four times) - illustrative comment:

*Most of the teachers said that they found the feedback to be too rushed and too soon after the observation, although they liked to have prompt feedback, on reflection it would have been of more value to receive the feedback when they were in a less agitated and anxious state.*  
(headteacher-infant school)

- There should be no warning - inspectors should just appear in the classroom - the long term notice is soul destroying (raised twice) - illustrative comment:

*The staff were just too tense after months of preparation - they were exhausted before the inspection began.* (headteacher-infant school)

- Written reports on teaching quality should be given to each teacher. (mentioned once) but frequently by teachers - see next chapter - illustrative comment:

*Our teachers found that they could only remember part of what had been said to them; it would have been valuable to receive a permanent written record of the judgements made.* (headteacher-primary school)

- Aftercare from OfSTED and the LEA should be stronger. (mentioned twice) - illustrative comment:

*I would have found it helpful for the team to return some time after the inspection to discuss what we were doing to address the weaknesses - the team developed a good knowledge of our school and it seems a waste for this not to be used.* (headteacher-secondary school)

- Should be more emphasis on self-evaluation. (mentioned twice) - illustrative comment:

*Inspectors should take more notice of the self-evaluation currently taking place in many schools - they (the inspectors) did not seem very interested in what we were doing to support ourselves. (deputy headteacher-primary school)*

- Teachers should be made to feel less under pressure and part of a political agenda. (mentioned three times) - illustrative comment:

*The emotional pressure of the whole process is just unacceptable. (headteacher-primary school).*

- Senior management teams should be doing more classroom observation and have more expertise in giving feedback. (mentioned twice) - illustrative comment:

*Although senior staff make routine visits to classrooms, they are not trained and generally lack confidence, especially when giving feedback (headteacher-secondary school).*

## **Summary**

It is striking how brief most summary reports on teaching quality are in inspections, and how superficial the comments are. More surprisingly are the relatively few negative comments that could be used to indicate areas for development and improvement. Many statements are vague and do not translate readily into pointers for action. Few schools indicate substantial support from their LEAs, before, during and after the inspection. Similarly, few schools have policies or existing strategies to monitor systematically and support teachers in the improvement of their day-to-day practices. Most believed that the report did not tell them anything they did not already know. Little use is made of the data obtained from inspections.

The negative effect on teachers' morale is clearly an issue, although schools with good reports of their teaching tend to make use of them when publicising the qualities of the school.

Although there was an awareness of a drive to improve standards in general, most senior teachers did not feel that they were part of a systematic local or national approach to improving the quality of teaching in schools. The promotion of self-assessment and performance review, by both central and local government, seems to be having a positive impact.

## Chapter Seven

### Presentation of findings - teacher tier

An investigation into the effects of OfSTED inspections on the improvement of teaching at the individual level.

#### Introduction

The results of the investigations reported in the last three chapters demonstrate how those with responsibility at different tiers of support, at both normative and operational levels, impact upon the improvement of teaching quality through processes of inspection. This chapter seeks to present the evidence obtained from questionnaires to 394 teachers in both primary and secondary schools. This is followed by a synthesis of the outcome of a sample of teachers from the ten schools selected for interview during the final phase of the investigation. These data will be used to triangulate the outcome of the questionnaire analysis.

#### Questionnaire data

Table 7.1 indicates the response rates per school for both the pilot and final investigation.

PILOT SAMPLE					FINAL SAMPLE				
School No.	Type	Total no. of teachers	Q'nnaires Returned	Percent. Returned	School No.	Type	Total no. of teachers	Q'nnaires returned	Percent. returned
1	S	85	33	39	1	S	28	25	89.3
2	S	50	41	82	2	S	36	23	63.9
3	P	14	4	29	3	P	10	9	90
4	P	6	5	83	4	P	14	0	0
5	P	9	7	78	5	P	10	9	90
6	P	5	4	80	6	P	11	6	54.5
7	P	12	7	58	7	P	10	9	90
8	P	8	2	25	8	P	4	1	25
9	P	8	1	12.5	9	P	12	8	66.6
10	P	14	7	50	10	P	9	4	44.4
11	P	4	3	75					
12	P	10	6	60					
13	P	8	7	87.5					
14	P	12	10	83					
15	P	5	0	0					
Total		250	137	54.8	Total		144	94	65.3

Table 7.1 individual school response rates

Table 7.2 indicates the total pilot questionnaire return rates. Return rate - pilot:

	Number Teachers	Returned	Percentage Return
Secondary	135	74	54.8
Primary	115	63	54.7

**Table 7.2 - pilot questionnaire return rates - both phases.**

The percentage return rate of both phases was remarkably close. Considering the time of year (December), this was encouraging. The return rate varied from school to school and was higher where the headteacher was prepared to promote the questionnaire. The headteachers in a few schools left the questionnaires in the staffroom alongside a notice seeking volunteers. The return rate was the lowest under such circumstances. Although difficult to substantiate, it did seem that those schools which expressed satisfaction in their report and the whole inspection process were more likely to respond.

Return rate - second sample:

	Number Teachers	Returned	Percentage Return
Secondary	64	48	75
Primary	80	46	57.5

**Table 7.3 Final sample - questionnaire return rates**

The return rate on this second sample was much better, but on this occasion each of the ten sample schools was visited to interview staff and the questionnaires collected at that time. In the case of the secondary schools, both had somewhat dynamic senior teachers who made their expectation of the return of the questionnaires very clear to staff.

Return rate - aggregate of both samples:

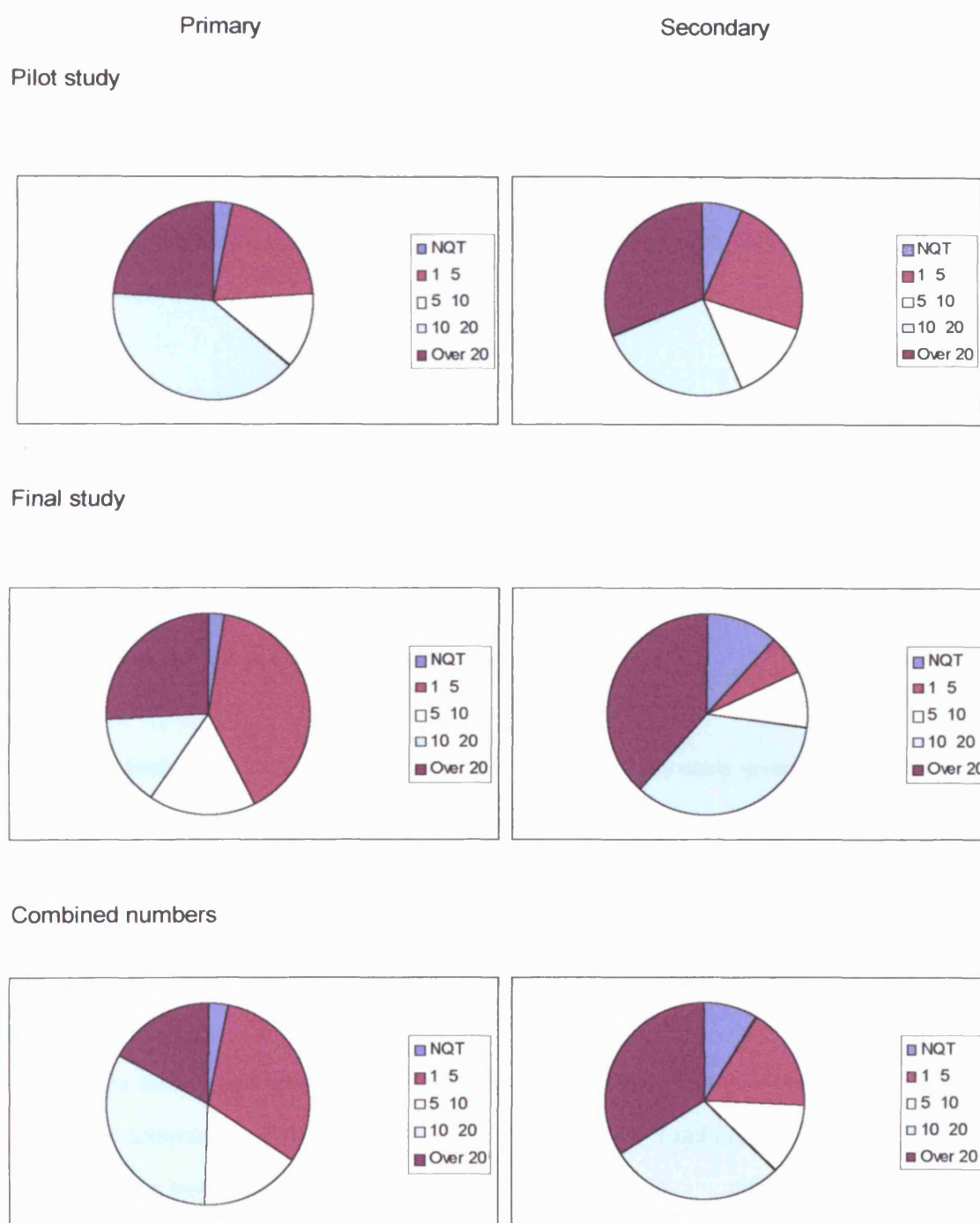
	Number Teachers	Returned	Percentage Return
Secondary	199	122	61.3
Primary	195	109	55.9

**Table 7.4 Aggregate questionnaire return rates**



## Teaching experience

The following graphs (Figure 7.1) show the teaching experience profile of the respondents from the two phases:



**Figure 7.1 Teaching experience distribution**

It does appear that teachers across the experience spectrum were prepared to respond.

## **Subject distribution (both samples)**

**Secondary** - the following subject areas were recorded n=122

Science 17; modern foreign languages 14; design and technology 14; mathematics 14; physical education 11; English 9; history 8; religious education 6; art 6; geography 6; other 5; special needs 5; drama 3; business education 2; media 1; sociology 1; music 1.

**Primary** - the following subject areas were recorded n= 109

English 25; all subjects 18; science 14; mathematics 14; geography 6; music 6; special needs 5; physical education 4; information technology 6; design and technology 2; religious education 2; art 7.

All subject specialists were thus represented.

## **The opportunity to receive feedback**

It states quite clearly in the *Framework for the Inspection of schools* that teachers should be offered feedback, but that they do not have to accept it.

Of the teachers in secondary schools, n=122, 70 said that they were given the opportunity to refuse, 34 said that they were not, 13 were unsure and 5 did not answer the question.

Of primary schools, n=109, 68 said that they were given the opportunity to refuse, 35 said that they were not, 1 said that they were unsure and 5 did not answer the question.

There were eleven additional comments, all of which indicated that they did not want it. Only one other comment was offered from a secondary teacher, '*I did not perceive any value in receiving such feedback from an inspector*'.

Of all the primary teachers, only one made a comment, *I did not refuse, but had to chase the inspector to get it.*

The data suggest that teachers welcome feedback and understand the framework in which it is offered. It also suggests variation in the approaches of different teams. One of the schools in the secondary sample was inspected by a team led by the writer. At the preliminary meeting of staff, the right to refuse was emphasised, yet 20 still responded by saying they had not been given the information.

## Process

**Was the issue of feedback to individual teachers explained by the registered inspector during the preliminary visit?**

This leads on from the previous question. The response is tabulated in table 7.5.

	Yes	No	Unsure	No reply	Total
Secondary	96	14	7	5	122
Primary	94	10	1	4	109
Total	190	24	8	9	231
% Total	82.3	10.5	3.4	3.8	100

**Table 7.5 Feedback to individual teachers - explanation of the issue**

As the registered inspector meets with all of the staff on the preliminary visit and should have explained how feedback was to take place, it is surprising that 17.7 per cent have no recollection of it.

**Did the senior management team discuss the issue with you before the inspection?**

The results are tabulated in table 7.6

	Yes	No	Unsure	No reply	Total
Secondary	98	14	4	6	122
Primary	81	17	2	9	109
Total	179	31	6	15	231
% Total	77.5	13.4	2.6	6.5	100

**Table 7.6 Discussion of feedback with senior management.**

Such a high figure is encouraging, indicating that senior staff are preparing staff well for this aspect prior to the inspection.

**Overall, how did you rate your level of preparedness?**

The results are tabulated in table 7.7

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No
	<i>High</i>						<i>Low</i>	reply
Secondary	56	34	12	9	3	1	1	6
% total secondary	46	28	10	7	3	0	1	5
Primary	36	29	15	12	5	3	2	7
% total primary	33	27	14	11	5	3	1	6
Total both	92	63	27	21	8	4	3	13
% total schools	40	27	12	9	3	2	1	6

**Table 7.7 Levels of preparedness for feedback.**

The data indicate that teachers generally felt well prepared, with secondary teachers generally feeling the better prepared of the two phases. For example, 46 per cent of secondary teachers

felt highly prepared compared with 33 per cent in the primary schools sampled. At the other levels there is little significant difference between the two ranges of response.

**Did you receive on-going feedback and the opportunity to discuss your teaching with an inspector?**

The results are given in Table 7.8.

	Yes	No	No reply
Secondary	78	39	5
Primary	78	23	8
Total	156	62	13
% Total	67	27	6

**Table 7.8 On-going feedback and the opportunity for discussion.**

These figures are disappointing in light of the preparation inspectors have been given and indicates that a substantial number of teachers, almost a third, are not receiving on-going feedback. *Inspection 98* (p. 76) emphasises the need to establish on-going dialogue and a developing rapport with teachers.

The comments invited at the end of this question were listed, coded and enumerated. Secondary teachers made far more comments than their primary colleagues, 37 to 16.

*I was very pleased to have a specialist who understood my area*

*Feedback was very thorough and as near to the inspected lesson as possible. Very positive feedback in an 'advisory' style was always given.*

*The inspector made me feel at ease and comments were very constructive.*

The negative comments included:

*In some circumstances feedback was hard to get because the inspector was so busy.*

*I felt that I was not given enough time during the final feedback session to ask questions and reflect upon comments made.*

*Some of the on-going feedback I received differed from the actual feedback at the end of the inspection e.g. one comment was 'brilliant', but the actual report was 'satisfactory' or 'good'.*

Many teachers commented on the limited time available for feedback and how they would have liked to have spent longer discussing professional matters.

The comments were listed as positive, negative or neutral (see Table 7.9) - an example of a neutral statement being, *as far as possible in one day or one inspector said that he would feedback at the end of the feedback meeting - another was happy to chat at the end of a teaching session.*

	Positive statements	Negative statements	Neutral statements
Secondary	28	24	19
Primary	13	19	9

**Table 7.9 Positive, negative and neutral statements.**

The number of comments represented 42 per cent of the total number of returned questionnaires. In other words, 58 per cent did not comment and it might be assumed that they were satisfied with the process, or did not feel strongly enough to make either a negative or positive comment. On the other hand, the number of negative or neutral comments is sufficiently high to indicate a major area of concern.

### **Where did the feedback take place?**

Feedbacks took place mainly in the back of classrooms or in departmental offices in secondary schools and principally in classrooms in primary schools.

### **Did you feel that your right to privacy was respected?**

The vast majority of teachers across both phases, (93 per cent), felt that their privacy was respected.

### **Did the feedback concentrate on the major strengths and weaknesses of your teaching?**

Seventy per cent of secondary teachers and 80 per cent of primary teachers felt that the feedback did concentrate on their major strengths and weaknesses as teachers. On the whole, the responses were more positive from primary teachers. This is not surprising as they normally are seen more often than their secondary colleagues and the feedbacks tend to be more substantial due to the stronger evidence base. A secondary teacher may be seen 2-3 times, whereas a primary teacher would be seen 5-10 times. The accompanying comments were very mixed. Amongst the positive comments:

- *positive and constructive feedback was received;*
- *it was very helpful; Useful, positive and of value;*
- *feedback was very constructive and positive;*
- *feedback was very positive, which was a great help at the time but on reflection discussion on weaknesses would have been more helpful;*
- *the inspector gave balanced, constructive advice.*

Amongst the negative comments:

- *did not discuss strengths and weaknesses of lessons observed;*
- *too many generalisations - felt that judgement was based on 2/3 days' observation only and not on what I had achieved with a difficult group of children over the year; when given it was short to the point of terseness and not really constructive;*
- *there was no discussion;*
- *the inspector had little understanding of my subject so weaknesses were vague and nothing was said connected to subject content. I am a reflective practitioner, insulted by this superficial judgement;*
- *feedback was vague.*

**Do you feel that you are part of an LEA and/or whole school approach to improving teaching quality?**

This question was not included in the pilot, therefore the sample size is reduced. For secondary schools n=48 and for primary schools n=46. The results are given in table 7.10

	Yes	No	No reply
Secondary	33	10	5
Primary	35	6	5
Total	68	16	10
% Total	72	17	11

**Table 7.10 Part of whole school/LEA approach to improving teaching quality.**

The proportion of positive and negative replies is similar for both phases, with a higher proportion of secondary teachers feeling that they were not part of an LEA or whole-school approach.



The actual comments, however, indicate that there is little grasp of what is meant by a whole school or LEA strategy. It is more a willingness to want to improve standards, rather than any comprehensive and well-understood approach. The question, however, is open to criticism for it has two parts. Of the more positive comments, however, the following illustrate the vagueness of the response:

- *I am part of a numeracy initiative (county) and improving GCSE results and SATs results (school).*
- *We have been working closely with the LEA for some time given the special circumstances of potential closure earlier in the year.*
- *Our LEA works closely with us to aid our continuing development as teachers to improve the quality of our teaching.*
- *I feel that more focus is placed on raising the standards of results.*
- *Much input has been received from the LEA and other agencies to improve areas of the curriculum/teaching.*
- *This is not always followed through by insisting on excellent teaching.*

The most telling comments include:

- *The LEA has tried to have an input, but is limited by the lack of staff.*
- *As a 'gregarious' colleague one believes that all is possible, but I cannot identify any LEA involvement and one hears that a whole school approach is in the pipeline.*
- *There were many pre-OfSTED visits by the LEA. Since then there has been very little or no contact. It is as if now the inspection is over, they do not need to bother.*

**Have you had the opportunity to discuss your teaching grades with anyone since the inspection?**

This question was not included in the pilot, therefore the sample size is reduced. For secondary schools n=48 and for primary schools n=46. The results are given in table 7.11

	Yes	No	No reply
Secondary	18	28	2
Primary	14	30	2
Total	32	58	4
<b>% Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>4</b>

**Table 7.11 Opportunity to discuss teaching grades.**

When discussion took place, it was mainly with the headteacher in primary schools and the head of department in secondary schools.

## **Value of the process**

**Did you feel that the feedback helped you understand your strengths and areas for development?**

### **Pilot sample**

There is a marked difference in the response from the two phases. Seventy-three per cent of primary teachers thought that the feedback had helped them, whereas only 55 per cent of secondary teachers thought that it had.

## Second sample

The second sample demonstrates a different picture, with 54 per cent of primary teachers in the sample viewing the feedback as being helpful, but with the secondary figure of 54 per cent remaining consistent with the first sample.

Positive comments included:

- *Very precise and accurate (secondary).*
- *It was all very encouraging (primary).*
- *The feedback was positive and helped one feel valued (primary).*

Not surprisingly, most of the comments were negative even though the overall response was a positive one. Negative comments included:

- *I learnt nothing I did not already know (secondary).*
- *Not really helpful, too vague (secondary).*
- *It was far too rushed, and it was difficult to absorb what was being said particularly regarding coordination and roles (primary).*
- *No comment made on what I needed to do to develop (primary).*
- *Not enough detail (secondary).*
- *Too vague (secondary).*

## Was the inspectors' feedback clear and analytical?

There was, again, a marked difference between primary and secondary teachers. Seventy-five per cent of secondary teachers in the pilot study found the feedback clear and analytical, whereas 84 per cent of primary teachers did. Of the overall response, 79 per cent made a positive response. The difference between the two phases in the final study was less marked when 75 per cent of the secondary teachers found the feedback to be useful, whereas the

proportion of primary teachers finding it useful fell to 70 per cent. The following comment illustrates the constructive remarks made by some teachers.

*Because of time constraints, on-going feedback tended to be quite hurried, although on some occasions, it was detailed and useful. The final feedback at the end of the inspection could be improved. It wasn't really clear that this particular interview was an overall comment on teaching performance and it was several minutes before I realised what I was listening to! I didn't, therefore take it all in. A written resume would have been useful.*

#### **Did feedback help you reflect on your own practice as a teacher?**

In the pilot study, 68 per cent of secondary teachers and 74 per cent of primary teachers thought that it did. The overall percentage was 71, which fell in the second sample to 54 for primary teachers and 63 per cent for secondary teachers. The overall percentage was 59.

#### **Were you given an indication of the grades awarded?**

Inspectors are given clear advice that grades should not be divulged. This does not take much translation, however. Excellent=1; very good=2; good=3; satisfactory=4; unsatisfactory=5; poor=6; and very poor=7. A throwaway line, however, can mislead a teacher, such as 'that was very good, when they mean satisfactory overall - there is a big difference between a grade 2 and a 4. The fact that 72 per cent of teachers thought that they had been given an indication of the grades awarded may indicate that the question was poorly phrased. Although the following comment was the most extreme, it illustrates an important point:

*I was and remain deeply concerned that, having been informed during my feedback that all my lessons seen were graded as 2's (on a 1-7 scale), my final printout differed greatly from this. Explanations that I have been given about this matter have*

*been unacceptable. It is clearly a major issue that you and your team need to resolve before future inspections. Having been told that my teaching was very good in all lessons and graded as 2's why should the final printout be so different? When I pursued this issue I was told that the printout was correct. By implication this means that the feedback given to me was totally incorrect. After the inspection I was demoralised. To be told that you are a very good teacher (2 on a 1-7 scale) and for the printout not to confirm this is unforgivable.*

**Was it made clear to you if a lesson was considered very good or better or less than satisfactory?**

#### **Pilot sample**

The point of this question was to discover whether or not high quality teaching and low quality teaching were both identified. Indeed, inspectors are instructed to ensure that when unsatisfactory teaching is recorded, the teacher should be informed. To balance this, some registered inspectors insist that teachers are made aware when their teaching is considered to be of high quality.

On reflection, the question has a misleading element. Most teaching would have been considered to be satisfactory, with the proportion of high and low quality teaching being infrequently commented upon. Sixty-five per cent of teachers believed that some indications were given, hence the belief that the question was misunderstood or poorly phrased. Comments were invited with this question. Amongst the positive, of which there were few comments, was the following statement:

- *Clearly supportive of good practice.*

It seems that of the third who felt ill-informed, most made a negative comment, including:

- *Verbal comment did not match written grade.*

- *In one case this was contradicted by the box mark (I cannot find fault with this lesson, does not sound like satisfactory to me).*
- *I found this to be very unsatisfactory to be given a piece of paper at the end with unnamed lessons apart from music and not to be able to distinguish between satisfactory and good and very good and excellent was a total waste of time. I had no idea, therefore, which lessons fell into the different categories and therefore which could be improved.*
- *I was very disappointed that the efforts of my ancillary helper downgraded my final grade.*

### Final sample

The question was modified in the second sample to include non-applicable - was it made clear to you if a lesson was considered very good or better, or less than satisfactory: Yes or no or not applicable (not applicable means that the lesson was satisfactory or good). Please circle.

The results from both phases were very close. Overall, 41 per cent felt that they had been informed of the grades awarded.

### Overall, how valuable did you find the feedback?

The results are given in table 7.12

	Very valuable	Some value	Of little value	No response
Secondary				
Total	19	65	24	14
%	15.5	53	20	11.5
<b>% response</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>-</b>
Primary				
Total	23	69	12	5
%	21	63	11	5
<b>% response</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>-</b>

**Table 7.12 Value of feedback.**

Overall, teachers did find the process worthwhile, with little difference in the response from the two phases.

**Do you think that feedback helped to improve the quality of your teaching?**

In both phases in the pilot study, about 45 per cent thought that feedback had helped them improve their practice, whilst 55 per cent did not. In the second sample only 32 per cent believed that the process had improved their teaching; 53 per cent said that it did not; and 15 per cent did not answer the question. This led into the next question where teachers were asked to comment on why they were dissatisfied.

**In what ways were you dissatisfied with the process?**

Fifty-six per cent responded and 44 did not. The comments were divided into positive and negative groups. There were 129 comments. Not surprisingly, because of the nature of the question, all but six comments were negative. Typical comments included:

- *It can only give a snapshot of my teaching (primary).*
- *No suggestions made for improvement (secondary).*
- *No right of reply following the feedback (secondary).*
- *It was all such a rush (primary).*
- *I have no idea what the credentials of the inspector were - has he taught? What is his background? How is he fit to judge me? (secondary).*
- *Feedback was vague and the sample was too small (secondary).*

In contrast:

- *We were very lucky with our inspector who was able to offer constructive help. He was very down-to-earth and understood the problems of teaching and*

*motivating pupils with regard to language. We felt good after the inspection because of the way he treated us. He went out of his way to talk collectively to us on the last day at 3:00 p.m. (secondary)*

### **Can you list ways in which the process could be improved?**

This was the final opportunity for teachers to make constructive comment. There were 51 written responses; These can best be summarised by putting them into categories:

18 comments referred to the general lack of time - teachers felt that the whole process was rushed;

17 concerned wanting more information - especially on how the grading system worked - a number thought that they should have the right to see what had been written on the observation forms.

The other comments were more general and included:

- *More time to meet with inspectors before the inspection (secondary).*
- *Inspectors to be ex-practitioners in the particular phase (primary) - primary teachers seem to loathe being inspected by ex-secondary teachers).*
- *The process should be more developmental than judgmental (secondary).*
- *Feedbacks should be more detailed; the final gradings should not group good with satisfactory (primary).*

### **Additional comments**

The result of the request for additional comments (at the end of the questionnaire) is listed in its entirety, by way of a summary;



- *It was a very positive and encouraging experience overall.*
- *I must add that our named 'English' inspector was involved in both lessons and 'clubs' and contributed to my own lessons very positively.*
- *I think the OfSTED inspection generally makes one reflect on one's teaching.*
- *The feedback helped me to focus on the issues that could help the development of my team.*
- *If we have to be inspected we couldn't have had a better team.*

### **Interviews with individual teachers**

Forty interviews took place in total in both the pilot and final investigation (19 in the pilot and 21 in the final study - in total 25 secondary and 15 primary). The purpose was to triangulate the data collected by questionnaire and allow staff to amplify any of the issues raised. It should be stressed that staff were volunteers, an opportunity sample, and they were interviewed in their own time. The following commentary is brief, although the time taken to conduct the interviews was approximately 30 hours. Comment is made where the teachers' comments contrast, or are at variance, with those collected through the questionnaires. The interview schedule is reproduced as appendix 5.

### **What was your understanding of the process of feedback before the inspection? Did you feel prepared?**

The interview data supported the questionnaire findings, with most teachers feeling well prepared and possessing a good understanding of the processes involved.

*We were fully prepared. We had a good introduction from the registered inspector on his preliminary visit and meeting with staff. (primary)*

### **Do you have any comments to make on the process?**

Similarly, most comments on the process were positive, although many teachers commented on the stressful nature of classroom observation.

*Most conscientious teachers are always open to ways to improve their teaching - courses, self-study etc., but the OfSTED experience did not make me feel of any worth or value despite any positive feedback. I felt that I was being observed just to see what was wrong with my teaching. (primary)*

This was often qualified with a statement concerning how professional and understanding the inspectors had been - nevertheless they found the process stressful. At least 12 commented on the rushed nature of the feedback.

*I felt constantly under pressure and the rushed nature of the feedbacks made it difficult to take it all in. (primary)*

Two primary teachers felt that they had been seen too often and three secondary teachers thought that they had not been observed for long enough for a fair assessment to have been made.

*Although, I was supposed to be seen for only half-a-day, in reality, I was observed for almost all of one particular day. (primary).*

*I was only seen twice and then for only part of each lesson. I do not think that this is sufficient for an overall judgement to be made about my teaching. (secondary)*

Two said that the inspection should take place with the minimum amount of notice to reduce stress.

*Inspectors should just turn up unannounced. (primary)*

Four primary teachers highlighted the variation in practices between inspectors; they believed that the process was applied inconsistently. Overall, however, the professionalism of the teams was emphasised.

#### **When did feedback take place? Was it on-going or summative?**

The findings support those of the questionnaire. Responses were mainly positive, with only one teacher commenting that one feedback was given within ear-shot of a child. Feedback was on-going and summative in primary schools, where teachers are seen more frequently, and mainly at the end of a lesson, or soon after for secondary teachers, who are often seen only once or twice.

*It was good to get feedback at the end of each lesson, although I had difficulty taking in everything that was said to me. (primary)*

#### **How valuable was the experience?**

Over three-quarters of the comments were favourable and supported the outcome of the questionnaire. Teachers talked of enjoying the process and it making them feel reassured.

*The inspector was relaxed and confident and this helped, but there seemed to be a lack of time to really get to grips with the comments made. (primary).*

About a quarter talked of their disappointment that the process seemed superficial - as one put it, impressionistic rather than rigorous and analytical.

*I did not learn anything new and the comments were too superficial - mostly praise and no real points for improvement. (secondary)*

Most, however, felt that it was valuable and a rare opportunity to have constructive criticism from outsiders.

**Were you given indications of the grades? Did you feel that the grading system was fair?**

Most were given some indication, but it was rare for an inspector to mention a grade. Most thought the grading system fair, but with the exception of grouping grades, such as good and satisfactory, into the same group on the printed record.

*Most of my lessons were said to be good but the record showed them to be in the middle band, which could have been satisfactory or good. This is unhelpful.*  
(secondary)

Most thought that the conclusions were accurate. Four stated that they were either disappointed or did not agree. The mismatch between what was stated in the feedback and in the written report was mentioned by two teachers and this supports similar statements made by teachers in the pilot investigation and on the questionnaires.

**If a lesson was graded as very good or unsatisfactory or worse, were the reasons explained to you?**

The purpose of this question was explained earlier; teachers must have it made quite clear to them at an appropriate time as soon after the lesson as possible, why it was unsatisfactory. To balance this, most teams will insist that excellence is also identified and reported on at an early stage. Clearly, this was not applicable to most of the teachers interviewed. One did report that this was clearly conveyed for an unsatisfactory lesson and two said that they were told that a lesson had been considered very good overall. Although there was some misunderstanding of this question in the questionnaire, it does appear that this difficult situation is being handled sensitively by inspectors.

**Did you feel that the feedback helped you to understand your strengths and weaknesses?**

As with the questionnaire, a number of teachers (8/40) commented that they already knew their strengths and weaknesses. Others (7/40) thought that it was reassuring to have their own views of their teaching confirmed. Overall, the lack of unexpected comment from inspectors suggests that teachers are aware of their strengths and areas for development.

*It was disappointing not to receive more information on my weaknesses and areas for development. It was reassuring to have such nice things said, but I'd like to have had more pointers for professional growth. (primary)*

**In what ways do you think your teaching has improved as a result?**

Most teachers interviewed believed that insufficient weaknesses were identified to help them with improvements. Most commented that they have given the feedback little thought since the inspection. This contrasts with the questionnaires that identified some improvement as the general view.

**How do you think the process could be improved?**

The interview statements correspond closely to those made in the questionnaires. Overwhelmingly, teachers wanted the amount of stress reduced. This was linked to the amount of notice given; many believed that inspectors should just appear unannounced.

The amount of time available for feedback is considered universally to be too brief and rushed. Eight teachers commented that they would like to be more involved in a discussion about their work rather than being a passive recipient of a hurried one-way dialogue.

Other comments support the general views expressed earlier.

**OfSTED has placed greater emphasis on improvement/development. Do you think that this approach was better than the last inspection?**

The general view was that the second inspection was more thorough and that teachers were able to play a more proactive role in the process.

*This inspection was much better than the last. We felt that we could communicate more readily with the inspectors and they appeared to be more relaxed than before. (primary)*

That feedback now takes place was valued without a doubt, but there are reservations about the process and its effectiveness, as can be seen from some of the comments given above.

Overall, the comments do not support significant change or that teachers feel that this is an exercise that will necessarily bring about improvements, especially in teaching quality.

**Do you feel part of a national approach towards school improvement ?**

The views of the interviewees mirrored the comments made in the questionnaires. There was a very strong feeling that there was both a national and local drive to improve standards.

*I feel part of local and national initiatives to improve standards and, overall, this is beneficial. (primary)*

As with the questionnaires, teachers remained a little unsure of what the strategies were. Five interviewees mentioned the move towards school self-evaluation and how the OfSTED process was enabling them to practise an approach to quality control using the national criteria produced to support the current approach to school inspection. There was more support for the effectiveness of OfSTED than the influence of the LEA.

**Are you part of a local scheme to improve teaching quality?**

A number of examples of local support groups were identified, for example, the literacy coordinators' forum, the science teachers' association and those supported by a local Education Action Zone (EAZ). Most teachers, however, could not identify any specific programmes to support the improvement of teaching quality other than some subject specific courses ran by LEAs which would have an identified teaching component within them.

**Are you part of an appraisal process?**

Appraisal was only identified in one school as being an on-going process. As reported earlier, it has not been seen as a priority in schools for a number of years, but with the emergence of the government's approach to performance review, it is undergoing a renaissance at the moment.

**How were your grades discussed - has there been any further reference to the inspection findings since the inspection?**

As with the questionnaire replies, a disappointing amount of follow-up has taken place since each inspection. Most teachers reported that, after some initial dialogue immediately after the inspection, nothing has been said since. In the case of primary teachers, six reported that there had been some observation of their literacy lessons since the inspection as part of the LEA's approach to monitoring its delivery. This was followed by some feedback on the quality of the teaching observed.

*It has been very disappointing to receive no on-going dialogue since the inspection eight months ago. It seems like a missed opportunity. (secondary)*

**Are you aware of the school's policy towards school improvement? Is there a teaching/learning policy?**

Most teachers talked of the school development plan and the action plan produced as a requirement of the inspection. None reported the existence of an over-arching policy for school improvement, although this was implicit in the school development plan.

Teaching and learning policies were either in existence or in the process of being produced. No teacher reported them as having a major impact.

**How would you like to see inspections developed?**

The comments of the teachers interviewed mirrored those made in the questionnaires. The issues of stress, more detailed feedback, shorter notice, and less intensity were raised.

**Summary**

Overall, strong comment in either support or opposition of the process was not made. The processes involved were generally well understood and teachers felt well prepared, although they would prefer much shorter notice - a significant number suggesting that inspectors should arrive unannounced. Feedback on teaching quality was welcomed, but the opportunity to spend more time in discussion with inspectors was frequently mentioned. Some teachers would like written comments and others the opportunity to question the grades awarded - they did not like the grouping of grades together in the grading statement supplied after the inspection. Many teachers sought greater detail and precision in the quality of the feedback.



Teachers expressed the view that they were part of a national and local approach to improving quality, but when pressed few could give details of precisely what these approaches were.

Most primary teachers thought that feedback was valuable, but most secondary teachers did not. However, in both phases, teachers believed that the inspection had enabled them to reflect on their own practices and this had been helpful. Just over half the teachers, however, did not believe that the inspection had actually brought about an improvement in their teaching.

The commonly stated ways in which inspection could be improved included: shorter notice to be given to reduce stress; inspectors in primary schools to be ex-primary practitioners; more time in discussion with inspectors; grades should always match the verbal feedback and teachers should have the right of reply having received written comments following the verbal feedback.

## Chapter Eight

### Analysis

#### Introduction

The analysis of the investigation findings draws on the Becher and Kogan model described in Chapter 2. The four tiers examined were the national, local, school and individual teacher. The two levels of responsibility are the normative and operational. The findings will compare the relationships and functions across the two levels and between the four tiers. To do this the inter-related questions will be re-grouped into the four main areas identified as follows.

#### Original grouping

- the national tier: to what extent have successive policies and inspection strategies contributed to raising teaching standards?

##### Areas

- i. can judgement and development exist side by side?
- ii. what is the rationale behind the view that inspection can improve teaching quality?
- iii. how does OfSTED use the very large amount of data at its disposal to promote strategies to improve teaching quality?
- iv. what level of training is provided by OfSTED for its inspectors to be effective classroom observers? How accurate are their judgements?

- the local tier: how have local education authorities been influenced by government policies and how do they support schools, both before and after an OfSTED inspection?

##### Areas

- i. can inspection and advice co-exist within an LEA?
- ii. what strategies do LEAs have to improve the quality of teaching?
- iii. how do LEAs use the data provided by an inspection?
- iv. how are LEA inspectors prepared for classroom observation?

- school tier: how does the school prepare for inspection and does the existence of a national inspection framework assist in promoting increased teaching quality; what use does the school make of the data obtained during an inspection?

##### Areas

- i. to what extent are schools monitoring teaching quality and can those who monitor also offer advice - how extensive and effective are existing systems in schools?
- ii. what policies and strategies are in place to promote improvement in teaching quality?
- iii. how do schools use the data provided by an OfSTED inspection to improve teaching quality?

iv. what level of preparation do senior staff have for classroom observation?

- teacher tier: building on the data obtained from the pilot study, how effective is feedback to individual teachers and to what extent do teachers feel that inspections are making a worthwhile contribution to the improvement of their classroom practice?

#### Areas

- i. how do teachers respond to feedback from observations of their teaching?
- ii. do teachers feel part of a national/local/school scheme to improve their teaching?
- iii. what use do teachers make of the data/feedback they are given ?
- iv. how do teachers value the quality of the feedback they receive?

The four main areas can be re-grouped for comparative analysis:

### Grouping for analysis

#### Area 1 - Inspection for accountability or advice

National	can judgement and development exist side by side?
Local	can inspection and advice co-exist within an LEA?
School	to what extent are schools monitoring teaching quality and can those who monitor also offer advice - how extensive and effective are existing systems in schools?
Teacher	how do teachers respond to feedback from observations of their teaching?

#### Area 2 - Policies and strategies for action

National	what is the rationale behind the view that inspection can improve teaching quality?
Local	what strategies do LEAs have to improve the quality of teaching?
School	what policies and strategies are in place to promote improvement in teaching quality?
Teacher	do teachers feel part of a national/local/school scheme to improve their teaching?

#### Area 3 - the use of collected data and feedback

National	how does OfSTED use the very large amount of data at its disposal to promote strategies to improve teaching quality?
Local	how do LEAs use the data provided by an inspection?
School	how do schools use the data provided by an OfSTED inspection to improve teaching quality?
Teacher	what use do teachers make of the data/feedback they are given?

#### Area 4 - A systematic approach to improving teaching quality

National	what level of training is provided by OfSTED for its inspectors to be effective classroom observers? How accurate are their judgements?
Local School	how are LEA inspectors prepared for classroom observation? what level of preparation do senior staff have for classroom observation?
Teacher	how do teachers value the quality of the feedback they receive?

#### Schools as units of analysis

The previous two chapters presented the findings of both the pilot and the final study and aggregated the outcomes of the questionnaires and interviews. Part of the following analyses will seek to compare the data from the ten schools in the final study, namely the two secondary schools, S1&S2, and eight primary schools, P1-P8, within the final two tiers in each of the above areas, that is, the school and individual teacher.

The questionnaire data and that obtained from the interviews with individual teachers have been analysed according to the overall strength of the response. For example, in response to the question, *Did you feel fully prepared?*, the overall response from the data collected from school P2 was negative. To the question *When did feedback take place*, that it did take place and was satisfactory was considered a positive response; that it did not take place, or was unsatisfactory, was considered a negative response. Figure 8.1 shows the collective response for all of the quantifiable questions put to individual teachers.

#### Questions:

1. What was your understanding of the process of feedback before inspection?
2. Did you feel fully prepared?
3. Do you have any comments to make about the process?
4. When did feedback take place?
5. Was it on-going or summative?
6. How valuable was the experience?

7. Did you feel that the grading was fair?
8. Did you feel that it was accurate?
9. Did you feel that feedback helped you to understand your strengths and weaknesses?
10. What do you feel about grading? Is it valuable?
11. OfSTED has placed greater emphasis on improvement/development. Do you think that this approach was better than the last inspection?
12. Do you feel part of a national approach towards school improvement?
13. Are you part of a local scheme to improve teaching quality?
14. Has your teaching been observed and commented upon since the last inspection?
15. How were your grades discussed - has there been any further reference to the inspection findings since the inspection?
16. Do you think that feedback has helped you improve the quality of your teaching?
17. Are you aware of the school's policy towards school improvement? Is there a teaching and learning policy?

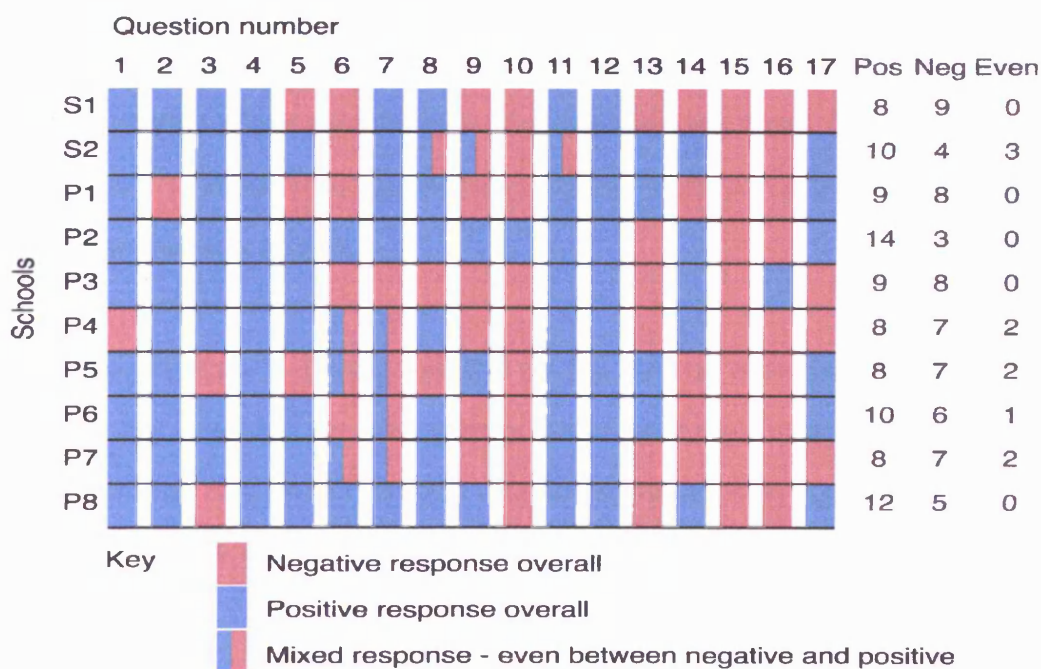


Figure 8.1 Summary of responses from the teachers in the ten schools.

## **Area 1 - Inspection for accountability or advice**

### **National tier**

The investigation established that there was common acceptance, at all tiers of responsibility, that inspection as a vehicle of accountability was necessary and that the current system was both appropriate and successful. The investigation did not establish that current national inspection practices were effective in helping schools to improve significantly.

It is quite clear that the fundamental purpose of inspection is accountability and that it meets West-Burnham's (1994, p. 157) definition of an external, summative process judging the extent to which an organisation meets externally imposed criteria. This has been the principal remit of HMI for 160 years and, more recently, their colleagues in the field, the registered inspectors and their teams (*OfSTED Frameworks*). This has wide acceptance amongst teachers, according to the MORI survey (1998) and the findings of this investigation. At the normative level, the purpose of inspection as a vehicle for public accountability is unequivocal. With its principal focus of pupil attainment (output), league tables can demonstrate whether or not schools are making progress over time. Certainly, schools are now accountable in accordance with Sockett's criteria (1980, p. 12) and to all of those he considers to be the wider audience.

The HMI interviewed made it quite clear that the first purpose of inspection is accountability and, through the inspection process, schools would inevitably improve. This investigation found little evidence to support OfSTED's claim of improvement through inspection. This is commensurate with the surveys conducted by MORI (1998) and the NUT (1999).

With the introduction of benchmarking, schools are being grouped into broad bands for comparative purposes. Databanks (PANDAs, PICSIs and national benchmarking data) are becoming increasingly sophisticated and the huge amount of data collected are providing, for the first time, the tools for making informed judgements. The other current application of

these data seems limited to providing the basis for the claims made by HMCI in his annual reports and the provision of answers to parliamentary questions and the production of league tables. This investigation could not establish any other widespread use of the data.

The focus of this investigation is the effect of inspection on improving teaching quality and the basic assumption is made that the quality of teaching has a direct impact on pupils' learning. Teaching may be considered the third strand of the major influences on attainment, the other two being resourcing and its management (in all its forms) and pupil motivation. In considering the purpose of inspection for accountability purposes, the following analysis focuses on teaching quality.

This investigation found sufficient expert comment to suggest that the data derived from classroom observation, and upon which public statements about quality are made, are questionable. A good example is the evidence given to the House of Commons Select Committee, in response to OfSTED's own research (Matthews *et al.*, 1998), by Mortimore and Goldstein (1999) who question the reliability of inspectors' judgements on the quality of teaching. This is considered to be highly significant, warranting further investigation and research.

Similarly, this investigation could find no widespread use of the extensive data collected by OfSTED. Even Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools Annual Report contains only a very limited use of what must be available on the OfSTED mainframe computer system.

The need for greater accountability has been linked to the growth in school autonomy (Bush, 1994) and the fundamental belief that schools will improve if subject to regular inspection (OfSTED 1993a, 1995c, 1999c,d,e). Certainly, the Parent's Charter was concerned with making all public institutions accountable in order that their progress towards externally set targets could be measured (Thorp, 1985). The very poor attendance figures at parents' consultation evenings of below 3.5 per cent, identified in this investigation, confirm the lack of interest in inspection reported by Tabberer (1995) and Elliot (1979). Although market

mechanisms are in place, this lack of parental interest brings into conflict the criteria power and operational power dimensions described by Simkins (1997).

It has been argued by senior HMI that the new *Framework* (1999 and operational from January 2000) has a detailed model of effective teaching, along with the characteristics of unsatisfactory teaching upon which quality can be judged. By identifying strengths and weaknesses, it meets the purpose of public accountability, whilst at the same time highlighting what the teacher must do to improve. The concept of accountability, therefore, is clearly established, but that of improvement is less precisely stated (Earley 1998, 2000).

The notion of improvement through inspection as a second purpose of the process was introduced by OfSTED in 1995, but it would appear that this notion was rejected by the House of Commons Select Committee (1999, para. 99). This is in direct conflict with the assertions of HMCI in his Annual Reports and other OfSTED publications.

An examination of the HMCI annual reports and the 100 school reports, and the key issues for action identified in these reports, demonstrate that, at the operational level, reporting is remarkably superficial. Typical comments included:

- *continue to incorporate more diverse teaching approaches to ensure that the full needs of all pupils are met; or*
- *improve the standards attained by pupils in science by ensuring teaching is of a consistently high standard; or*
- *ensure that appropriate action is taken to address the issue of unsatisfactory teaching.*

It is difficult to see how such vague statements can be helpful in aiding a school to improve the quality of teaching.

Quality is presented in terms of proportions of teaching quality nationally over a seven point scale. The change from a five point scale in 1997, is sufficient to cast some doubt on the comparisons made by OfSTED over the past seven years. It has been suggested earlier in this investigation that the requirement to give feedback directly and face-to-face with teachers



might result in borderline unsatisfactory lessons being graded as satisfactory. There have been conflicting reports on the degree to which inspection supports improvement (Earley 1996, Thomas 1999 and MORI 1998). In this investigation, only a third of the teachers thought that their teaching had improved. There were very few comments from the interviews to suggest that any improvement was marked. It was more a suggestion that the process had helped teachers reflect on their practices and this was essentially beneficial. Few suggested that the inspection distracted teachers from essential teaching tasks. The NUT survey in 1998 reported that two thirds of their respondents did not believe that inspections helped with improvement.

The most recent *Framework* gives firm guidance as to what must be graded unsatisfactory, even when the majority of the criteria have been met (OfSTED 1999). The critics of OfSTED's methodology, (Fitz-Gibbon, 1999, Glover, 1999 and Cullingford, 1999) have argued that the system actually lowers standards. Jeffery and Woods (1996, p. 353) write in passionate terms of teachers' dehumanisation and deprofessionalisation by the process and that this is in-built into the system. It may satisfy the need for accountability, but certainly undermines the process of improvement. Cullingford's research on pupils' achievement during the year of an inspection demonstrates that standards fall, especially at GCSE level, when the inspection is in the Spring term preceding the final examination of the pupils in the Summer term. That this investigation found such a small proportion of negative/ action points relating to teaching in the 100 reports examined is some indication of the value of reports in helping teachers to improve their practices.

The reluctance of OfSTED to accept or promote independent research into the efficacy of its claims is disturbing. The evidence of Mortimore and Goldstein to the Select Committee challenges the claim that OfSTED's own limited research into the validity of inspectors' judgements about teaching quality is acceptable.

## Local tier

The investigation supported the existence of weaknesses in the role of the LEA. The inspectors and advisers interviewed were generally over-worked, stretched too thinly and remain uncertain of their role. Their contribution to the process of both accountability and improvement was considered varied, but generally weak.

There is no doubt that LEAs are indirectly controlled by the activities of OfSTED. The *Framework* is universally accepted and increasingly seen as the driving force behind the new orthodoxy. During this investigation, LEA inspectors constantly referred to OfSTED and the impact of the *Framework*.

At the normative level, local inspectors are under constant critical attack by OfSTED, as witnessed by the number of LEAs receiving poor reports themselves (Hackney 1998, Islington 1999). As very few LEAs now conduct full inspections of their own schools, local inspection/advisory teams can hardly be judged as quality controllers in any real sense. They analyse OfSTED reports of schools, but only one of the LEAs investigated did this in any systematic way. This investigation could not establish the existence of the practice of analysing and presenting data on the quality of teaching in any of the LEAs reviewed. It is difficult to see how the available data were used to inform development programmes for teachers in any meaningful way.

The data collected during this investigation confirms that inspectors do not see a conflict between their twin roles of inspector and adviser. This conflicts with the comments made by many schools that they rarely had contact with their assigned advisers. This was most likely to be the case when a school had received a favourable report.

Local inspectors argue that OfSTED inspections are expensive, time-consuming and get in the way of local plans to improve schools. Although the data obtained are useful, they rarely tell the LEA what they did not already know and usually in less detail.

Certainly, the relationship between the LEAs and OfSTED is not one of partnership, with strong statements by OfSTED, such as LEAs failing to influence the improvement of standards at the local level (OfSTED 1997), not helping to strengthen the relationship. In many respects, the application of the Becher and Kogan model demonstrates an uncertain relationship between OfSTED and the LEA. OfSTED appears stronger at the normative level in many respects through the rigid application of its bureaucracy and established orthodoxies. This is commensurate with Simkin's (1997) model of the redistribution of power within the education system. The role of the LEA is less clearly defined and it appears stronger at the operational and informal level. That OfSTED communicates directly with schools has further reduced the influence of the LEA. This was clear from the interviews with the senior LEA staff. They seemed uncertain of the future and were as anxious about an OfSTED LEA inspection as schools are. This position is highlighted by the current research of Bush, Anderson and Wise, (2000). They quote several schools:

*I don't think that LEAs should exist. They just create a whole lot of bureaucracy which costs millions of pounds. The money would be better concentrated in the classrooms.*

*I don't see the need for an LEA. As far as we are concerned, they are an irrelevance. (p.26)*

It should be borne in mind, however, that the schools sampled were former GM schools and may not represent the views of a typical cross-section of those within an LEA.

LEAs, as with schools, are accountable to OfSTED. The current media concern is over OfSTED's accountability (TES 6 June 2000). OfSTED argues that it is accountable to parliament and the conclusion of the House of Commons Select Committee (1999 para. 99) is unequivocal - *...inspection teams should not become involved in giving advice.*

## School tier

The senior staff in all schools investigated stated that inspection was principally concerned with accountability and that they accepted that they should be accountable. As with the Brunel University/Helix Consulting Group (1999), secondary headteachers did not feel that accountability was strongly improved by inspection. This supports the findings of Chapman (2001, p. 63), who found that 70 per cent of schools reported strong agreement on the main aim of inspection being accountability.

The senior staff of all the secondary schools accepted that some improvement resulted from inspection. The senior staff at the largest secondary (S2) emphasised how they had prepared to use the data obtained from the inspection to highlight areas for improvement. This contrasts with the other secondary school, which believed that the data obtained were of limited value. Chapman's study (2001, p.66) had attributed such differences to the professional learning culture of a school and how some schools were prepared for the 'inspection game'. Such schools were more likely to view inspection as a vehicle for improvement rather than accountability. The size of the senior management team in school S2 was much larger than S1 and had at least one member who acted as professional tutor. She had attended many courses and appeared to have a considerable, positive influence on other members of the team.

OfSTED readily quotes the data from its post-inspection questionnaire to schools. The evidence of headteachers to the Select Committee, however, is clear in that they would like to see the advice element increased, and most wanted further visits after the inspection to aid development and school improvement (Ferguson *et al.*, 2000, p. 92).

The interviews with senior staff from the ten schools indicate a weakness in procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching. Only one school, P3, had a regular pattern of classroom observation and feedback. Several schools (P3, P8) had adopted the OfSTED procedures for

monitoring teaching quality, but there was little evidence that they were being applied in any systematic way. This investigation found that appraisal, which contains an element of classroom observation, had lapsed in most schools. Many teachers interviewed were unfamiliar with the criteria of effective teaching detailed in the most recent *Framework*. This would indicate that, at the normative level, schools were weak in this respect. At the operational level, they tended to become very active prior to an inspection and it was at this time that they had their closest relationship with the LEA, where advisers frequently observed lessons and advised on how to create a more positive impression. Most senior staff interviewed accepted that the reports were fair, helpful and constructive, but few were surprised at the judgements; the report did not tell them anything they did not already know. Most found the key issues for action to be vague and too lacking in precision to be considered as advice.

This is supported by the examination of the quality of the key issues for action in 100 reports relating to teaching. Senior staff reported when interviewed that, at the operational level, off-the-record discussions with inspectors had often been the most valuable part of the inspection. Fitz-Gibbon (1999, p. 107) reports the outcome of her question to headteachers: How much information of use to you in improving schooling did you gain from your inspection?

*Since this question in a sense went to the heart of the slogan for OfSTED 'Improvement through inspection', only 4 headteachers reported having learnt nothing; 14 reported 'not much'; 34 reported 'some' (the middle of the scale) 28 reported 'quite a lot' and 5 reported 'a large amount'. The modal response was thus 40 per cent of the sample in the middle of the scale suggesting that had learnt something in between 'not much' and 'quite a lot'; a result not overwhelmingly positive nor overwhelmingly negative. (p. 107)*

Secondary school S2 in this study is more aligned to the modal response described above, with secondary school S1 reporting that they had not learned very much. None of the primary school headteachers felt that they had learned a great deal, but most agreed that there was

some value in the process, even if this was only to put improvement of teaching quality back on the agenda. Primary schools P2, P6 and P8 had received favourable inspection reports and had noted how this had raised staff morale. Overall, the teachers in these schools made more favourable responses to the questions put to them. This parallels the observations of Chapman (2001, p. 67) who identified how a range of factors can influence teachers' perceptions of the whole inspection process.

Certainly, a more positive approach was identified in the senior staff in secondary school S2, in comparison with S1. Within the primary schools, senior management teams tended to be small and it was usually the headteacher who made the most input at the interviews. If one of the factors influencing staff perceptions of inspection is the attitude of the senior management team, and where the team is dominated by the headteacher, there is a greater chance that his/her views will prevail.

### **Teacher tier**

Individual teachers spoke frequently during the interviews of the stress of inspections and of the strain of trying to provide the right performance. This supports Jeffrey and Woods' (1996, 1998) notion of deprofessionalising teachers that forces them to take a technician approach to their work:

*...professional uncertainty was induced (by the inspection), with teachers experiencing confusion, anomie, anxiety and doubt about their competence. They also suffered an assault on their personal selves.. this took the form of mortification, dehumanisation, the loss of pedagogic values and of harmony and changed and weakened commitment. One of the ways for teachers to cope with such trauma is by shifting identity and status from professional to technician (p. 325).*

Although this study has not focused on the psychological effects of inspection on teachers, the reports each week of suffering teachers in the *Times Educational Supplement* are

supported by the comments of teachers in this investigation; inspection induces unacceptable levels of stress and this has a negative effect on teacher effectiveness. This is supported by the research of Ouston, Fidler and Earley (1998a, p. 67). If stress is an inevitable dimension of a process of accountability, it cannot possibly support improvement in any meaningful or substantial way (Earley, 1999).

The teachers interviewed accepted that the process was essentially about accountability. They felt strongly that they were public employees and should be accountable. This supports the normative responsibility level and contrasts with the operational level regarding the stress involved. It is interesting that they emphasised during the interviews how stressful inspections were, but many wanted even shorter periods of notice, some even suggesting that inspectors should just arrived unannounced. This ties in with the debilitating effects of anticipation described by Sandbrook (1996) and Ouston, Fidler and Earley (1998a, p. 67). Most teachers interviewed felt well prepared for the process and that the process was well understood.

Reference to the data displayed in Figure 8.1 indicates just how well teachers felt prepared - mainly positive responses from all schools to questions 1-4. Only school, P4, expressed a poor understanding of the process and registered at least seven other negative responses, indicating an overall disappointment in the process. It is interesting to note that the headteacher of this school had expressed similar views when interviewed. This reflects the findings of Chapman (2001, p. 67) when he suggests that a school may be 'unlucky' in experiencing an inspection team that was poor at defining and building relationships with teachers. It is possible that the attitudes of the headteacher to the whole inspection process had a strong influence on the way staff perceived it, in a way similar to that reported by Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1995c, p. 13).

The rejection of the inspection as a vehicle for substantial improvement in teaching quality, however, does not support OfSTED's claim of improvement through inspection. It must be noted, however, that all schools felt that there had been a greater emphasis on improvement/development (Q.11) since the previous inspection, with only school S2 having a

split response. Interestingly, school S1 felt positively about this issue, but gave negative responses to questions 13-17.

The overwhelming view of the teachers interviewed was that the time available for quality discussion with, and advice from, inspectors was too brief. Feedback was inevitably rushed and considered too imprecise to be of value. Overall, this was the first area (Q.6) to draw a predominantly negative response. Both secondary schools rejected the notion that feedback had any substantial value. The majority of teachers, however, thought that it was accurate. Similarly, most schools, including both secondary schools, felt that feedback had not helped them understand their strengths and weaknesses. These findings are in-line with those of the Brunel University/Helix Consulting Group (1999), the House of Commons Select Committee (1999) and the work of Ferguson, Earley, Fidler and Ouston (2000). Those receiving good reports felt that their morale had been lifted, many felt depressed at being labelled 'satisfactory', or even worse, 'unsatisfactory'. Several teacher deaths have been reported in the media during the past year and the suicides have been linked to the pressure of inspection.

Hoy *et al.*, (2000, p. 29) highlight the recent lack of sustained challenge to the claims of OfSTED that inspection leads to an improvement in quality. Glover (1999, p. 165) concludes that there is a real danger that the existing OfSTED methodology may actually undermine rather than enhance the prospects for school development over time. The case of Stratford School (Snelling, 2001) is a good example where the processes of inspection are reported to have held up school development for a number of critical years.

## **Area 2 - Policies and strategies for action**

### **National tier**

Government policy lies at the heart of the changes that have taken place in school inspection through the creation of OfSTED in 1992. Kogan and Maden (1999, p. 10)) see inspection as



a tool of government and management, its nature being affected by the policies that it is meant to advance and reinforce. They write of the school evaluators (OfSTED and its sub-contractors) having unprecedented power and resources on the basis of explicit assumptions of what constitutes school effectiveness and what will cause improvement. These powers lie within the authority vested in OfSTED. Bolton (1995, p. 34) has argued that the creation of OfSTED was to limit the capacity of HMI and, particularly, HMCI in criticising government policy and their overall influence on policy-makers. Five years later, the outspoken and frequently criticised offerings of the last HMCI would not fully support Bolton's view. The government policies and inspection *Frameworks* and supporting handbooks examined during this investigation indicate a linear progression in their development over time and comprehensiveness that has representatives from overseas filing into OfSTED to research the system (interview with Senior HMI OfSTED March 2000).

An examination during the investigation of the most recent version of the Framework (1999), effective from January 2000, reveals the most detailed criteria to date for evaluating the quality of teaching, further evidence of the strength of the normative level. Some significant changes have gradually been introduced over the past seven years, for example, the dropping of the notion that inspectors can easily determine the capabilities of pupils in a classroom. Fitz-Gibbon (1999, p. 115) referred to the lack of apology or compensation to schools damaged by those methods, which are now admitted to be indefensible. Reference has been made in this investigation to the House of Commons Select Committee Report (1999) and its conclusion that more research is required to establish the reliability and validity of lesson observation data. This concurs with the views of Glover (1999), Fitz-Gibbon (1999) and others who question OfSTED methodology.

## **LEA tier**

The early marginalisation of the LEA has been well documented (DuQuesney 1995, p. 105). This arose from top-slicing of funding from central government to LEAs and resulted in a rapid decline in inspection and advisory service provision. DuQuesney (1995) argues that this

was in essence a matter of restricting control at the local level and a means of making LEAs more accountable. In the five years since she wrote the article, many LEAs have themselves been inspected and some have been considered as failures (OfSTED 2000 - Waltham Forest) and private companies enlisted to take control of them. The interviews with senior inspectors in the four LEAs suggest weaknesses at both the normative and operational levels. The relationship with OfSTED had changed considerably since the introduction of LEA inspections. In a sense, schools and the LEAs share a similar position relative to the authority exerted by OfSTED. With the devolvement of more funding to schools (*TES* 2 June 2000), and in the aftermath of the GMS movement, it is not surprising that LEAs are still struggling to find a role.

All four LEA inspectors commented upon the enormous pressure that they were under, with one shire county inspector being given 40 schools to oversee. Kogan (1999, p.23) and others (Earley 1996, Fitz-Gibbon 1996) commented on the vast sums of money spent by OfSTED, currently, upwards of £150M per annum and the labour intensity of a single inspection (up to 65 inspector days in a large comprehensive school). It is not surprising that, with such comparatively limited resources, LEAs are struggling to make an impact. In addition, they reported the importance of maintaining their own professional status, as registered inspectors and team members, by seeking contracts with OfSTED or joining teams organised by other agencies. Some LEAs have targets for income generation, which add to the pressure.

The investigation revealed that the principal function of the LEA seemed to be to prepare schools for an inspection and provide assistance afterwards to complete the action plan. No extensive reviews were taking place and very few policies for improving the quality of teaching were offered at LEA level. Glover (2000, p. 163), however, highlights the sustained efforts made by some LEAs to help schools make a recovery after receiving a poor report. Inspectors reported low morale within the local services they represent, and the feeling that they were being made scapegoats was a common view and commensurate with those of DuQuesney (1995). Such opposition to the efforts of LEAs to help schools prepare for inspection is reported in the most recent HMCI Annual Report (OfSTED 2000) which complains that LEAs:

*Continue 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 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. (p. 72).*

Ferguson *et al.*, (2000, p. 25) comments that this suggests that LEA inspectors are less capable than OfSTED inspectors, but points out that a considerable number of part-time OfSTED inspectors are actually employed by LEAs. He goes on to highlight the critical role of the LEA inspectors in helping a school prepare thoroughly in order to avoid the consequences of possible failure.

The LEA inspectors interviewed did report the value of having national criteria for judging quality and these had, by necessity, been adopted. This ties in with the view expressed by the senior HMI interviewed. This is at odds, however, with researchers who claim that OfSTED's models of effectiveness do not draw on the extensive school improvement and school effectiveness research (Glover and Law 1999, p. 148). It is interesting to note the momentum being gained by the self-evaluation/inspection movement (Hoy *et al.*, 2000) and the extent to which the new *Framework* (1999) details how schools can begin the process, using OfSTED criteria. Ferguson *et al.*, (2000, p. 152) are not alone in highlighting the significant role LEAs could play in assisting schools with self-inspection. Could this be the true meaning of *losing an empire and finding a role?*

With specific reference to improving the quality of teaching through the process, the role of the LEA is weak at both the normative and operational levels. During this investigation it was found that:

- few policies or strategies are in existence to promote improvement and none were offered for examination during the interviews;

- only one LEA wrote summaries of the inspection reports;
- no LEAs supported any local systematic monitoring of teaching quality;
- local appraisal schemes had not been pursued.

There were signs, however, that the four LEAs were becoming increasingly interested in school self-evaluation. This relates favourably with the findings of Ferguson *et al.*, (2000, p. 96-97) survey of headteachers who believed that LEAs were an under-used asset. Most wanted their LEAs involved in inspections so that they could make a contribution to the decision-making process at team meetings. The House of Commons Select Committee Report (1999), however, did not seem to have engaged in much discussion of the LEA's role or the mechanisms by which a local perspective might complement or contribute to the outcomes of an OfSTED inspection; a further indication of the weakness of the normative responsibility of the LEA. Similarly, the vague references by the Select Committee to LEA inspectors continuing to make 'drop-in' visits as part of their work in monitoring standards indicates an equally weak operational role.

## **School tier**

At the institutional tier, the normative levels of responsibility are clearly defined. Successive *Frameworks*, handbooks and guidance documents detail exactly what a school must do in preparation for an inspection. It is also clear what constitutes good quality teaching and what are the characteristics of unsatisfactory teaching.

The investigation established that:

- members of senior management teams felt generally well supported by the LEA, but all had bought in advice from private consultants;

- most expressed dissatisfaction with the LEA post-inspection, especially if the report was favourable;
- none indicated any formal strategy by the LEA for supporting schools.

Researchers have highlighted the need for local teams to support failing schools at the expense of those succeeding (Ferguson *et al.*, 2000, p 52-53, 64, 97). At least two schools in the survey had not received a visit to discuss the report in eight months that had elapsed since the findings were published.

All schools expressed the view that they felt part of a national approach towards school improvement (Q12). This was the only question to receive 100 per cent positive responses. School S1 did not belong to a local scheme to improve the quality of teaching, but school S2 did (Q 13). Overall, school S2 had a more positive approach to school inspection and improvement and this may account for the more positive response from the teachers in this school compared with school S1. Of the primary schools in the study, all were aware that they were part of a national drive to improve teaching standards (Q.12), but only schools P1, P5 and P6 were aware of a local approach (Q 13).

Most schools did not have a regular programme of classroom observation. This suggests that headteachers were reluctant to carry out lesson observation, which supports the findings of Lowe (1998).

The examination of 100 reports on overall teaching quality confirms the widely expressed view that they are vague and lacking in sufficient detail to be helpful. None of the schools could provide a written policy of any substance that promoted the systematic improvement of teaching. Although most said that they interviewed and had professional dialogue with teachers, this was not borne out by the teachers themselves. At this operational level, institutions appear weak. Most schools did not systematically monitor teaching quality and, even in the largest schools, the role of professional tutor was particularly under-developed -

an interesting fact, bearing in mind that this role was a major recommendation of the 'James' Report as long ago as 1972. Although most senior staff interviewed talked freely of adopting OfSTED's criteria for monitoring teaching quality, none were familiar with the contents of the revised Handbook (OfSTED 1999).

It may be that schools are still struggling to cope with the additional workload created by other recent national initiatives. They are aware of the broader picture, but not necessarily the detail. For example, unless a school is about to be inspected, the staff would not see familiarisation of the most recent inspection framework as a priority. Where the school had a member of staff taking on the role of professional tutor, there was more chance that this would occur.

### **Teacher tier**

Overall, the investigation demonstrated that teachers were well prepared for inspection and understood the policies and strategies of OfSTED, indicating a strong normative link between teachers, schools and the policymakers. The link between the LEA and individual teachers by contrast was found to be much weaker. Most teachers reported that they did feel part of a national strategy to promote improvement, but this was weaker at the local level. On the other hand, within school, they did not generally feel supported by systematic and comprehensive policies and strategies of which they were an intrinsic part. School S2 reported the existence of a teaching and learning policy and a whole-school approach to school improvement. Half of the primary schools had a teaching and learning policy and these tended to have more positive responses in other areas. Only primary schools P2, P6 and P8 had very positive responses overall and especially for familiarisation with policies. None, however, were able to see the policies being translated into practice; none, overall, reported any discussion on their teaching grades since the last inspection.

If schools are moving towards school self-evaluation, more precise policies will be essential if they are to succeed (Ferguson *et al.*, 2000, p. 147-8).

### **Area 3 - the use of collected data and feedback**

#### **National tier**

The data accumulated by OfSTED are considerable and unprecedented in volume. In an earlier investigation into the feasibility of using classroom observations in OfSTED inspections to obtain data for educational research (Snelling 1999, p.7), the following data (Table 8.1) were obtained from the statistics section at OfSTED.

#### **Schools inspected in 1996/97**

##### **Primary schools**

Total number of lessons	296910
Total observation time (mins)	9211301
Average observation time (mins)	31

##### **Secondary schools**

Total number of lessons	92917
Total observation time (mins)	3969775
Average observation time (mins)	43

**Table 8.1 Number of lessons and time spent 1996/97**

This gives a total of **389827** individual lesson observations, the grades of which are recorded on OfSTED's database. It has been stated that these statistical data form the basis of judgements made in HMCI's Annual Reports and for answering parliamentary questions. Judgements of the quality of teaching in the classroom are made on a seven point scale. The validity of these data and the methodology employed to obtain them has been questioned by

Fitz-Gibbon (1999), and by Mortimore and Goldstein (1999 - evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee). The objections of these researchers include:

- inspectors have insufficient expertise in all the areas they inspect;
- lesson observation times are too short (see above);
- the methodology is flawed;
- inspectors' training is inadequate;
- there is bias towards reporting negative attributes;
- although there is a seven point scale, inspectors are reluctant to make very high or low judgements;
- the validity of observation grades has not been tested;
- the quality of teaching grades are inconsistent with the knowledge of the teacher by the head and LEA.

Teachers, school leaders and researchers have questioned the validity of judgements made where teachers are 'playing safe'; teaching to a formula to get through rather than excel. This comment was made by many of the teachers interviewed.

From the limited evidence available during this investigation, it would seem that the current database held by OfSTED is considerably under-used. Richards (1997, p.15) is not alone in stating that OfSTED, with its massive database, is in a pivotal position to contribute meaningfully to a national professional 'conversation' about the state of teaching.

The proportion of unsatisfactory lessons, however, is a trigger towards placing a school in special measures or serious weaknesses. The new *Framework* (OfSTED 1999) is designed to ensure that overall teaching quality within a school is more likely to be unsatisfactory by tinkering with the criteria, as reported earlier:

*Teaching overall is likely to be unsatisfactory if more than approximately one in ten lessons are so judged. If these contain poor or very poor teaching, or the proportion*



*is higher than one in eight, you will need to consider whether the school has serious weaknesses. (page 48).*

This highlights the problem of shifting the criteria and the satisfactory/unsatisfactory threshold over a number of years, and then drawing comparative conclusions from them, which are published nationally. The commentaries on teaching quality, however, in HMCI's Annual Reports examined during this investigation are found to be remarkably superficial.

Nevertheless, the country does now have a set of teaching qualities which, as OfSTED correctly points out, can be used as national benchmarks. These will form the basis of the next move, which is predicted to be school self-evaluation/inspection (Brighouse 1995, Sandbrook, 1996, Grubb, 1999, Ferguson *et al.*, 2000).

Although questionable methods may be employed, at the normative level, the position of OfSTED is very strong. It maintains strict control of the system (Grubb 1999) and, through its power to inspect at the local level, it now exerts considerable control and influence over LEAs (Maden, 1995 and Ferguson *et al.*, 2000). Sandbrook (1996, pp. 70-81), Jeffrey and Woods (1996, p. 325) and Cuckle and Broadhead (1999, p. 177) have written of the fear of failure at the heart of the system and the stress for some teachers has led to despair or even suicide. The constant references to the OfSTED activities in the *Times Educational Supplement* each week are evidence enough of the on-going stress of the process. The significance OfSTED attaches to its contractors following procedures and their current strategy of monitoring one in three inspections, is an indication of its strength at both the normative and operational level.

This investigation did reveal an element of cynicism over the accuracy of grades awarded by inspectors, although over 80 per cent of teachers surveyed thought the process fair and the gradings accurate.

The centrally held data on school performance in South Australia is made available to schools who, in turn, must publish their own performance against these national benchmarks. It does appear that the Australians work together on the interpretation and application of such data.

This contrasts with OfSTED's procedures of publishing statistical statements, which are then challenged by others. A good example is the evidence given by OfSTED to the Select Committee on the outcome of dual observation, which was subsequently challenged by Mortimore and Goldstein (1999 - evidence to the Select Committee).

It is also worth re-stating the conclusion of the Select Committee that more research is indeed required to establish the reliability and validity of lesson observation data. Currently, OfSTED has no plans to conduct this.

### **LEA tier**

At the LEA tier, little evidence was found of explicit policies or systematically applied policies to complement the work of OfSTED. As reported earlier, only one of the LEAs examined produced a synthesis of report findings to inform the education committee, or for use in determining future support strategies and training needs.

All inspectors complained of over-work and a simple lack of time to respond to both the demands of OfSTED and the schools they were trying to support.

An examination of the data available on teaching quality in the 100 reports examined, however, does demonstrate the superficiality of these and a certain vagueness, making them of limited use for development purposes by the LEA. This is commensurate with the findings of Ferguson *et al.*, (2000).

Similarly, a further examination of key issues for action relating to teaching illustrates a lack of detail and precision, making them of limited use to the LEA. LEA inspectors commented that the reports rarely told them what they did not already know.

Subject inspectors in some LEAs analysed relevant parts of the report and this analysis was used to inform the LEA's development plan. It is surprising that none of the four LEAs

investigated sought the teaching profiles provided to schools at the end of an inspection to create an LEA-wide picture.

The lack of systematic and rigorous support found in the LEAs investigated, however, is commensurate with comments made in the last HMCI report that there are no current signs of LEAs being directly responsible for raising standards (1998/1999 HMCI Annual Report para. 378). This is further evidence of the weakness of LEAs at both the normative and operational levels.

### **School tier**

At the institutional level, the investigation demonstrates a willingness to improve and a recognition that a national Framework for judging quality was in place. Few schools had detailed teaching policies or staff development handbooks that referred to monitoring teaching quality.

Lesson observation did not occur on a regular basis and, in all but one school, this was on an *ad hoc* basis. Senior staff reported that they did not feel confident in judging teaching quality and lacked training in basic observational skills. Many were uncomfortable with the concept and simply did not wish to make judgements about the teaching qualities of colleagues.

The teachers in school S2 did report that classroom observation evidence was being collected, but no collective statistical data on teaching were being analysed. This contrasts with school S1 where very little classroom observation was taking place and no data were available.

The collective data, by school, show that the majority of teachers in all schools did not report any discussion with senior staff regarding the grades they obtained during the inspection. Individually, however, the picture is different, with a third of teachers across all schools receiving some discussion with senior staff. There is little difference between primary and secondary schools. Primary schools P2, P6 and P8 had a higher proportion of feedback. Overall, there was a resistance in all schools to grading teaching quality.

The data provided by the inspection were not used in conjunction with teacher appraisal, which was in operation in only one school investigated.

It is unclear how the data obtained from inspection will form part of the DfEE programme of performance management to be introduced in September 2000 (although the High Court decision, 14 July, 2000, to quash the regulations governing the introduction through an action brought by the National Union of Teachers, will postpone this for the foreseeable future). What seems apparent, however, is the move towards Australian system, whereby schools use centrally held data to make their own comparisons and judgements about performance, in line with the recommendations of Ferguson and Earley, (2000, p. 22) and Ferguson *et al.*, (2000 . Ch. 10)

On a more positive note, most schools investigated stated that a good report on teaching had raised morale and some heads had used the statistical data obtained to promote the school to prospective parents.

It cannot be said that the overall grading process was put to any significant use by schools. Most senior teachers freely admitted that no reference had been made to the grades obtained within a very short period after the inspection. The comments received from the headteachers and senior teachers interviewed during this investigation support Lowe's view (1998) that they are reluctant to become involved in monitoring and advising on teaching quality. Similarly, the research of Aris, Davies and Johnson (1998) highlights the effects of a lack of teaching policies within schools and the failure of teachers to grasp what is expected of them in terms of standards and qualities of teaching.

### **Teacher tier**

As reported previously, some teachers reported tearing up their grading sheets without bothering to read them, such was the contempt felt for the process. At least four schools had

agreed at staff meetings, following the inspection, that the grades were of little value and that the written commentary on teaching had been too superficial to be of any value, although some areas for development had been identified. Grubb (1999, p. 78) pointed out that many teachers find the whole process so distressing and illegitimate that they are unwilling to respond to the recommendations that come from it.

During the inspection, teachers are given on-going feedback, although Grubb (1999, p. 76) points out that the practices of individual teams vary enormously - as pointed out earlier in this investigation. The limitations of rushed verbal feedback have already been considered, yet teachers value this opportunity and are disappointed that this is not more detailed. They did not find the receipt of a data sheet some weeks after the inspection to be of any practical use and, as reported above, many refused to accept the legitimacy of them. Most teachers reported that they would prefer a written commentary on their teaching. The resource and legal implications of this are, of course, enormous. It is difficult to comment further on the use teachers make of the hard data obtained from an inspection, although some teachers did comment that, as they had received high grades, they mentioned these in job applications.

In secondary school S1, the majority of teachers did not feel that feedback helped them to understand their strengths and weaknesses (Q9). At least half of the teachers in secondary school S2 felt the same. That so many teachers in primary schools (P3, P4, P6, and P7) were also unconvinced that feedback had helped them understand how to improve their teaching, is equally disturbing. Similarly, only one school (P2) had the majority of teachers believing that the grading system was valuable (Q 10).

It is clear from the aggregated responses that the principle of feedback is welcomed by most teachers, but the high proportion of dissatisfaction with the process (42 per cent) indicates a major area for review by OfSTED. Chapman (2001, p. 69) points out that, where teachers view the OfSTED process as a tool for improvement, teachers have the most positive interactions, and also consider the feedback received the most useful. Where feedback is well constructed and positively received, teachers are more likely to change their classroom practice. That the majority of teachers in most of the survey schools did not find the process

of feedback valuable is a significant finding and supports the conclusions of Ferguson *et al.*, (2000, p. 143) and the earlier work of Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1996a, p.339) who reported that only one-third of teachers intended to change their classroom practice as a result of OfSTED inspections. Chapman's study (2001, p. 63) found that 50 per cent of teachers felt that they would change their classroom practices, representing a small improvement since the earlier research of Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1996), and Fidler *et al.*, (1994) who highlighted the importance that teachers attached to both written and verbal feedback.

#### **Area 4 - A systematic approach to improving teaching quality**

##### **National tier**

This investigation could not establish that there was an explicit, consistent and systematic national approach to the improvement of teaching quality in state schools. In other words, there is no effective national strategy. Rather, it is implied that OfSTED systems will bring about improvement. This notion is largely unproven, with leading educational researchers (Mortimore and Goldstein 1999) questioning OfSTED's methodology and the validity of the interpretation of its own data.

It has been argued earlier in this investigation that the quality of teaching was regarded as a secondary issue in the first *Framework* for the inspection of schools (OfSTED, 1992). It was to be reported under 'contributory factors'. The second and third *Frameworks* place increasing emphasis on reporting the quality of teaching.

OfSTED now claims (interview with senior HMI) that the current *Framework* (2000) provides a national model of what constitutes the qualities of satisfactory and unsatisfactory teaching. It was further argued that the changing emphasis on certain characteristics of teaching made it inevitable that more teachers would have unsatisfactory grades.

At the same time that OfSTED was producing the new *Framework*, the DfEE had commissioned a commercial organisation, Hay/McBer to:

*....provide a framework describing effective teaching. Its purpose was to help take forward the proposals in the Green Paper, 'Teachers: meeting the challenge of change'. We set out to create a vivid description of what effective teachers do in practice at different stages in the profession. (DfEE, June 2000, introduction to the report findings).*

The report is not available in its entirety at the time of writing, but it would seem that education now has a number of national models, which define the qualities of effective teaching:

the competencies defined by the Teacher Training Agency;  
the OfSTED Framework (1999, effective from January 2000);  
the DfEE Framework described above, and effective from September 2000.

The value of the Hay/McBer report is that it does highlight the need for a systematic, national approach. The debate that this latest survey will engender may move the process on. Hay/McBer conclude:

*Our research findings can take their place in the strategy of modernising the teaching profession by supporting a whole range of management processes deployed within schools: performance management, selection, career planning and professional development. (page 2).*

It is, of course, possible that the present proposals to take teachers through a threshold for higher payments require a set of criteria not currently in existence. The Hay/McBer model, with its dictionary of definitions, gives a template from which assessors will be able to make their judgements. It is claimed by Hay/McBer that the model also allows for the identification

of outstanding teachers. The DfEE can claim to have its own set of criteria which loosely relate to those devised by OfSTED. Applying the Becher/Kogan model, it is clear that the normative level of responsibility is well-established with OfSTED, but yet to be established with the DfEE; as a systematic national approach to teacher evaluation, it is weak overall. At the operational level, the influence of OfSTED at LEA, school and individual level is very strong.

### **LEA tier**

At the local level, the evidence given by the four LEA inspectors suggests weakness in the provision of a systematic approach to the improvement of teaching quality. Indeed, one of the on-going criticisms of OfSTED and others is that LEAs are giving insufficient direction to schools and are making little improvement to standards (OfSTED 1999a, 2000c/d).

During the interviews with senior inspectors, those in the larger shire counties emphasised the need to concentrate most of their support in the schools deemed to be have serious weaknesses or to be failing. On the other hand, most LEA advisers and inspectors are also trained OfSTED inspectors, but it has been pointed out that many are given targets to raise money (a quite extraordinary situation for a locally funded service).

With the pressure on inspectors/advisers' time, it is not surprising that, at both normative and operational levels, their influence appears to be weak.

There was no evidence of any systematic training of inspectors in classroom observation. What takes place has been on an *ad hoc* basis, with OfSTED training courses being cited as the main source of training. Fitz-Gibbon (1996, p. 204-207) has argued that most national and LEA inspectors and advisers remain poorly trained and frequently make judgements in areas where they have little personal expertise or knowledge.



Fitz-Gibbon's criticism (1995, p.102) that a classroom observer with limited time (and training) cannot possibly measure a teacher's expectations, remains unchallenged, yet it appears boldly as one of the Hay/McBer characteristics of effective teachers and is lifted directly from the OfSTED Framework - the wording, interestingly, is identical:

*....Effective teachers set high expectations for the pupils and communicate them directly to the pupils. They challenge and inspire pupils, expecting the most from them, so as to deepen their knowledge and understanding. (Hay/McBer 2000 section 1.2.5. and OFSTED 1999 p.46).*

Other statements within the above section of the Hay/McBer report can easily be paraphrased from that in the OfSTED Framework. The Internet version of the report gives no more guidance on how expectations are to be measured than the OfSTED Frameworks and handbooks.

In many respects, LEAs are no better informed than schools. It is difficult not to conclude that the sphere of influence of LEAs has been systematically eroded since the establishment of OfSTED. From this investigation, it appears that schools as well as OfSTED believe that LEAs are achieving little in improving standards.

At the normative level, the processes to inspect a school are clearly understood and schools are generally well prepared. This investigation has established that schools generally know what is expected of them and that most LEAs provide additional support beforehand. As preparation has become more sophisticated, schools have learnt how to work the system to their advantage, and that both inspectors and teachers have become part of an elaborate game.

The move towards school self-evaluation and assisted self-review, as occurs in some Australian states, was considered by most LEA inspectors as the next step in which they would play a more structured and informed part. This, linked with a national approach to

performance management, was considered a positive move, although the system of appointing external assessors and advisers would undermine the position of the LEA further.

Although there was considerable optimism within each LEA reviewed, none could produce evidence of a systematic approach to the improvement of teaching quality, other than an initial response to recent DfEE initiatives, such as Performance Management.

### **School tier**

All senior staff interviewed believed that they were part of a national approach towards improving teaching quality, yet staff in some schools, S1, P3, P4 and P7, were unaware of the school's policy on school improvement and reported that a teaching and learning policy had yet to be produced.

Classroom observation was not taking place on a regular basis in school S1, but was in school S2. In half the primary schools, teachers did not receive regular feedback and most did not participate in any discussion of grading.

As reported previously, senior school staff stated in the interviews that they are reluctant to observe and comment on the work of colleagues, and this may account for their reluctance to undertake further training. In this investigation, the staff interviewed felt that they lacked confidence and the professional expertise to be effective observers. They also felt overstretched with other responsibilities. Subject coordinators interviewed in primary schools stated that they were given several half days a year to observe lessons, but that this was totally inadequate to make any real impact. They had not received any training on how to conduct classroom observation. However, the introduction of Performance Management (DfEE 2000) has seen the invitation of all schools to training events across the country and this may herald the start of a systematic approach to classroom observation using both the DfEE threshold assessment materials and the criteria produced by Hay/McBer (2000). Although schools did not see a conflict between the DfEE and OfSTED, this was certainly

commented upon by LEAs interviewed. Overall, schools did not feel that inspections were having a major impact on improving the quality of teaching, especially in the long-term.

A common view was that schools did need a shake-up or, as the Americans put it, a wake-up call (Wilson, 1996). The imposition of a national system of performance management should alter the current lack of a systematic approach at school level indicated by this investigation.

Both staff interviewed, and those responding to the questionnaire, state that unacceptable stress is created by OfSTED inspections. Jeffrey and Woods (1996) and others have reported lowered teaching standards and even reduced pupil performance (Cullingford, 1998 and Fitz-Gibbon, 1999) as a result of stress. This was mentioned by all senior staff interviewed.

At the normative and operational level, schools would appear to be weak in terms of using inspections and the data obtained from them to improve the quality of teaching, although in other aspects, as stated above, there are strengths.

### **Teacher tier**

That only one-third of teachers answering the questionnaire indicated that there had been discussion about their teaching and the grades awarded since the inspection is an empirical measure of the importance schools attach to these data. When considering the data by school, the response overall was negative at all of the institutions (Q15). In only four primary schools, P2, P3, P4 and P8 and one secondary school S2, has the quality of teaching of most teachers been commented upon within the school since the last inspection (Q14). In only one primary school, P3, did the majority of teachers believe that the quality of their teaching had improved as a result of feedback and grading (Q 16). The link between having clear policies in place and a regular programme of feedback for teachers is clearly established in school P2 and, again, supports the findings of Chapman (2001, p. 68) commented on in the previous

section. Overall, however, these linkages are not strong indicating the need to develop a stronger and more systematic approach to this aspect of school improvement.

Interviewing and classroom observation, on the other hand, are very time-consuming and under current workloads, it is difficult to see how all of this vital human resource management can be achieved. Recent reports (*TES* 16.6.00) indicate that almost 180,000 teachers, representing 78.8 per cent of the 250,000 eligible teachers, have applied to be assessed to qualify for the additional salary allowance. Some headteachers are having to process up to 80 applications. As this involves substantial classroom observation, the implications for senior staff time, and the appointment of external assessors, is quite staggering. If inspection has not resulted in a detailed discussion and analysis of individual teaching qualities, performance management certainly will.

The survey findings, supported by teacher comment during the interviews, demonstrated that about 80 per cent of teachers across both phases found the process of feedback to be clear and analytical, yet most teachers replied that the process did not help them to understand their strengths and weaknesses. The questionnaire data were confirmed by the teachers interviewed. They were familiar with what was being judged and, in general, conformed to the system - in other words assimilated the orthodoxy (Lowe 1997, 1998), but did not believe it to be very effective. The teachers in school S2 had a mixed reaction to how the inspection had improved their teaching, whereas those in school S1 did not believe it had. That school S2 had more policies in place, is an indicator that a more systematic approach by the school is beginning to have an impact upon its teachers. That very little feedback to teachers is taking place in either secondary school is an indicator of how much a systematic approach is in its infancy.

In the primary phase, three schools, P3, P6 and P8, indicated an overall positive response to the questions. These schools had policies in place and the teachers felt that they were part of a more systematic approach. It is interesting to note that two of the schools were in LEAs requiring each school to produce a teaching and learning policy and actively encouraging classroom observation.

At the normative level, teachers seem to have readily accepted the orthodoxies referred to above. They were critical of not having an LEA or school teaching policy, which supports the research findings of Aris, Davies and Johnson (1998) that teachers did not always know exactly what was expected of them.

Although OfSTED argued that the inspection criteria were sufficient, it has taken an external, commercial company (Hay/McBer) to detail a model for effective teaching and define the qualities of outstanding teaching. The link with performance related pay is now almost completely in place. At the time of writing, the full report has not been published, but there is sufficient detail available to indicate that it could form the basis of school self-evaluation of teaching quality, eclipsing, it would seem, the efforts of OfSTED and bringing the process more into line with that in Australia. It is interesting to note that, in the 160 years of state inspections, HMI have failed to produce a template as comprehensive as that currently obtainable over the Internet and readily available to teachers, senior managers and governors. These criteria could well meet Aris, Davies and Johnson's (1998) proposed working document that would allow:

*teachers to analyse their teaching and set targets for improvement;*  
*the support team to make judgements about the quality of teaching against a set of*  
*criteria which teachers recognised as theirs;*  
*and teachers and evaluators to agree the findings. (p. 69)*

Feedback to teachers will still be a necessary component of classroom observation, be it during the process of inspection or teacher development. Teachers completing the questionnaire clearly valued the opportunity to receive an outsider's view of their work, but needed to be confident that the inspectors had professional credibility.

The challenge of Fitz-Gibbon and Forster (1999), that OfSTED has failed to demonstrate that inspectors have analytical skills to a degree that gives them authority in the interpretation of

complex data and research evidence, remains unanswered. Teachers in the survey and those interviewed would have valued the experience more if they:

- had more time;
- could have been more involved in the dialogue;
- feedback could have taken place after the inspection week when they would have had time to reflect more; and
- had received a written summary rather than the grouped gradings, which seem to be universally unpopular.

These observations are commensurate with the findings of Ferguson *et al.*, (2000), Fitz-Gibbon and Forster (1999) and the NUT survey (1998).

Clearly, teachers found feedback to be of some value, but insufficient to justify the enormous disruption the process created. Some teachers being interviewed found the process actually reduced the quality of their teaching; they tended to teach 'safe' lessons as reported by Ferguson *et al.*, (2000). It is a strange paradox that teachers demanded feedback, which was missing from earlier inspections, but are now critical when it is given. It might be better to avoid it rather than to do it badly.

Overall, the findings of this investigation, that only about one-third of teachers thought the process had improved their teaching, is commensurate with the findings of those researchers quoted earlier.

There is a growing body of evidence (Cullingford 1998, 1999) that inspection lowers pupils' attainment, especially when the inspection is held during the Spring term. Most teachers commented on the stressful aspects of inspection and how this affected their teaching adversely. Many researchers (Sandbrook, 1996) equate the stress of inspection to divorce and bereavement. The anti-climax and emotional drainage after inspection was frequently mentioned by teachers during this investigation and is commensurate with the findings of

Ferguson *et al.*, (2000, p.50). A number of teachers and senior staff being interviewed had considered that teams should just arrive at a school unannounced. There are enormous practical implications and unconsidered psychological problems with this notion, but it should be noted that the lead in time for inspections has been reduced considerably (OfSTED, 1999). Sandbrook (1996) and others have likened the process of inspection to a trial, with teachers waiting for the guilty or not guilty verdict. This pass/fail element generates a climate of fear, which Deming (1986), in the eighth of his fourteen points, has stated that it is vital that an organisation should 'drive out fear'. Hoy *et al.*, (2000, p. 33) reinforce this view by stating that:

*A culture of naming and shaming is not helpful in promoting the pursuit of excellence. Professional development is enhanced more effectively through the recognition of effort.*

This investigation did not find the level of stress as high as suggested by Woods and Jeffrey (1996), but it was a topic raised in every school examined. Glover (1999, p.165) concludes that:

*There is a real danger that OfSTED methodology may actually undermine rather than enhance the prospects for school improvement over time - ironically, in those schools which need to improve the most.*

Teachers were not overwhelmingly convinced that feedback had helped them to identify their strengths and weaknesses, but had generally welcomed the opportunity the inspection had given for them to reflect on their classroom practice. This was made quite clear in the responses to the questionnaire and by those teachers being interviewed. Primary school teachers found the process more helpful than those in secondary schools. The interviews had suggested that primary teachers had generally been seen more often and that their feedback had been more detailed. The variation in team quality, identified by Grubb (1999) and Kent (2000), is a major factor in determining the quality of feedback. The system, however,

dictates against more detailed and considered feedback supporting the criticisms of Thomas (1999) and Lonsdale and Parsons (1998), whose critique refers to *Inspection and the school improvement hoax*. As with Sandbrook (1996), they return in their criticism of the system to the fear generated by inspection and how this cannot support improvement.

That most teachers felt that inspection had not helped them improve their classroom practice is the most significant finding of this investigation. Teachers are generally dissatisfied with the process. The findings of this investigation correspond with those of the NUT survey (1998). In the NUT survey, two-thirds of the respondents did not believe that inspection had helped with school improvement. In this investigation the proportion is very close, with only 32 per cent believing that the process had improved their teaching.

## Summary

The analysis has demonstrated the general acceptance and effectiveness of inspection as a vehicle for accountability, but supports the view of Earley (1996) that the claim of improvement through inspection by OfSTED is largely unproven. Whilst OfSTED persists in its mission to bring about improvement through inspection, the House of Commons Select Committee rejects the notion of giving advice. Although inspection is meeting the requirements of John Major's Parent's Charter, parental interest in the process appears minimal.

LEAs, schools and individual teachers have all reported that they have gained little from inspection overall, and learnt little that they did not already know. There is little to demonstrate that the data obtained from inspection are being used to improve the overall quality of provision. There have been numerous studies that indicate that the process actually slows down and, in some cases, reverses progress in school development and pupil attainment.



Some teachers felt that inspection had made some improvement to their teaching, although two-thirds in this investigation did not. The main areas for improvement in the process included more time for considered feedback, less notice of inspection, written feedback to match the oral comments at the end of the inspection and a further reduction in the stress experienced by teachers.

This study has indicated that when schools have clear policies regarding the improvement of teaching quality, and when classroom observation is organised systematically and teachers are given substantial feedback, improved teaching standards result. As Chapman (2001, p. 67) has demonstrated, schools regarding inspection as a developmental process and taking a positive view of the process are more likely to see change in the practices of classroom teachers.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

#### **Introduction**

This final chapter draws conclusions from the investigation and analysis of the research findings. Recommendations are made in light of these conclusions to improve the current process of inspection and ways are identified in which the system could be enhanced to help teachers develop the quality of their teaching. The significance and limitations of the study, and the extent to which the research questions have been answered, are considered.

#### **Overview of findings**

This overview is divided into three main sections. The first addresses the four main research questions: is inspection for accountability or advice; are there policies and strategies for action; what use is made of collected data and how effective is feedback; is there a systematic approach to improving teaching quality?

The second considers the application of the models of Becher and Kogan (1980) and Simkins (1997) to this study.

Finally, consideration is given to the implied model of improvement.

#### **Area 1 - Is Inspection for accountability or advice?**

The investigation highlighted the confusion that still exists over this issue at the national level. The House of Commons Select Committee (1999) was quite clear that inspection was about accountability and not giving advice. This contradicts the intention of OfSTED, evident in the

2000 edition of the *Framework* and subsequent advice to inspectors, that feedback to teachers should help them understand their weaknesses. At the operational level, there was considerable evidence that inspectors did give much off-the-record advice that was appreciated by schools and teachers. The evidence of Fidler *et al.*, (1998c, p. 1) to the House of Commons Select Committee, after three national surveys in 1998 and on-going research into the effects of inspection since 1994, identifies a number of strengths relevant to this study. These are mainly that the inspection framework provides a useful guide for staff development; inspections have contributed to an increased attention on teaching and learning; and the grading system and associated feedback provides useful information for managers and teachers. Whilst the research of Fidler *et al.*, (1998c, p. 1) sought the views of mainly headteachers, this investigation was aimed principally at classroom teachers, who accepted the view that inspection was for accountability purposes (in line with the findings of Chapman, 2001), but did not accept that inspection helped them to improve their teaching. This investigation, however, supports the evidence of Fidler *et al.*, (1998c, p. 4) that there is an inevitable tension between the aims of public accountability and the aiding of school improvement. This study highlighted the confusion generated by having three national models of teacher competence. The sections on teaching and the key issues for action in 100 school inspection reports were considered to be too vague and general to be of much use in helping to improve teaching. The ratio of 22 positive comments to 1 negative comment in the teaching sections of OfSTED school reports is offered as an indicator of the weighting of accountability to advice in such reports (see p. 122).

The investigation supports the claims of those describing the demise of LEAs (Sandbrook (1996) and, more recently, Bush *et al.*, (2000), and their marginalisation by OfSTED processes. Bush *et al.*, (2000, p. 26) report that only nine out of 41 LEAs inspected by OfSTED support their schools effectively. The LEAs' role in school improvement remains ambiguous and uncertain. The evidence sought from four senior inspectors in the LEAs examined confirms that the amount of advice they could offer schools was limited by the amount of time they had available and that the advice was often informal and *ad hoc*. Although those examined did not see a conflict between their twin role of inspector and

adviser, a lack of role definition has reduced both their normative and operational power (Simkins 1997) and their effectiveness at the normative and operational levels (Becher and Kogan, 1980, 1992).

The senior staff in all schools investigated stated that inspection was principally concerned with accountability and that they accepted that they should be accountable. However, as with the Brunel University/Helix Consulting Group (1999) study, headteachers did not feel that accountability was strongly improved by inspection. Similarly, the senior staff at all of the primary schools had little reservation in accepting that inspection was principally concerned with accountability, although there were stronger elements of advice during the second inspection. This is commensurate with the findings of Fidler *et al.*, (1998c, p. 3) and also supports the findings of Chapman (2001, p. 63), who found that 70 per cent of schools reported strong agreement that the main aim of inspection was for accountability. There was limited evidence to suggest that some schools had a more positive approach to inspection and that this had influenced staff perceptions. Such schools see inspection as an aid to improvement in line with the findings of Ouston and Davies (1998, p. 21). Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1995c, p. 13) and Chapman (2001, p. 67).

Teachers generally accepted that inspection should be concerned with accountability, but many questioned the OfSTED approach. Although the evidence presented in this study demonstrates that teachers were generally well-prepared and understood the process, the negative effects of stress were emphasised time and again, commensurate with the findings of Sandbrook (1996, pp. 70-81) Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1996, p. 340), Jeffrey and Woods (1996), Cuckle and Broadhead (1999, p. 177) and the evidence of Fidler *et al.*, (1998, p. 3) to the House of Commons Select Committee.

One of the prime purposes of inspection is to help teachers understand their strengths and weaknesses in order that they might improve their classroom practice. The majority of teachers in most schools in this study did not believe that this was the case.

## **Area 2 - Are there policies and strategies for action?**

Kogan and Maden (1999, p. 10) emphasise the unprecedented power of OfSTED and those sub-contractors working as their agents. They write of the explicit assumptions of what constitutes school effectiveness and what will cause improvement and the assumed efficacy of the inspection process in effecting change for the better. Lowe (1998) and Fidler *et al.*, (1998c) refer to the uncritical acceptance of the orthodoxies being promoted through the universal acceptance of the OfSTED Framework. The policies and frameworks produced by OfSTED are embodied in law and represent powerful normative and operational positions. OfSTED has produced a very clear outline of the characteristics of effective teaching and how they are to be judged. This study has shown that teaching quality can only be judged with any degree of national consistency through the clear definition of teaching qualities or competencies. That the DfEE has commissioned the Hay/McBer organisation to produce a set of competencies (see Ch. 2) and this now exists alongside those of the Teaching Training Agency and OfSTED, can only create further confusion. This study has highlighted the inconsistency of inspectors' judgements of teaching quality and the questionable use of national data on teaching quality to demonstrate improvement (Tomlinson 2001, p. 10). This is consistent with the conclusion of the House of Commons Select Committee (1999) that more research is required to establish the reliability and validity of lesson observation data.

This study could not establish the existence of an explicit national strategy for improving the quality of teaching, although the Performance Management Strategy (DfEE, 2000) does promote an examination of standards for teachers applying for Threshold Assessment, and may be considered as a step towards this.

The weakness of LEAs in providing adequate support for schools was highlighted in the most recent HMCI report (OfSTED 2000, p. 72) and the OfSTED/Audit Commission report on local authority support for school improvement (2001, pp. 3-4). This study found that few policies or strategies were in place to promote improvement in teaching quality. Only one of the LEAs examined in this investigation wrote summaries of inspection report entries on teaching quality. No LEA supported any systematic monitoring of teaching quality.

The senior staff in all schools felt that they were part of a national drive to improve standards in schools, but they were not generally aware of a specific strategy to improve teaching standards. The OfSTED Framework was repeatedly cited as the source of guidance, as it outlines the qualities of successful teaching as well as what constitutes unsuccessful teaching. Most schools were unaware of an explicit LEA strategy to improve the quality of teaching. Most schools investigated did not have a regular pattern of classroom observation and feedback to teachers. Four out of ten schools did not have a teaching and learning policy.

Teachers were aware that the government was trying to improve teaching standards, but six out of ten schools were unaware of any local scheme. Over half of the teachers were unaware of their own school's approach to improving teaching quality. It is difficult not to concur with the findings of Ferguson *et al.*, (2000, p. 147-8), 'If schools are moving towards school self-evaluation, more precise policies will be essential if they are to succeed'.

### **Area 3 - What use is made of collected data and how effective is feedback?**

Apart from informing Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools of data to be included in his Annual Report and in assisting with the answers to parliamentary questions, no widespread application of the vast amounts of data collected by OfSTED could be found. The validity of these data and the methodology employed to obtain them has been questioned by Fitz-Gibbon and Forster (1999) and by Mortimore and Goldstein in their evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee (1999). Giving evidence to the same Select Committee, Fidler *et al.*, (Oct. 1998, p. 3) stated 'There is a risk that the 'data' collected by inspectors will be used uncritically...The data in the OfSTED database is of differential quality...some limitations on validity are inherent and some are due to lack of quality in the inspection process'. The Select Committee (1999) concluded that more research was required to establish the reliability and validity of lesson observation data.

The data made available to LEAs were not routinely analysed by most of the senior inspectors interviewed. It was not possible to find any official local authority documents that used

collective statistical data to report on the quality of teaching in their schools, or to inform strategies for improving teaching. On the other hand, one unitary authority was beginning to work with the Hay/McBer organisation and intended to use the teaching qualities published by them and reported in this study. An examination of the data available on teaching quality in the 100 reports examined, however, does demonstrate the superficiality of these sections and a certain vagueness, making them of limited use for development purposes by the LEA. This is commensurate with the findings of Fitz-Gibbon (1996) and Ferguson *et al.*, (2000). Similarly, a further examination of key issues for action relating to teaching illustrates a lack of detail and precision, making them of limited use to the LEA. LEA inspectors commented that the reports rarely told them what they did not already know.

Schools made little use of the data provided on the quality of teaching following an inspection, other than for marketing purposes when the overall grades were considered to be very good.

Many teachers referred to the fact that no discussion had taken place with senior management about their individual grades and, in many schools, the grading forms were locked away never to see the light of day again. The majority of teachers in the secondary schools investigated did not feel that feedback had helped them understand their strengths and weaknesses. The majority of teachers in primary schools felt the same. In only one primary school did the majority of teachers feel that feedback was valuable. What is clear, however, is that most teachers welcome the principle of feedback, reflecting the findings of Fidler *et al.*, (1994) and Brimblecombe *et al.*, (1996), but have strong reservations about the way it is currently conducted. The principal recommendations by teachers to improve the process included: more time for constructive and more detailed dialogue at a time not immediately after the inspection; the opportunity to respond; final gradings (if they have to be given) should not be banded into groups. This final point was highlighted Fidler *et al.*, (1998b, p. 268) who pointed out that the move to broader bands tacitly admits the less than precise status of the performance grades or ratings. When the feedback was offered in a constructive and supportive way, teachers were more likely to be responsive and change their classroom practices, echoing the findings of Chapman (2001, p. 63).

#### **Area 4 - Is there a systematic approach to improving teaching quality?**

The amount of training inspectors receive in classroom observation is still minimal and HMI do not join inspectors in classrooms to monitor the accuracy of their comments and grades. Fitz-Gibbon's plea for OfSTED's methodology and validity to be tested remains unheeded, although the House of Commons Select Committee (1999) did conclude that this was, indeed, overdue. Although the systematic inspection of teaching quality is clearly in place, the seeds of a national, systematic approach to identifying levels of quality (Hay/McBer) are only just being established. The final step of developing a national strategy for improving teaching quality is not in place.

LEA inspectors are not subject to regular training in classroom observation and most depend on the occasional training days, such as those to support the national literacy strategy, organised by one of OfSTED's contractors. One of the recommendations of OfSTED/Audit Commission (2001, p. 53) is 'that there should be a national framework of competencies and of training for LEA officers, advisers and inspectors engaged in school improvement'.

Senior staff in schools generally reported a lack of training in classroom observation and a reluctance to judge colleagues. The onset of performance management, however, in the Autumn term of 2000 will force senior staff to make such judgements.

Finally, this study could not substantiate that teachers placed a high value on the feedback they received on the quality of their teaching, or found the comments to be particularly constructive and helpful. The inspection feedbacks were not seen as an integral part of a systematic approach to improving teaching quality at national, local or even school level.

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This investigation was unable to substantiate the claim that inspection improves the quality of teaching to any significant degree. The command and control model remains politically popular as a means of maintaining minimum standards. The naming and shaming of schools



failing to meet minimum standards has been a popular source of copy for newspapers, but is unproven as a mechanism for improving standards. Indeed, some once-failing schools, such as Stratford in east London, have demonstrated that the inspection process actually hampered improvement (Snelling, 2001).

### **The model applied throughout the study**

The framework for the research was described in the opening chapter and Chapter 2, and drew on the Becher and Kogan (1980) model used for analysing the relationships between the various dynamic components in higher education. This model has been supplemented as a unit of analysis by considering more contemporary accounts of power distribution within the state education system (Simkins 1997).

This study has sought to examine the relationships between the four tiers and identify strengths and weaknesses where they occur. In applying the models, it was possible to highlight the reasons for OfSTED's powerful and influential position and the corresponding weakness of the LEA at both normative and operational levels (see fig 9.1). The thickness in the arrows in Fig. 9.1 represents criteria power as described by Simkins (1997). This study has demonstrated the powerful and influential position of OfSTED, and the acceptance of the legislation by teachers, who mainly agree with the concept of accountability whilst not necessarily accepting that improvement results as a consequence of the process.

The vertical relationships are different in character. Where the horizontal links ensure normal day-to-day working, the vertical can involve what Becher and Kogan refer to as departures from convention (p. 17). They state that as long as the normative and operational modes are in phase with one another, the system as a whole can be said to be in dynamic equilibrium. When they become out of phase, some adjustment is necessary to avoid breakdown and to restore the possibility of normal functioning. Such tension has been recorded throughout this study. For example, the excessive workload of LEA inspectors and the burgeoning bureaucracy and demands of change across the whole system have generated tension at the

operational level. It might be argued that the normative and operational power of the LEA has been diminished deliberately to maintain, increase and sustain central power and influence. This weakness at local level was borne out by teacher and senior staff comments and, indeed, the LEA inspectors and advisers themselves during this investigation.

It is expected that the normative level would exercise dominance over the operational level, constituting at times of crisis, or tension, a solid framework of legally established procedures to ensure compliance. Not only is the power of OfSTED enshrined in legislation (Section 9 Education {Schools} Act 1992 and subsequent Acts), highly structured procedures have to be followed by both institutions and inspectors. These are subject to stringent scrutiny by HMI to ensure compliance at all levels. Under the threat of failure, schools readily comply with the normative values and the procedures, which they are obliged to follow. This was borne out by the comments of schools and individual teachers during this investigation, who had all experienced fear of failure and the tension created by the inspection process. In the space of several years, central government has defined what constitutes appropriate approaches to the teaching of literacy and numeracy and has established compliance through training and the subsequent inspection of implementation. The DfEE and OfSTED have added further support to the national cause by announcing the success of the initiatives. Under such powerful direction and control, deviation from national expectations at the operational level, seems unlikely. Inspectors ensure compliance as agents of this powerful central bureaucracy. Although teachers may be cynical of the claims of OfSTED for improvement, this investigation was unable to establish any non-compliance with the demands of the inspection, now firmly embedded in law and an emerging orthodoxy. The role of the LEA is no longer clearly defined by legislation and is, therefore, weak at the normative level (see fig 9.3); LEAs lack the criteria power described by Simkins (1997). This was borne out by the frustrations reported by the LEA inspectors and advisers. It is interesting to note the success of the first school to mount a successful legal challenge to an OfSTED report when the school was deemed to be failing (*TES* 1 December 2000). This may indicate the type of necessary adjustment within the system, suggested by Becher and Kogan, to maintain equilibrium, or as they put it, balanced tension. The publication of the joint OfSTED/Audit Commission report (2001) demonstrates further the increasingly powerful control of LEAs by OfSTED.

Becher and Kogan emphasise that relationships within the model are not just horizontal or vertical, but may be diagonal. In the application of this dimension of the model to the school inspection system, it was possible to demonstrate how OfSTED frequently by-passed the LEA to exercise direct influence on schools and individual teachers (see fig 9.1). This renders the LEA, in this case, a 'dormant partner', (Becher and Kogan, 1992, p. 23). By adopting a horizontal link between OfSTED and schools, the possibility of LEA variation in implementation at the operational level is avoided. This may be regarded as a political move to establish conformity in a short space of time, with the minimum of local opposition. It also by-passes those LEAs considered to be ineffective, but reduces the power of all LEAs in the process. The schools and individual teachers investigated constantly referred to the demands of OfSTED, but rarely referred to the LEA in the same way. The Australian approach to inspection, with its emphasis on partnership, implies a stronger two-way dialogue than exists in the English/Welsh model. To adopt this approach in England and Wales would require a shift in power from the centre at the very time when central authority has been so successfully established.

The current national approaches to performance management emphasise the direct diagonal linkage between central authority (OfSTED, DfEE) and the individual teacher. In this current government initiative, advisers and assessors verify the claims of teachers to meet nationally defined standards. In this sense, senior school staff and self-employed agents of central authority act at the operational level in direct accordance with normative requirements. To do otherwise would be in breach of contract and, possibly, risk future employment.

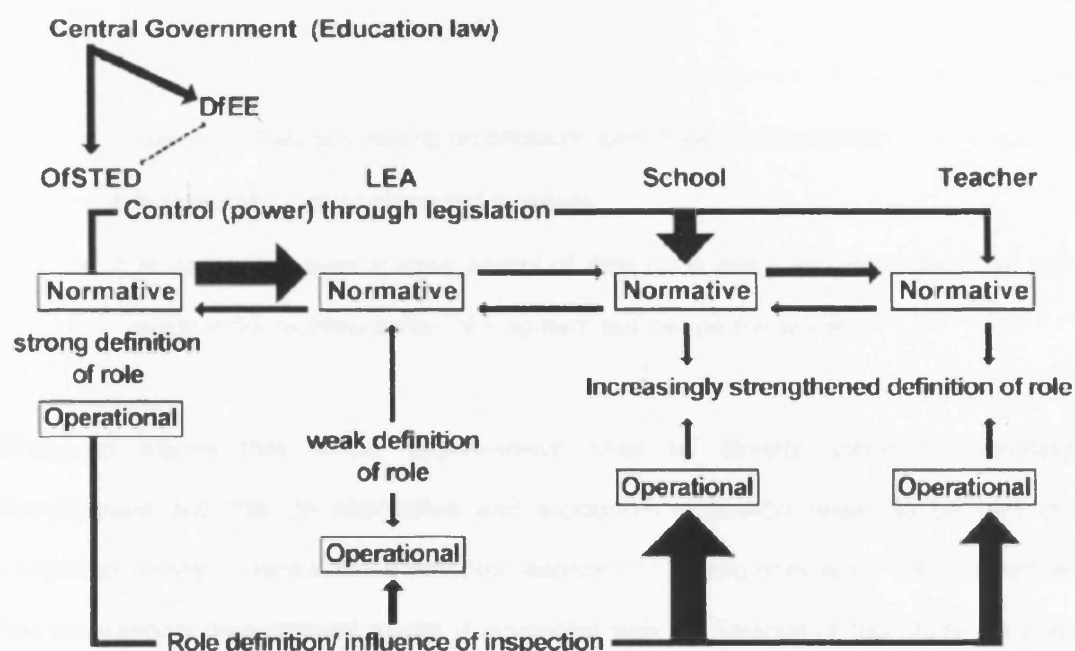


Figure 9.1 The relationship between the eight elements in the inspection process

In conclusion, this model has demonstrated how shifts in power and control have been established between the four tiers involved, how tiers can be by-passed, and how central control has been able to reduce the degree of freedom between operational and normative levels of operation. In other words, the difference between the two levels has been reduced considerably in the case of OfSTED inspections.

## Models of improvement

The model of improvement implied in the OfSTED process suggests a command and control approach. Such models are applied rigidly by organisations such as the military. The powerful central authority has substantial criteria, or normative, power in both cases, and uses strict methods of control, through inspection, to establish conformity. In the case of teaching, it was argued that the establishment of market accountability had reduced professional accountability (Ch.2, pp.22-28). The effects of this are likely to promote the deprofessionalism and technicist approach described by Jeffrey and Woods (1996, p. 325). This existing model of command and control contrasts with those promoting a more developmental approach. For those who believe that OfSTED inspections are a lever for school improvement at all levels, Chapman (2000, p. 57) offers the following reasons why the belief is flawed:

- *It uses only methods relying on pressure, giving very little support;*
- *It is threatening and judgmental in nature;*
- *It is conducted over a short period of time once every six years therefore not giving a fair representation of long-term teacher performance.*

Chapman argues that school improvement must be directly linked to professional development and that an alternative and supportive inspection needs to be part of an integrated, widely understood and accepted approach to raising standards. The preference for this professional development model is consistent with the findings of this study. A note of caution, however, is expressed by Walker and Scott (2000, p. 68) who point out that the effects of professional development have seldom been monitored. They argue that it is too often used for short-term gain and has no noticeable impact on long-term performance in the classroom.

## **The significance and limitations of the study**

### **Significance**

This study adds to the increasing body of evidence challenging OfSTED's claim of improving standards through inspection. OfSTED's own data, used to inform Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools' Annual Reports, confirms an improvement in all-round standards. This study indicates that teachers do not believe that their own teaching standards are improved significantly by the process. The stress induced by the current process is definitely viewed by teachers as being detrimental to their classroom practice.

The study supports the evidence of other researchers (Jeffrey and Woods, 1996, 1998) that teachers can be deprofessionalised by the process and reduced to a technician role rather than that of a reflective professional. They play safe and teach to a formula.

Following on from this, the study re-inforces the powerful effects of establishing orthodoxies, which become rapidly assimilated by educational professionals wishing to meet nationally stated success criteria

This research has been conducted by a full-time registered inspector, thus providing a rare 'insider' view of the inspection process. It has been a powerful influence in the consideration of current OfSTED practices and the nature of the professional dialogue to be established with senior staff and teachers in schools by the inspection company concerned. The outcomes of the survey have been made available to teams employed by this company and will be used in briefing future teams. It will, therefore, have some influence on those working within the field. For the inspection company involved, the survey will form part of the quality assurance processes demanded by OfSTED as part of the company's management plan.

For the schools who participated in the survey, feedback has been offered and this gives some assurance to teachers who may feel that their views have not been previously taken into consideration. In the case of one very dissatisfied teacher interviewed in the pilot study, who happened to be qualified as a team inspector, he was offered a place on a forthcoming inspection. As part of a secondary school inspection team, he was able to share his views further and influence the process accordingly by being an active practitioner.

Finally, the study sought to place the examination of the efficacy of inspection processes on improving teaching quality within the broader context of the four tiers of responsibility involved in the national approach to school inspection. The study did not seek to give an equal weighting to the examination of each tier, the school and teacher tiers being the most significant in answering the fundamental question, *does inspection improve teaching quality?* Nevertheless, the question could not be answered by considering the views of teachers and schools in isolation from the wider political and national/local dimensions. It was unusual to interview professionals at all levels, but this is justified by the national and local context in which the main findings are set. By adopting a wider approach, the nature of the relationships between the four tiers has been explored and a rationale for the current orthodoxy of school inspection, and its contribution to central control, established.

## **Limitations**

### **National tier**

Although the review of central documentation was a rewarding and revealing exercise, the outcome of the interview with the senior HMI resulted in a far more limited range of data than was expected. This was due to a weakness in the questions framed and suggests similarities with the experiences of Bush and Kogan (1982) and Ball (1994) when interviewing powerful people. In this case, the senior HMI was perceived to be guarded in his response and the interviewer was insufficiently skilled to elicit more detailed answers to some of the questions.

### **LEA tier**

Although considerable thought was given to the selection of four contrasting LEAs, difficulty was again experienced with the interviews. The questions to the senior inspectors needed to be more focused on supporting the improvement of teaching, but frequently resulted in expressions of personal frustration at task-overload and the view that they were being made the scapegoats of the system.

### **School tier**

The senior staff interviewed gave the impression that they were going through the OfSTED inspection process once again. This was considered to be the case, as the interviewer had been the registered inspector for some of the schools, or the contractor for the others. As with LEA officers, there was the feeling that they were trying to give the expected answers rather than completely honest ones.

### **Teacher tier**

This was the main aspect of the investigation which was not intended to be in four equal parts: the presentation has implied this. The survey questions were more specific and linked directly with those in the interview schedule.

Sampling was problematic in many respects. The choice to restrict it to teachers within four LEAs was for practical reasons, but was fundamentally purposive, that is, based to a certain extent on what was considered to be most appropriate. Teachers interviewed were volunteers and this may have introduced an element of bias. Cohen *et al.*, (2000) refer to this as opportunity sampling. Although the potential for bias is recognised, it was not felt that it overly detracted from the validity of the samples. Of greater significance was the perception of deference experienced by the interviewer. An element of wanting to give the right answer, or one that was thought to be acceptable, definitely existed. To what extent this is significant is debatable.

Wragg's (1984) pitfalls in interviewing techniques were experienced, especially interviewer bias, where the interviewer is tempted to lead the respondent in the direction they wish to go. This occurred when teachers seemed unsure of a question or had a straightforward, simple answer. A good example was the notion of inspectors turning up unannounced as a way of reducing stress. It was difficult not to try and explain why this simple idea was fraught with problems and would create more than it attempted to solve.

## **Recommendations**

### **National tier**

1. There should be a national approach to improving schools involving a genuine partnership of all with a vested interest in its success. Teachers need to be central to this. The role of inspection within the process needs to be more clearly defined.
2. There needs to be a single national framework for defining the qualities and competencies of teachers.



3. There should be more research into the effectiveness of OfSTED's methodology and its claims to support school improvement through inspection. This aspect of OfSTED's work should be more clearly defined.
4. If feedback to schools is to be more meaningful, the section in the reports on teaching quality needs to be more detailed and substantial. Key issues for action relating to teaching should be less vague and more detailed, offering purposeful direction.
5. Classroom observation needs to be longer and more substantial than at present. The methods used by inspectors need to be validated through further research. The training for inspectors should be more thorough and their advisory role should be strengthened.
6. There needs to be a thorough investigation into the value and effectiveness of grading teachers on a seven point scale.
7. There should be more stringent training for all classroom observers. The validity and reliability of observation grades should be examined by independent researchers.

#### **Local tier**

1. The role of the LEA needs to be more clearly defined; at present their personnel are over-worked. There is currently confusion and a lack of confidence, which is unproductive.
2. LEAs should analyse data from OfSTED inspections and publish the findings as part of their strategy for school improvement.

#### **School tier**

1. School improvement and quality issues should be clearly defined at school level, with teachers central to the implementation of the processes involved.

2. Senior staff should be better trained in quality assurance and quality control techniques, especially in classroom observation and the development of feedback skills.

### **Teacher tier**

1. The link between inspection and the development of teacher competencies should be strengthened.
2. The process of feedback should form part of a major study into the contribution it makes to improving teaching quality.
3. The negative effects of stress caused by the inspection process remain the most important single factor requiring urgent investigation. That it induces high levels of distress is in direct contrast to the findings of those researching school effectiveness and improvement, i.e. learning can only take place in the absence of fear. Further research should be conducted into the detrimental effects of stress generated during inspection.
4. Teachers should become a more integral part of school inspection processes and strategies for school improvement.

Approximately 54000 words

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

As an indicator, the following number attended meetings and returned parental questionnaires organised by Kensington Education Associates in 1999.

School Name	No. of pupils on roll	No. of parents attending parents evening	No. of questionnaires returned
<b>Secondary</b>			
Manor Community College	375	19	64
Northfleet School for Boys	824	36	546
Beverley School	665	12	226
Neale-Wade Community College	1422	67	294
<b>Primary</b>			
Brady Primary	197	11	52
Engayne Infant	236	19	108
Eversley County Primary	410	21	74
Friars Infant	236	15	30
Giffards County Infant	251	5	60
Lark Rise Lower	194	19	74
Leigh Infant	256	23	63
Mereworth Primary	224	21	59
The R.J. Mitchell Primary	245	15	51
Nabbotts County Infants'	213	18	57
St Laurence-in-Thamet C of E (Aided) Junior	260	11	76
Thornhill Lower	230	9	32
Upminster Infant	272	36	151
William Torbitt Junior	416	25	97
Tilbury Manor Infants School & Nursery	263	8	67
Bournemouth Park Infant	228	22	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>7417</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>2252</b>

This gives an average attendance of 33 at secondary school parents' evenings and 17 at primary school parents' evenings. Assuming two parents/guardians per pupil, the attendance rate equates to 2.04 per cent for secondary schools and 3.37 per cent for primary schools.

N.B. This information is taken from the schools' OfSTED reports, which are in the public domain and freely available on request to the school. Alternatively, they can be accessed on the Internet (<http://WWW.OFSTED.gov.uk>)

## Appendix 2

### National level

the national level: to what extent have successive policies and inspection strategies contributed to raising teaching standards?

- i. can judgement and development exist side by side?
- ii. what is the rationale behind the view that inspection can improve teaching quality?
- iii. how does OFSTED use the very large amount of data at its disposal to promote strategies to improve teaching quality?
- iv. what level of training is provided by OFSTED for its inspectors to be effective classroom observers? How accurate are their judgements?

To what extent has OFSTED shifted its position on the purposes of inspection i.e. accountability v. improvement? What is the latest position/view? Is the shift reflected in the new Framework?

To what extent does inspection improve the quality of teaching and what evidence does OFSTED have to support the claim of *improvement through inspection*?

The new Framework contains significantly more guidance on what to look for when assessing teaching quality - what influenced the expansion of this aspect?

Is OFSTED guided in the choice of criteria by a model of teacher competencies and will there be a move towards a national model?

Apart from informing HMCI's annual report, where overall quality grades are reported, what other uses are made of the data obtained?

NQTs' place of ITT is recorded on the LOF - how is the data obtained on teaching quality used? Is the data used to measure ITT output quality?

Is training for would be inspectors more rigorous than it was in the past? Is it possible to train inspectors adequately in such a short space of time?

How dependent is OFSTED on contractors providing on-going training and how is the quality of this training monitored?

What confidence is there in the present system of monitoring the grades awarded by team inspectors? How rigorous are HMI monitoring procedures.

What was the outcome of the voluntary dual lesson observation project? Was it reported?

## Local level

the local level: how have local education authorities been influenced by government policies and how do they support schools, both before and after an OFSTED inspection?

- i. can inspection and advice co-exist within an LEA?
- ii. what strategies do LEAs have to improve the quality of teaching?
- iii. how do LEAs use the data provided by an inspection?
- iv. how are LEA inspectors prepared for classroom observation?

To what extent has the LEA shifted its position on the purposes of inspection?  
How influential has OFSTED been?

To what extent can an inspection team be both judges and advisers? How has the LEA overcome this conflict?

How has the composition and function of the advisory/inspection team altered during the past ten years?

To what extent does inspection improve the quality of teaching and what evidence does the LEA have to support the OFSTED's claim of *improvement through inspection*?

## School level

school level: how does the school prepare for inspection and does the existence of a national inspection framework assist in promoting increased teaching quality; what use does the school make of the data obtained during an inspection?

- i. to what extent are schools monitoring teaching quality and can those who monitor also offer advice - how extensive and effective are existing systems in schools?
- ii. what policies and strategies are in place to promote improvement in teaching quality?
- iii. how do schools use the data provided by an OFSTED inspection to improve teaching quality?
- iv. what level of preparation do senior staff have for classroom observation?

What arrangements does the school currently have in place to monitor teaching quality? Is there a policy? How was the strategy produced? Is it reviewed on a regular basis?

What criteria are used when judging teaching quality?

How useful is the *Framework* in helping to judge teaching quality and make improvements?

In what ways has the school responded to the OFSTED report with regard to teaching quality?

Is the report seen as the basis for improvement? How valuable was the report to the SMT?



What use has been made of the data resulting from the inspection?

What training has taken place for senior staff to help them observe and guide teachers on improving teaching quality?

How was the LEA involved? Has any support been offered since the inspection? Have you been guided by an LEA policy or strategy?

Do you feel part of a local/national scheme to improve teaching quality?

Overall, do you feel that OFSTED inspections are making a substantial contribution to improving teaching quality?

In what ways could the system be improved?

### **Teacher level**

teacher level: building on the data obtained from the pilot study, how effective is feedback to individual teachers and to what extent do teachers feel that inspections are making a worthwhile contribution to the improvement of their classroom practice?

- i. how do teachers respond to feedback from observations of their teaching?
- ii. do teachers feel part of a national/local/school scheme to improve their teaching?
- iii. what use do teachers make of the data/feedback they are given ?
- iv. how do teachers value the quality of the feedback they receive?

For questions - see questionnaire appendix 3b.

## Appendix 3a Kensington Education Associates

### Post inspection questionnaire - Feedback to individual teachers (Pilot)

As part of our quality assurance procedures, we are seeking your views on aspects of your recent inspection. This questionnaire is deliberately brief and should take only a very short time to complete.

Feedback to individual teachers on the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching in the lessons observed was introduced as an option during inspection by OFSTED in September 1997. We are seeking to improve this process, but can only do so by seeking your views on the effectiveness of our current practices.

Please use the back of the card for any additional comment you would like to make or if you need additional space to complete the comment boxes below. This survey is anonymous and schools will be informed of the outcome. If you did not receive feedback, please complete Section A only.

#### Section A - Context

- i. How long have you been a teacher? NQT 1-5 yrs 5-10 yrs 10-20 yrs Over 20 yrs. Please circle.
- ii. What is your main subject area? \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. Were you given the opportunity to refuse feedback? Yes or No Please circle.
- iv. If you did refuse, what was your reason? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section B - Process

- i. Was the issue of feedback to individual teachers explained fully by the Registered Inspector during the preliminary visit? Yes No Please circle.
- ii. Did the senior management team discuss the issue with you before the inspection? Yes or No Please circle.
- iii. Overall, how do you rate your level of preparedness high 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 low Please circle.
- iv. Did you receive on-going feedback and the opportunity to discuss your teaching with an inspector? Yes or No

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- v. If yes, where did the feedback take place? \_\_\_\_\_
- vi. Did you feel that your right to privacy was respected? Yes or No
- vii. Did the feedback concentrate on the major strengths and weaknesses of your teaching? Yes or No

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Section B - Value

- i. Did you feel that the feedback helped you to understand your strengths and areas for development? Yes or No

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- ii. Was the inspector's feedback clear and analytical? Yes or No
- iii. Did it help you to reflect on your own practice as a teacher? Yes or No
- iv. Were you given an indication of the grades awarded? Yes or No
- v. Was it made clear to you if a lesson was considered very good or better or less than satisfactory? Yes or No or not applicable. Please circle. Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ continue overleaf if required

- vi. Overall, how valuable did you find the feedback? Very valuable Some value Of little value Please circle
- vii. Do you think that feedback helped to improve the quality of your teaching? Yes or No Please circle
- viii. In what ways were you dissatisfied with the process? Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ continue overleaf if required

- ix. Can you list ways in which the process could be improved? Comment \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ continue overleaf if required

Please use the back of this card for further comments or observations that you would like to make. Thank you for your co-operation; I'd be very grateful if you could return this card by the end of the day. Glynn Snelling

## **Appendix 3b Kensington Education Associates**

### **Post inspection questionnaire - Feedback to teachers (Final study)**

As part of our quality assurance procedures, we have been seeking teachers' views on aspects of their recent inspections. The data obtained has been used to improve the quality of the feedbacks given by our inspectors to individual teachers.

I am seeking your help in the completion of this questionnaire with my own research into the contribution OFSTED inspections make to improving teaching quality. It is deliberately brief and your considered answers are much appreciated.

This survey is anonymous and schools will be informed of the outcome. If you did not receive feedback, please complete Section A only.

#### **Section A - Context**

i. How long have you been a teacher? NQT 1-5 yrs 5-10 yrs 10-20 yrs Over 20 yrs. Please circle.

ii. What is your main subject area? \_\_\_\_\_

iii. Were you given the opportunity to refuse feedback? Yes or No Please circle.

iv. If you did refuse, what was your reason? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Section B - Process**

i. Was the issue of feedback to individual teachers explained fully by the Registered Inspector during the preliminary visit? Yes No Please circle.

ii. Did the senior management team discuss the issue with you before the inspection? Yes or No Please circle.

iii. Overall, how do you rate your level of preparedness high 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 low Please circle.

iv. Did you receive on-going feedback and the opportunity to discuss your teaching with an inspector? Yes or No  
Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

v. If yes, where did the feedback take place? \_\_\_\_\_

vi. Did you feel that your right to privacy was respected? Yes or No

vii. Did the feedback concentrate on the major strengths and weaknesses of your teaching? Yes or No

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

viii. Do you feel that you are part of an LEA and/or whole school approach to improving teaching quality? Yes or No

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

ix. Have you had the opportunity to discuss your teaching grades with anyone since the inspection? Yes or No

If yes, with whom? \_\_\_\_\_

## Section C - Value

i. Did you feel that the feedback helped you to understand your strengths and areas for development? Yes or No

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

ii. Was the inspector's feedback clear and analytical? Yes or No

iii. Did it help you to reflect on your own practice as a teacher? Yes or No

iv. Were you given an indication of the grades awarded? Yes or No

v. Was it made clear to you if a lesson was considered very good or better, or less than satisfactory? Yes or No or not applicable (not applicable means that the lesson was satisfactory or good). Please circle.

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

vi. Overall, how valuable did you find the feedback? Very valuable    Some value    Of little value    Please circle

vii. Do you think that feedback helped to improve the quality of your teaching? Yes or No    Please circle

viii. In what ways were you dissatisfied with the process? Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

ix. Can you list ways in which the process could be improved? Comment \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please use additional sheets for further comments or observations that you would like to make. Thank you for your co-operation; I'd be very grateful if you could return this card by the end of the day. Glynn Snelling

## Appendix 4

### Questions to Head of Inspection Quality OFSTED

HMI X 28.3.2000

the national level: to what extent have successive policies and inspection strategies contributed to raising teaching standards?

- i. can judgement and development exist side by side?
- ii. what is the rationale behind the view that inspection can improve teaching quality?
- iii. how does OFSTED use the very large amount of data at its disposal to promote strategies to improve teaching quality?
- iv. what level of training is provided by OFSTED for its inspectors to be effective classroom observers? How accurate are their judgements?

To what extent has OFSTED shifted its position on the purposes of inspection i.e accountability v. improvement? What is the latest position/view? Is the shift reflected in the new Framework?

To what extent does inspection improve the quality of teaching and what evidence does OFSTED have to support the claim *improvement through inspection*?

The new Framework contains significantly more guidance on what to look for when assessing teaching quality - what influenced the expansion of this aspect?

Is OFSTED guided in the choice of criteria by a model of teacher competencies and will there be a move towards a national model?

Apart from informing HMCI's annual report, where overall quality grades are reported, what other uses are made of the data obtained?

NQTs' place of ITT is recorded on the LOF - how is the data obtained on teaching quality used? Is the data used to measure ITT output quality?

Is training for would be inspectors more rigorous than it was in the past? Is it possible to adequately train inspectors in such a short space of time?

How dependent is OFSTED on contractors providing on-going training and how is the quality of this training monitored?

What confidence is there in the present system of monitoring the grades awarded by team inspectors? How rigorous are HMI monitoring procedures.

What was the outcome of the voluntary dual lesson observation project? Was is reported?

What other OFSTED reports are available relating to quality of teaching?

## Questions to Chief inspectors:

the local level: how have local education authorities been influenced by government policies and how do they support schools, both before and after an OFSTED inspection?

- i. can inspection and advice co-exist within an LEA?
- ii. what strategies do LEAs have to improve the quality of teaching?
- iii. how do LEAs use the data provided by an inspection?
- iv. how are LEA inspectors prepared for classroom observation?

To what extent has the LEA shifted its position on the purposes of inspection?  
How influential has OFSTED been?

To what extent can an inspection team be both judges and advisers? How has the LEA overcome this conflict?

How has the composition and function of the advisory/inspection team altered during the past ten years?

To what extent does inspection improve the quality of teaching and what evidence does the LEA have to support the OFSTED's claim *improvement through inspection*?

What does the LEA do with reports it receives on schools? What does it make of the data on teaching quality? Is it used to inform development needs/strategies for improvement?

How does this fit in with the LEA approach to appraisal and continuing professional development?

What part does the LEA play in preparing a school for inspection?

When the inspection is over how does the LEA help the school to respond to the key issues for action and other issues highlighted for improvement, especially in improving the quality of teaching?

Do LEA inspectors/advisers receive on-going training in classroom observation?

## Questions to Senior Management Team of the ten schools surveyed

school level: how does the school prepare for inspection and does the existence of a national inspection framework assist in promoting increased teaching quality; what use does the school make of the data obtained during an inspection?

- i. to what extent are school's monitoring teaching quality and can those who monitor also offer advice - how extensive and effective are existing systems in schools?
- ii. what policies and strategies are in place to promote improvement in teaching quality?
- iii. how do schools use the data provided by an OFSTED inspection to improve teaching quality?
- iv. what level of preparation do senior staff have for classroom observation?

What arrangements does the school currently have in place to monitor teaching quality? Is there a policy? How was the strategy produced? Is it reviewed on a regular basis?

What criteria are used when judging teaching quality?

How useful is the *Framework* in helping you to judge teaching quality and make improvements?

In what ways has the school responded to the OFSTED report with regard to teaching quality?

Is the report seen as the basis for improvement? How valuable was the report to the SMT?

What use has been made of the data resulting from the inspection?

What training has taken place for senior staff to help them observe and guide teachers on improving teaching quality?

How was the LEA involved? Has any support been offered since the inspection? Have you been guided by an LEA policy or strategy?

Do you feel part of a local/national scheme to improve teaching quality?

Overall, do you feel that OFSTED inspections are making a substantial contribution to improving teaching quality?

In what ways could the system be improved?

## Appendix 5

Post inspection questionnaire

Selected staff interviews:

School code 1 Number of teachers\_\_\_\_\_ Experience\_\_\_\_\_

Did you complete the questionnaire? Y/N

1. What was your understanding of the process of feedback before the inspection?

2. Did you feel fully prepared?

3. Do you have any comments to make on the process?

4. When did feedback take place?

comment?

5. Was it on-going or summative or both?

6. How valuable was the experience?



7. Where you given indications of the grades?

8. Did you feel that the grading was fair? Y/N

Comment?

9. Did you feel that it was accurate?

10. If a lesson was graded as very good or unsatisfactory or worse, were the reasons explained carefully to you?

11. Did you feel that the feedback helped you to understand your strengths and weaknesses?

12. In what ways do you think your teaching has improved as a result?

13. What do you feel about grading? Is it valuable?

14. How do you think the process could be improved?

15. OFSTED has placed greater emphasis on improvement/development? Do you think that this approach was better than the last inspection?

16. Do you feel part of a national approach towards school improvement?

17. Are you part of a local scheme to improve teaching quality?

18. Are you part of an appraisal process?

19. How were your grades discussed - has there been any further reference to the inspection findings since the inspection?

20. Has your teaching been observed and commented upon since the last inspection?

21. Are you aware of the schools policy towards school improvement? Is there a teaching/learning policy?

22. How would you like to see future inspections develop?

23 Open session. Are there other issues that you wish to raise?