

Perspectives on the Impact of the OFSTED System of School Inspection on
Primary Schools: A Case Study Approach

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham in partial fulfilment of the
Degree of Doctor of Education.

June, 2002



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks go to the headteachers, staffs and governors of the case study schools who gave so freely of their time in the completion of questionnaires. Gratitude is also expressed to those who agreed to be interviewed for this project. Thanks go to Jane Restorick for her invaluable assistance in data analysis.

Finally, particular gratitude is expressed to my supervisor, Professor Alma Harris, for her encouragement, guidance and support over the last five years.

Abstract

The activities of OFSTED and its impact are 'a matter of high public interest' (Brunel University, 1999 p.3) constituting as they arguably do, the central plank in governmental efforts to improve contemporary primary education. However, after almost a decade since its introduction, and in spite of a growing body of research into various aspects of the inspection process, there is relatively little which actually points to sustained improvements in either standards or classroom practice which can be directly attributed to OFSTED.

This research project adopted a case study approach to investigate the perceptions of those working in, and for, a sample of six Derbyshire primary schools concerning the impact of the OFSTED process of inspection. Data was gathered from headteachers, teachers, governors and classroom assistants using questionnaires, interviews and formal and informal site visits. Other data sources, including inspection reports and contextual data drawn from the sample schools were also included, providing useful information relating to each institution's culture and context.

This qualitative study attempts to explore the overall impact of inspection on the teaching and learning process and its relationship to school improvement in the context of primary education. The findings from this project indicate that the OFSTED system of inspection has only a limited positive impact upon primary school practice. It also raises questions concerning the anxieties and pressures felt by schools who experience 'light touch' short inspections. Ultimately, the evidence from this study would suggest that, to

date, it remains difficult to justify the inspectorate's validating objective of 'improvement through inspection' and that, as a result, the positive impact of inspection upon primary schools remains questionable.

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Structure of the Study

This study consists of five chapters which have been divided into various sections for ease of reference. It commences with an Introduction which puts the study into the contemporary context. It provides details of the author's interest in the OFSTED system of school inspection which precipitated the generation of the research focus and objectives.

Chapter one reviews, in some detail, the available literature concerning OFSTED and inspection. It seeks to draw together several themes contained within the work and research of a number of respected authors. It provides a broad context; reference to the development of OFSTED and its purposes and considers notions of accountability, validity and reliability. The experience of the inspection process is considered prior to the impact of inspection on school and classroom improvement. The chapter concludes with reference to the influence of OFSTED in the development, in many primary schools, of 'setting' and subject specialization.

Chapter two describes the methodology used, providing details of the criteria adopted for the selection of the six case study schools. The methods of data collection and analysis are described, and details of the questionnaire response rates and roles of the interviewees in their respective schools are provided. The chapter concludes with the brief consideration of possible improvements to the study.

Chapter three provides data relating to the six case study schools and includes key information drawn from questionnaire responses; interviews

with headteachers, staff and governors; and data drawn from visits to the schools and from their respective inspection reports. Quotations are used from the various sources of information as necessary. The sample of schools selected experienced 'successful' inspections, which is a central feature of this study given the relative lack of research into the effect of inspection upon primary schools providing a good, or at least satisfactory, service as defined by OFSTED (Earley, 1998).

The 'authentic voices' of governors, teachers, headteachers and classroom assistants within the case study schools are presented with appropriate observations and conclusions. Their responses are included verbatim to maintain their richness and flavour.

Chapter four is divided into four sections to reflect the findings from the questionnaire distributed in the case study schools and interviews conducted during the period of data collection. It reflects upon the findings of the research in relation to the perceptions of the various stakeholders working in, and for, the sample primary schools. Following a brief introduction, the chapter is divided into the following sections:

- Practical Experiences of the Process and the Team;
- Classroom and Observation Issues;
- General School Issues; and
- The National Context.

Each section is concluded with a brief final commentary.

Chapter five concludes the thesis by presenting a summary of the main questionnaire and interview findings, prior to considering several key themes and implications for future research. The chapter ends with some final thoughts concerning the original research questions and the evidence gathered.

Introduction

There are likely to be few issues which excite more comment from those engaged in education than the consideration of the relative merits of the various methods of performance evaluation currently in use in schools. Contemporary teachers and the institutions in which they work are audited and evaluated in an array of ways (Lonsdale, Parsons, 1998, Cullingford, 1999) and the effectiveness of their methods and programmes have become subject to greater public scrutiny than ever before. Certainly, the field of education has become an area of endeavour in which evaluation and assessment in terms of input, output, value-added, pupil outcomes and value for money are increasingly emphasised. It is within this judgemental context that the teaching and learning process is subject to external consideration and objective scrutiny; its effectiveness and impact are analysed and – to an increasing degree – are appraised and quantified. Moreover, schools are encouraged to embark upon self-evaluation and self-inspection, with headteachers monitoring the classroom practice of their teacher colleagues and the results of national assessment (Lowe, 1998).

It has been suggested that the OFSTED system of school inspection was introduced to regulate education in much the same way as the State has sought to regulate other key professions and services (Brunel University 1999). In so doing, central government embarked upon a major shift in both policy and activity which has resulted in the 'marketisation' of schools as a means of forcing up educational standards. The State has thus sought to define in practice its own notion of school improvement. Grace (1995 p. 21),

encapsulates this notion of education as a marketable product when he argues that:

“A process of ideological transformation is occurring in English society in which education is regarded as a commodity; the schools as a value-adding production unit; the headteacher as a chief executive and managing director; the parents as consumers; and the ultimate aim of the whole enterprise to achieve a maximum value-added product which keeps the school as near to the top of the league table of success as possible Contemporary headteachers are therefore expected to ‘market the school’, ‘deliver the curriculum’, and to ‘satisfy the customers’.

Lonsdale and Parsons (1998) regard the contemporary inspection process as a system of ‘checking up’, which has at its foundation the control of state education. For them, OFSTED inspection is overly restrictive and is based upon the fear of failure. Cullingford (1999) takes the notion of inspection as an auditing, rather than developmental, process a little further in stating that,

“The holy grail of all inspection is a check-list that provides clear answers; has something been achieved or not? Thus actions are easier to measure than understandings, demonstrating the ability to remember a fact easier to measure than thinking skills.” (p.2)

Both the Centre for the Evaluation of Public Practice (Brunel University, 1999) and Cullingford (1999) reflect upon the apparent ambiguity of freeing schools from the control of local education authorities (L.E.A.s) through

financial delegation and the local management of schools (L.M.S.), whilst at the same time, introducing tighter controls upon the curriculum delivered.

It could be argued that the degree of interest in the impact of contemporary primary education has been motivated by a commonly expressed view that today's schools frequently fail to provide an acceptable education for a significant number of the nation's children.

A number of writers (Battery, 1988; Lonsdale and Parsons, 1998; and Day et al., 1999) express their reservations about the increase in bureaucracy and 'managerialism' resulting from the pressure to systematize and document all aspects of education. For them, there is clearly the danger that teachers become de-professionalised or de-skilled in a context in which orthodoxy is expressed in practical terms through the National Curriculum and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, and that this orthodoxy is 'policed' by the inspectorate through its judgemental and potentially punitive system of inspection.

Lowe (1998) echoes concerns over the managerialist approach to leadership in contemporary schools and refers to 'the colonisation of school discourses' in which educational institutions and the staffs working within them have little time to enter into professional dialogue due to the need to introduce and implement initiative after initiative. Southworth's (1993) view of the headteacher as the school's 'culture founder' thus becomes threatened as

he, or she, struggles to implement a vision whilst being enmeshed in the need 'to manage' rather than 'to lead'.

However, OFSTED's view as to the necessity for a much more systematic, deliberate and directed approach to the delivery of the primary curriculum is emphasised in its **"Review of Primary Schools in England and Wales, 1994 – 98"** (1999), which reflects upon adverse comparisons in pupil performance in mathematics and science with 'many of our economic counterparts'.

Numerous writers (for example: Fullan, 1992 and Southworth, 1993) argue that the implementation of change is more to do with the quality of leadership than it is to do with external pressure, and that change, development and improvement are necessarily linked with involvement and ownership:

"Real change can only come as a result of the commitments of both minds and hearts of the total school community – teachers, parents, students, administrators and school board."

(Sergiovanni, 1994 in Day et al., 1999 p. 2)

For Day et al. (1999), there is a definite tension between the need to meet the pressures of externally imposed change and the headteacher's own vision of school improvement. The fact that the OFSTED system of school inspection effectively ensures compliance with State policy adds to this tension; whilst the rate of change and development in today's schools has

made more complex the existence of competing and conflicting pressures to implement action plans

“Externally imposed changes challenge headteachers’ sense that as leaders they have the ability to shape the school in line with their vision and their style of working. Headteachers who are used to being proactive rather than reactive have had to learn how to deal with a more or less constant flow of initiatives. They now have to demonstrate their leadership by: the selection of which initiatives they take on; the relative support which they provide for their implementation; their knowledge of how others are tackling new initiatives and how well they can adapt initiatives that are forced on them to their particular circumstances.” (p. 169)

Alexander, Rose and Woodhead (1992) emphasised the importance of subject specialisation and direct whole class teaching or instruction as the means by which pupil outcomes could be improved. With the latter as Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools (to December, 2000), the ‘deliberalisation’ of the primary school curriculum continued, set against a backdrop of increasing acceptance of the need for an external view of what schools provide for their pupils. Ferguson and Earley (1999) refer to the broad acceptance of an ‘inspection culture’, but add a note of caution:

“Few would wish to deny the value of, and need for, an external perspective; the key question is how can that perspective be deployed for maximum benefit to secure institutional improvement while reassuring the various stakeholders that schools are

accountable for the quality of education that they provide.” (1999, p.26)

Concerns are expressed by some writers (e.g. Fitz-Gibbon, 1998) that the process of inspection is neither valid nor reliable. A view that is expressed succinctly by Day et al. (1999):

“The opinions of any individual (therefore) are inherently ‘biased’ by the position from which they have observed events ..” (p. 16)

Winkley (1999) uses the analogy of the inspector as ‘theatre critic’ to reflect that what is observed is merely a snapshot of the reality. Judgement therefore involves a degree of intuition which inevitably becomes part of the process of evaluation

“In practice, as in all textual interpretations, the theory is mediated through the minds of different inspectors.” (p. 36)

Lonsdale and Parsons (1998) reflect upon the ‘obsession’ of schools with inspection – an obsession which is not fully repaid in terms of the final report’s usefulness as a focus for school development and improvement. However, Ouston and Davies (1998) suggest that the pre-inspection period of preparation, as well as the post-inspection follow-up, may be invaluable in fostering school improvement activity. For Ferguson and Earley (1999), the link between OFSTED inspection and school improvement is not a clearly established one. They refer to a widespread reluctance amongst headteachers to regard the pre-inspection period as a spur to action or a chance to inject urgency into school development plans, since staff are ‘too anxious and over-burdened for a year or more before an inspection is due’ (p. 22). Indeed, their research was to lead them to conclude that:

“School improvements were often adversely affected in the aftermath of an inspection to allow staff time to recover.” (p. 23)

Ferguson et al. (2000) even go so far as to suggest that the year during which an inspection takes place may see an adverse impact upon the quality of teaching and learning as staff put maximum effort into ensuring their school is ‘seen in good light’. It is well documented that the process of inspection is very stressful for teachers, headteachers and governors (Brunel University, 1999; Lonsdale and Parsons, 1998). The Brunel University (1999) study suggests that the pre-inspection period may actually be ‘worse’ for schools than the inspection week itself. However, it may be likely that the stress brought about by the challenge of an impending inspection will galvanise a staff, fostering a stronger sense of collaboration and collegiality. The said study warns that schools may be drawn into spending too much time ‘window dressing’; whilst Ferguson and Earley (1999) are concerned that the stress and exhaustion caused may actually impede progress along schools’ action and development plans.

A recurring theme in inspection reports is that of monitoring and evaluation. The process requires that all aspects of school activity are monitored and their impact upon pupil outcomes evaluated. This is, however, an area of activity in which primary schools in particular are criticised. Day et al. (1999) refer to the inherent difficulties experienced in small primary schools, in which the roles of headteacher, teacher and curriculum manager are frequently blurred. Lowe (1998) refers to a context of ‘managerial surveillance’ which now exists in primary schools; but for OFSTED (1999b)

the link between monitoring and evaluation and school improvement is a fundamental one. Indeed, concerns are expressed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (OFSTED, 1999a) that school management in primary schools remains weak in terms of its knowledge and awareness of actual classroom practice:

“Too many headteachers do not really know what is happening in the classrooms of their schools. They do not know because they do not have a rigorous and systematic approach to standards and evaluating the quality of teaching.” (p.18)

However, the same publication (OFSTED 1999a), does comment favourably upon the overall quality of leadership and management to be found in contemporary primary schools and refers to the improving use of the plethora of data available to headteachers, senior managers and governors.

The fact that headteachers have become much more aware of measurable outcomes of pupil and school performance may be beneficial and may be directly attributable to OFSTED and the publication of results and reports. However, Day et al. (1999) argue that school improvement, change and development are about much more than systematic monitoring and data analysis and, like others, draw a distinction between ‘managing’ and ‘leading’:

“Central is the way in which headteachers manage competing values in simultaneously achieving internal focus, a balance of high levels of concern with the welfare and support of staff with

internal efficiency and tradition (a concern with maintaining existing policies, practices and procedures) and external focus, the pursuit of attainment in the context of change and innovation. What makes (these) heads effective is the recognition that it is teachers who bring about changes in achievement and how they are led and managed is, therefore, critical.” (Day et al., 1999: p. 6)

Alexander, Rose and Woodhead (1992) emphasise the need to establish ‘fitness for purpose’ in classroom delivery; but the emphasis of the National Curriculum in terms of its focus upon discrete subject coverage, in addition to the structure imposed by the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies, may well be pushing primary schools towards a practical orthodoxy which is ‘policed’ by OFSTED through its inspection process. This ‘orthodoxy’ was, in fact, welcomed by Woodhead in one of his Annual Reports (HMCI on the academic year 1997/98):

“The structure of mathematics and literacy lessons, increasingly being adopted in other subjects, encourages the teacher to work with the whole class on a particular aspect of the subject, and then the pupils to follow this up in groups of pupils with similar attainment” (1999a, p.9).

Similarly, in its Review of Primary Education, OFSTED (1999b) welcomes the movement of schools toward discrete subject teaching and direct delivery to whole class groups. However, it is clear that small, and even medium-sized primary schools, are likely to experience problems in terms of

the delivery of the diverse requirements of the National Curriculum and the small numbers of staff they have to provide the recommended level of expertise. Indeed, Day et al, (1999), refer to the limits on the natural flexibility of small numbers of staff caused by the needs of extensive curriculum coverage.

The inspectorate's view of high quality teaching is quite clear; involving much direct exposition and instruction of discrete subjects delivered at pace. However, Ferguson and Earley (1999) caution against a single orthodox view of good teaching when they argue that the

“OFSTED model of good practice is not the only possible interpretation and that it holds ideological positions and makes tacit assumptions with which others might disagree.” (p. 28)

Indeed, Kogan and Maden (1999) express their concern that schools embracing OFSTED's notions of practice, change and development may well become overly dependent upon an inspectorate which is burgeoning in both its power and political influence:

“We identify schools as being in danger of potential dependency on OFSTED as the source of models of change and development and standard setting Too many schools engage OFSTED passively. Thus, too strong an inspectorate can lead to infantilism in what should be a confident and self-sufficient profession.” (p. 27)

Fidler and Davies (1998) express the view that the inspection process may lead to school improvement, although the Brunel University study (1999)

suggests that there must be less variability between the practice of individual inspectors and teams of inspectors if the process is to be regarded by schools as a developmental one. For Fidler and Davies (1998), the relationship established between the school and the Registered Inspector is central to a positive experience. However, they reflect that the practical experience of having been through the process once is of limited value in the context of re-inspection, since teams of inspectors are inevitably different from one inspection to the next.

A common complaint emanating from schools is the lack of professional dialogue established between teachers, heads and teams of inspectors (N.U.T., 1998 and M.O.R.I., 1998). Moreover, even when feedback is provided, it is frequently of limited practical value. Indeed, Ferguson and Earley (1999) reflect,

“Our case studies revealed that teachers had not normally been told anything which caused them to alter their practice and few could recall being given any substantial help or valuable advice or insights.” (p. 24)

Ferguson et al. (2000) refer to comments made by the deputy headteacher of a rural primary school to reflect the generally unsatisfactory feedback, as perceived by teachers, provided by inspectors:

“They come in. They watch you. They make their decision. The whole point is to help us to improve but if you don't actually get to talk to one or explain things or ask things then it's hard to see how it can improve you.” (p. 48)

“Excellence in Schools” (D.f.E.E., 1997) and Wood (1998) emphasise the importance of L.E.A.s in supporting their schools in the drive toward improvement. Given the inspectorate’s support of the ‘external’ view and its contribution, there would appear to be an ambiguity inherent in a system which chooses not to recognise the direct role of OFSTED itself in school improvement. Ferguson and Earley (1999) argue that inspectors should ‘act like consultants in industry’ (p. 25); whilst Lonsdale and Parsons (1998) reflect that what schools are most likely to value is practical help and advice to improve classroom practice and curriculum delivery. For them, there is a fundamental imperviousness in the inspection system to professional dialogue and that this is geared against the best interests of headteachers, teachers and schools. The writers argue thus:

“It is important that inspectors don’t just say what is wrong and walk away, they must be responsible for putting things right.” (p. 124)

The factual accuracy of pre-inspection data and of the reports following OFSTED inspection are a source of concern to some educationalists (Fitz-Gibbon, 1998; Brunel University, 1999; MORI survey, 1998; and N.U.T. survey, 1998); whilst Cromey-Hawke (1998) is rather more positive, suggesting that,

“Initial rejection, side-lining and resentment at perceived misdirected state intrusion would appear to be moderating. In many cases, OFSTED and inspection seem to be becoming institutionalized within the teaching profession and to be increasingly valued, albeit from a low starting base.” (p. 138)

However, the Brunel University study (1999) found that few teachers or headteachers felt inspection had impacted significantly upon practice; whilst Lonsdale and Parsons (1998) and Kogan and Maden (1999) argue that issues raised by OFSTED are frequently identified by schools themselves. The view that institutions are readily able to identify their own areas of weakness is not however supported by all writers (Earley, 1998).

The extent to which OFSTED and its system of inspection is having an impact upon classroom practice and on curriculum delivery would seem debatable. The Brunel University study (1999) raises questions about the existence of a direct link between inspection and improvements in national standards in education. The OFSTED view that pupil performance is enhanced by the direct teaching of discrete subjects by subject specialists is both plausible and logical, but in practice few primary schools – especially smaller ones – have either the personnel or finance available to fund such an approach to curriculum delivery. Similarly, though much is made by the inspectorate of a direct causal link between ‘setting’ and pupil outcomes, the evidence presently available to support this view is open to interpretation and some debate, especially given the relative crudity of contemporary pupil performance indicators.

Generation of Initial Idea

The research question evolved primarily from the range of competing and conflicting views on the role of inspectors in schools, and the impact of the process of inspection upon development and change in the primary phase to

be found in the literature. My specific interest in this area of research developed over several years and commenced with the publicity generated by early inspections in primary schools in Derbyshire. Much interest was generated in the local media with many column-inches of space in the local press devoted to schools with few serious problems. In 1996 my own school was inspected by a local authority team – an experience which was found to be both challenging and stressful. During the course of the inspection-week, it became particularly apparent that teachers experienced a range of feelings and emotions as a result of what was happening within their own classrooms, departments and the school in general. For some, the experience was validating; for others, rather less so. For all, it was a period of anxiety and tension.

Discussions with colleagues from other schools revealed some quite marked differences in the way the process was conducted and the effect it had on their institutions and the individuals working within them. Some related their experiences and views in the context of change and development in classroom practice; others referred to the impact upon standards; whilst others expressed their views in terms of the national situation. However, for everyone involved, key issues underlying the very existence of OFSTED inspection concerned the overall impact of the process in practical terms in comparison to the stress and anxiety it generated both before and after the event.

This personal experience of OFSTED and a general academic interest in the area provided the impetus to undertake research in this area.

Research Focus

There remains a relative lack of objective in-depth research into the practical effects of the OFSTED system of school inspection (Earley, 1998). The presumption seems to be that inspection must be good for education and for schools, but there appears to be little real evidence to reflect that standards are rising as a direct result of what is an overtly judgemental process. Indeed, this lack of evidence may perhaps be best exemplified by the availability of so limited a body of information which actually deals with the impact of inspection on the teaching and learning situation in primary schools, and on the views and perspectives of those working in them.

This study marks an attempt to make some contribution to the available research concerning the effects of OFSTED inspection on primary education. It considers some of the strengths and weaknesses of the OFSTED process in real contexts, and ascertains views on the effects inspection has on primary schools from those working within them. This essentially qualitative study explores the overall impact of the OFSTED system of school inspection, particularly on the teaching and learning process and its relationship to school improvement in the context of primary education.

The Research Objectives

- To investigate the impact of the OFSTED system of school inspection on teaching and learning in a group of 'successful' primary schools of various sizes.
- To explore the perceptions of those working within primary schools of the impact of school inspection on teaching and learning.
- To examine the contribution of OFSTED inspection to school and classroom improvement in the case study schools.

This qualitative study explored the overall impact of the OFSTED system of school inspection on the teaching and learning process and its relationship to school improvement in the context of a group of Derbyshire primary schools.

The following chapter considers a range of key issues which emerge from the plethora of literature relating to the inspection of schools by OFSTED. Although much of the literature available discusses themes concerning the inspection process in broad terms, the essential foci of this research are the impact of inspection upon school improvement, and its effects upon the teaching and learning process in primary schools and the perceptions of those working within them.

CHAPTER 1

The Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relating to OFSTED inspection, its impact upon practice and school improvement. A literature search was conducted that included a full ERIC search and interrogation of other research data-bases of direct relevance. In addition, government web-sites and archives were explored to provide policy documents and papers relating to OFSTED. The literature review therefore draws upon the following sources:

- Papers
- Journal Articles
- Books
- Policy Documents
- Government Documents
- OFSTED papers and reports.

It was clear from this review that a great deal of information exists concerning OFSTED but relatively little external, empirical evidence is available. Hence, this review draws mainly upon those empirical studies that have explored the impact on, and outcomes of, OFSTED on classroom and school improvement. Other references are included because they provide the important historical context in which OFSTED

emerged and contextual plus contemporary detail of the development of inspection as a tool for improvement.

This literature review is structured in the following sections:

1. The Development of OFSTED: Three Phases
2. Purposes of OFSTED
3. Accountability, Reliability and Validity
4. The Experience of OFSTED
5. Inspection and School Improvement
6. Inspection and Classroom Improvement.

1. The Development of OFSTED: Three Phases

Until 1992 schools were inspected by two organizations – Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and Local Education Authority (LEA) advisors and inspectors. The passing of the 1992 Education (schools) Act signalled the dawn of a new era in school evaluation, the creation of a non-ministerial government body responsible for school inspections in England and Wales. This new department, the Office for Standards in Education, initiated a programme where every school in England and Wales was to be inspected on a four-year cycle against centrally defined criteria.

Although OFSTED has always claimed as its focus 'improvement through inspection', it can be argued that during the early years of its existence it was primarily concerned with appraising and evaluating schools, reporting

on the quality of standards of education provided without prescribing or speculating on possible improvements. The inspection handbook stated the purpose of OFSTED as:

“An appraisal of the quality and standards of education in the school The function of the report is to evaluate, not prescribe or speculate; reports must be as objective as possible.”

(OFSTED, 1993: p.7)

This early stage of the OFSTED life cycle (1992 – 1995) could be described as the ‘period of absolute public accountability’, where the main agenda was to gain information about what was actually happening in the schools of England and Wales, in the form of a long-term on-going audit. OFSTED had the legal right to regular access to schools, with the consequence of bringing these private institutions into the public eye.

The original framework was modified several times, before a revised framework was introduced during the summer of 1996. This framework indicated a shift in policy and signalled the beginning of a new stage in OFSTED’s development - the ‘period of striving to improve’ (1996 – 1999).

Two major changes in emphasis can be identified. Firstly, the issue of ‘improvement’ became more prominent - the revised framework was initially to ‘promote school improvement by identifying priorities for action’ (OFSTED, 1995b: p.2). And secondly, to assess the school’s own capacity to manage

the change process and review its own systems for institutional improvement (Earley, Fidler and Ouston, 1996: p.3). The term 'striving' may be used because the desire for improvement was there from both schools and OFSTED. However, 'the climate' was lacking. In many cases crucial elements such as trust, mutual respect and the willingness to work together collaboratively were missing from the relationship. It could be argued that this stage of OFSTED's development saw the first small shift away from the top-down, pressurized and external model of development towards the diametrically opposed bottom-up, supportive internally generated model for development as described by MacBeath (1999). The publication of School Evaluation Matters (OFSTED, 1998) may be cited as further evidence of this shift in the purpose towards helping schools to improve for themselves.

The third, and current stage of OFSTED's development started with the introduction of the current inspection framework in January 2000. The framework places an even greater importance on improvement and internal development. This stage could be termed 'the period of externally controlled improvement'. There is still a strong element of external control in terms of what actually constitutes improvement, since it may be that internal self-review and development in many schools is in its infancy. However, there is movement towards a more balanced role combining issues of improvement and accountability in more equal measures. The new handbook devotes a whole chapter to self-evaluation and clearly states its commitment to internal review and development:

“OFSTED is committed to promoting self-evaluation as a key aspect of the work of schools. Monitoring and evaluation are essential to improve the school’s quality and raise the achievements of its pupils.” (OFSTED, 1999: p.4)

This phase could also be described as an era of hope where relationship building and a movement towards a more collaborative climate are more frequently being attempted as subtle shifts in the purpose of OFSTED occur. Indeed, evidence of this rather more collaborative climate may be clearly seen in changes in the inspection process introduced from September 2001, under the existing OFSTED framework (2000). These changes include:

- the provision, by Rgl’s, to schools of copies of their intended commentaries, either shortly before or at the beginning of the inspection; and
- a more contextual and sympathetic view of staffing situations in schools being inspected.

The first of these changes offers the headteacher the opportunity to discuss hypotheses set out in the inspection commentary; whilst the second, expects inspectors to take account of practical staffing problems experienced by schools. Clear examples of common staff-related problems experienced by schools during an inspection include situations where relief cover for absent staff may be difficult to obtain, and concerns surrounding the observation of newly qualified teachers in the first weeks of their first term in post.

In a letter to the headteachers of the nation's schools (24.1.2002), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector acknowledged the need for a more 'positive' inspection experience for schools, but stopped short of endorsing an advisory role for inspectors:

"Inspection can be supportive without losing rigour and objectivity. It is a powerful aid to development for individual teachers and for schools as a whole. It is what the best inspectors do now. It does not mean inspectors turning into advisers." (Letter to headteachers of all schools subject to Section 10 Inspection – Tomlinson, M. 24.1.2002)

Furthermore, a rather more 'school friendly' approach to inspection has been promised (OFSTED, 2001: Improving Inspection, Improving Schools) which involves OFSTED concentrating upon the following in future inspections:

- the core subjects and a small sample of foundation subjects in the large majority of schools;
- more appropriate intervals between inspections, with the most effective schools being inspected only once every six years;
- increasing the number of inspection teams involving serving school staff; and
- improving the quality of, and time allocated for, post-observation feedback to teachers.

Ferguson, Earley, Fidler and Ouston (2000) suggest a possible future framework where two elements of the current system are finally teased apart

and separated. In their detailed proposals it is suggested that the school and Local Education Authority are responsible for the 'school self-inspection', whilst OFSTED is responsible for the 'inspection for accountability'. These two separate processes would both contribute to the outcomes of the report. These proposals signal a significant step forward and may indicate the first step towards a situation where schools regain control of their own school improvement agenda, allowing OFSTED to exclusively develop their public accountability role. Perhaps this could be the dawning of a new era - the 'period of internally controlled improvement'.

2. Purposes of OFSTED

The OFSTED system of inspection is essentially a process that seeks to evaluate the performance of schools against a known set of criteria that are unequivocally laid down in order to provide indicators against which, quality and effectiveness may be quantified and judged.

OFSTED (1998a) explicitly stated its primary intention was that,

“Inspection should provide you (the school community) with an independent assessment of what you need to know: how well your school is doing, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and what it needs to do to improve.” (p.5)

The means by which schools would be appraised were clearly established in OFSTED's original 'Handbook', published in 1992, with emphasis given to four specific areas of function and performance:

- i. the educational standards achieved;
- ii. the quality of education provided;
- iii. the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of resources; and
- iv. the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.

The system was thus established to appraise objectively educational standards, and to observe and critique teacher and management performance with a view to promoting school improvement by identifying priorities for action.

However the impact of the establishment of the Office for Standards in Education and its system of inspection are matters of considerable general, as well as professional, debate. Indeed, a survey of over 7,000 parents published in 1995 by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), revealed a fascinating range of views from:

“Schools with a very good reputation such as ours become complacent and an outside view can highlight their strengths and weaknesses and in this way go forward”

to

“I get the impression that it caused the staff a lot of stress and interrupted normal teaching.” (p.5)

This would suggest that the benefits and advantages of the inspection process may not be universally accepted.

Yet within this context there lies a clear ambiguity as the State's control of the curriculum, its content and processes are set alongside a decentralisation of power and resources as successive legislation has effectively reduced the power of the local education authorities (LEAs). The Centre for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Practice (Brunel University, 1999) emphasise this inherent ambiguity:

“On the face of it the creation of a national inspectorate with unprecedented power to evaluate all aspects of educational activity within the public sector runs counter to the declared intention to release energies by decentralisation.” (p.6)

For Lonsdale and Parsons (1998), inspection is essentially about checking up and control:

“..... 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 fear, an essentially disciplining role.”
(p.110)

The process is viewed as a non-negotiable accountability system which is highly judgemental and can be punitive. Moreover, Lonsdale and Parsons (1998) contend that the culture of the contemporary school has become one

in which 'policing' is emphasised, with the surveillance of headteachers by governors and the surveillance of teachers by heads. It would seem from all this that the inspection process is itself both conditioning and defining contemporary education, whilst central government established with clarity in its primary schools – by way, for example, of the introduction and implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies – what is to be regarded as quality in terms of teaching and learning. Lonsdale and Parsons (1998), provide us with a clear view of an increasingly disempowered profession emasculated by an auditing process which conditions the shape of what is audited. For them, any notion of school improvement is difficult to justify since there is no feeling of collegueship engendered by a process which throws up issues rather than solutions

“The arrangements established have sought primarily to disempower and subordinate professionals, 'police' the work being done and enable a punitive response to schools which the market alone cannot deliver. Were improvement the prime goal, collegueship would be retained, dialogue would be on-going, and the inspection process itself would offer 'solutions' rather than 'issues' and empower front-line professionals not induce fear.”

(p.114)

The government's Select Committee on 'The Work of OFSTED' (1999)', however, argued that any debate on inspection should not be based upon a supposed dichotomy between 'audit' and 'advice', and that inspectors could

best contribute to school improvement by acting as catalysts for change and development rather than providers of formal advice.

In his analysis of the factors facilitating or inhibiting the successful implementation of change in the classroom following inspection, Lowe (1998) argued that the following factors were especially influential:

- i. staff willingness to act upon inspection findings and implement change;
- ii. the response of the headteacher and senior staff;
- iii. the quality of action planning;
- iv. resourcing in relation to the areas found to be in need of improvement;
- v. the availability and quality of LEA support and funding;
- vi. staff perceptions of the conduct of the inspection process; and
- vii. the nature of the inspection recommendations.

It is suggested that this has resulted in a much more systems-based and managerialist approach to the leadership of schools by headteachers

“The various management-orientated initiatives promoted by central government such as the local management of schools, the trend to formulate school development plans, performance tables, OFSTED inspection and, most recently, target-setting, appear to have changed the beliefs which underpin schools’ discourses towards those of a more managerialist nature. The process can be viewed as the ‘colonisation of school discourses’. The main

‘carrier’ in colonisation at the level of the school is the headteacher and thus it is unsurprising that the trend towards managerialist thinking seems to have had its greatest impact on the headteacher and senior staff.” (p.103)

If Lowe’s (1998) view is correct, the influence of the headteacher upon classroom practice may well be reduced as heads become more specifically concerned with bureaucratic, organisational and management issues at the expense of those relating to the teaching and learning process

“The effect of the decoupling of discourses about school management from teaching and learning has been to minimise the number of occasions when headteachers become involved in questions of pedagogy.” (p.104)

This suggests a basic dichotomy which places on one hand, the school’s ability to respond to inspection in terms of management and organisational change and, on the other, the development of teaching and learning.

In his on-going study of seven comprehensive schools which describes the implementation of different types of inspection recommendations, Lowe (1998), thus reflects that:

“..... each school was a brew of managerial surveillance, subject tradition, corporate culture, hierarchies, degrees of willingness to act on inspection advice and adherence to the school’s own values. In spite of these different situations the schools had

experienced less difficulty with the implementation of those inspection recommendations concerned with management, administration and school documentation. Much less progress had been made with transforming teaching and learning in line with OFSTED's thinking." (p.108)

A fundamental assumption has been made that competition between schools, whose performance would be accurately and reliably quantified, would drive up educational standards. Thus, the education marketplace (Ferguson et al. 2000) would see the public better informed by the provision of masses of indicative data, including league tables based on examination performance and statutory assessment and inspection reports. All aspects and areas of school activity would be subject to close and independent scrutiny by OFSTED and the contemporary catchphrase would be 'improvement through inspection'.

However, the highly judgemental model adopted in England and Wales is far from universally accepted by researchers and educationalists abroad and at home. Fullan (1991) emphasises that it is the individual teacher rather than the school who is the true agent of change. For the latter, the process of educational change leading to school improvement is not facilitated by the constant interruption involved in dealing with children, colleagues, governors, parents and LEA officers and administrators. The luxury of reflection time for headteachers is a rarity; whilst for primary school teachers – engaged at the 'chalkface' with little, if any, non-contact time and,

in all probability, with one or more curriculum areas to co-ordinate – pressure exists to deal with issues intuitively and without the time necessary to engage in thoughtful reasoning. It is precisely because of this range of practical pressures that Fullan (1991) argues,

“there is no reason for the teacher to believe in change, and few incentives (and large costs) to find out whether a given change will turn out to be worthwhile.” (p.34)

The contemporary inspection process is essentially one that seeks to evaluate school performance against a published and clearly established set of criteria. These are laid down in order to provide indicators against which schools may be judged in terms of their effectiveness in providing quality in teaching and learning. Alexander (1999) suggests there is a fundamental concern in respect of the status of OFSTED judgements which he regards as effectively absolute since the complaints procedure operates with limited real power and accepts complaints about conduct but not about evidence, findings or evaluations:

“In the OFSTED model it is impossible to be wrong

This, manifestly, is to invest in OFSTED inspection judgements and authority far beyond what they can legitimately bear. I doubt whether for any other profession outside a totalitarian regime this would be even contemplated, let alone sanctioned, and those outside the education service may find it astonishing that in this

country it was indeed both contemplated and implemented.”

(Alexander, 1999: p.124/125)

In its ‘Briefing for Schools on the New Inspection Requirements’, OFSTED (1998b) lays down unequivocally that inspection teams should form a view on pupil progress by

“..... assessing the rate, breadth and depth of learning in each year based on the gains in knowledge, skills and understanding pupils make in lessons and over a period of time. Inspectors will base judgements on evidence from classroom observations, examination of pupils’ work and discussion with them, and from teachers’ planning and records. They should form a view about progress through the key stages.” (p.5)

The ‘Briefing’ in fact goes further by emphasising that attention will ‘..... focus particularly on pupils’ attainment by the time they leave school’.

It is the notion of the ‘end result’, as influenced by the teaching and learning process, which is a key element of OFSTED’s approach to the quantification and evaluation of school effectiveness. As a result, it could be argued, that even in infant schools and classes, there is now a much more direct subject bias to lesson delivery, welcomed by Alexander, Rose and Woodhead (1992) and emphasised by OFSTED’s own review of inspections done between 1994 and 1998 (OFSTED, 1999b):

“The use of topic work, whereby several subjects are integrated under a common theme such as ‘ourselves’ or ‘buildings’, which many teachers found difficult to manage and which led to much superficial work for many pupils is now far less common. Teachers are focusing more rigorously upon the programmes of study for each subject and planning lessons accordingly.” (p.13)

Ultimately, it would seem reasonable to suggest that a significant result of the inspection process has been to establish the broad acceptance of an ‘inspection culture’ in which the performance and effectiveness of schools are periodically investigated, observed, quantified and evaluated. It is perhaps against the context of a new culture in education that the present system of inspection needs to be considered in terms of its impact upon classroom practice. However, in so doing, any evaluation of the system currently in place needs to reflect upon its reliability and validity as an instrument of school performance and accountability.

3. Accountability, Reliability and Validity

For proponents of OFSTED, the current system of school inspection seeks to provide a fair and unbiased appraisal of school performance and overall effectiveness and it seeks to guarantee its own reliability and validity by involving a range of research elements and by following a clear research structure.

Anderson and Arsenault (1998) define research in education as:

“..... a disciplined attempt to address questions or solve problems through the collection and analysis of primary data for the purpose of description, explanation, generalisation and prediction”
(p.6)

Moreover, there seems a common-sense appeal to the notion that organisations require powerful stimuli to engage maximum effort and, in the case of schools, the threat of publication of potentially critical and damaging research judgements would seem to provide a very potent source of encouragement to the pursuit of maximum efficiency and optimum output.

One cannot however easily escape or ignore that much of the literature questions the reliability, validity and even the legitimacy of the inspection process. Anderson and Arsenault (1998) argue that,

“Fundamental to good description are good measurement and observations” (p.9)

but also reflect,

“It is all right to have limitations, but only if they are acknowledged openly and taken seriously in data interpretation.” (p.109)

For Winkley, (1999), defenders of the OFSTED system of inspection will argue that,

“..... the inspection process has the integrity of a piece of quality social research – depersonalised, indifferent to opinion, quality

controlled, analysed and delivered by trained researchers (the inspectors). Indifference to outcome and lack of commitment to the schools inspected becomes a virtue. Judgements are not linked to future business commitments or to any future involvement with the people surveyed.” (p.60)

However, observation which constitutes a major part of inspection, is not in itself value free, regardless of the structure or schedule under which it is conducted. What is observed, and how it is observed and reported inherently implies certain values in the observer. Furthermore there are important aspects in the educational process which cannot themselves be either observed or quantified.

Anderson and Arsenault (1998) reflect that

“All research involves certain common elements such as defining the questions, reviewing the literature, planning the methodology, collecting and analyzing data, and disseminating findings.” (p. 27)

The inspection process has been established as a means of testing and considering the effectiveness of schools. But to study a concept like effectiveness one must presume one has a clear and defensible definition of what is meant by the term. OFSTED inspection, by its very nature, draws broad conclusions and passes blanket judgements on schools as a whole; yet it is abundantly clear that even the poorest of schools is likely to be effective in some respects and in some areas in spite of its deficiencies in

others. Moreover, notions of value and views about what really matters and what is successful in education could hardly be more varied (Cullingford, 1999).

Again Anderson and Arsenault (1998) return us to the issue of values and attitudes which are bound to be manifest in all research into school effectiveness:

“The impossibility is to attempt to apply a single score to the global effectiveness of the school. To do that requires you to apply a set of educational values to the issue. I might prefer a school where everyone graduates: you might favour one where only some graduate, but with high academic standing; someone else will prefer the school which instils certain religious beliefs in those who attend; others might value academic development.”
(p.59)

For Fitz-Gibbon (1998) the issue of inter-inspection reliability is a serious one:

“..... would all inspectors reach more or less the same judgements of a class. If the judgements made depend heavily upon which inspector happens to turn up, then we have a serious problem with the system.” (p. 23)

Anderson and Arsenault's (1998) view of qualitative research may also heighten the general concerns of educationalists over a system which, to all

intents and purposes, is regarded as both objective and reliable by OFSTED, central government and much of the general public.

“The qualitative research community, and anyone involved in human science research, recognise that it is impossible to do value-free research. Values, like politics, are ever-present and will impact upon the research process.” (p.33)

Lincoln and Denzin’s (1994) definition of the qualitative research methodology provides us with a clear view of what such forms of investigation are likely to entail:

“Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempt to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials, case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual contexts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives.” (p. 2)

It is clear that OFSTED inspection, as a process, involves much of the above but it raises a number of fundamental questions:

- i. Would different inspectors reach the same or similar conclusions from the observations of and data gathered about a particular school?
- ii. Indeed, can we feel reasonably sure that any two individuals observing a particular situation would reach similar conclusions?
- iii. How much are inspectors' judgements likely to be influenced by their own personal values and their own personal experiences? And
- iv. Given the relatively short period during which a school is inspected, how likely is it that schools' and LEAs' own views and observations will be considered to add context and balance to an inspection team's judgements?

The Centre for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Practice (Brunel University, 1999) found over half (54.1%) of the headteachers questioned believed that two teams would come up with different findings from an inspection conducted on the same school. Similarly, 45.5 per cent of the school governors sampled and 41 per cent of the parents believed that two inspection teams working independently of each other would fail to reach the same conclusions about their schools. For the researchers the message was clear:

“Taken together these data indicate a lack of confidence among headteachers, governors and parents in the credibility of the OFSTED process itself. These findings also add weight to the

case study concerns about the variability of OFSTED teams.” (p. 51)

Indeed, whilst welcoming the fact that OFSTED continues to improve the validity and reliability of the inspection process, the Fourth Report of the Select Committee on ‘The Work of OFSTED’ (1999) was to conclude that full and frank research was necessary to increase the confidence of practitioners in basic elements of the inspection system.

Ultimately, reliability is not facilitated by the time constraints under which inspections are conducted. The inspection process provides, at best, a mere snapshot of what actually takes place over a considerable period of time, involving many planned and unplanned encounters and activities.

4. The Experience of OFSTED

The literature reveals a great deal about the experience of the inspection process. It highlights that during OFSTED inspections there are many reported cases of fear, stress and associated negative perceptions towards the process of inspection (Grubb, 1999). Despite these perceptions the literature reports that most relationships with inspectors are positive (Wilcox and Gray, 1996; Brimblecome et al., 1996; Kogan and Maden, 1999; Select Committee on ‘The Work of OFSTED’, 1999) often developing from a starting point of mutual respect (Russell, 1996). Teachers’ feelings of anxiety and stress appear to be at their worst during the build up period to inspection. Indeed, Brimblecombe and colleagues (1996) suggest that the

thought of inspection is worse than the actual inspection itself. They also report that how senior management teams prepare their staff for inspection can determine how prepared for the event they feel (Shaw, Brimblecome and Ormston, 1995).

Ouston and Davies, (1998), suggest that the impact of OFSTED inspection involves the following series of stages which manifest themselves over considerable time:

- i. before the inspection is announced;
- ii. after an inspection date is known;
- iii. the period of inspection, including the preparation of an action plan;
- iv. the period of action plan implementation;
- v. the period after the impact of inspection has faded; and
- vi. the preparation for reinspection,

For them, the period of preparation is potentially a vital one during which attention is clearly focused on development. They suggest that some headteachers regard inspection as 'free consultancy' during which their schools are seen operating normally and in accordance with established routines. Others however, aim for the 'perfect week'. In such schools, the emphasis is upon management, administration and systems organisation with a consequential distraction from 'normal' activities.

Ouston and Davies (1998) express concern that some schools seek to obscure or hide known weaknesses rather than solve them. The outcome of this is that significant amounts of time, and financial and human resources are expended inefficiently. Moreover, they suggest that schools are encouraged to conform to the inspection framework rather than develop in accordance with their own localised and agreed priorities. In such instances the stress of the whole process is augmented as its judgmental nature fosters the build up of anxiety over possible damage to personal and institutional reputations.

For many headteachers, teachers and governors the period of preparation for inspection is likely to be as stressful as the period of inspection itself. However, if we accept Ouston and Davies' (1998) view of the developmental value of the pre-inspection period, reducing preparation time by providing schools with little notice may actually reduce the positive developmental effects resulting from the 'burst of activity' likely to be engendered by the knowledge of an impending OFSTED visit. Understandably, headteachers, teachers and governors are likely to spend considerable amounts of time on OFSTED-related activities, as schools generally seek to present themselves in the best possible light. This said, a careful balance must be drawn between the needs of inspection on one hand, and the stress brought about in schools as a direct attempt to meet those needs, on the other. Added to this, schools must continue to seek to develop their own agenda if the needs of inspection are not to be seen to detract from the development of classroom practice and pedagogy.

The Brunel University study (1999) clearly reflects the stress and anxiety engendered during the immediate pre-inspection period:

“Most of the teachers interviewed described the run-up to the inspection as worse than the inspection week itself. In the main, teachers reported that they would have been happier if OFSTED had just ‘dropped in’ with minimum notice thus, it is clear that the prospect of being inspected and the resulting extra workload have implications for school staff. In all the case study schools teaching staff and most headteachers referred to being under considerable stress in the period prior to the inspection.” (p. 41)

There is probably little that would encourage some school staff to work more collaboratively than the collective sense of anxiety brought about by a future inspection. In such schools it is likely that an OFSTED visit will foster greater levels of collegiality and a common sense of purpose. However, as schools naturally seek to obviate criticism, it is also likely that an inspection will encourage them to shelve or defer existing plans and priorities. Again, the writers put it most succinctly,

“The overall evaluation of the notice and preparation period is that it tends to promote activity which runs counter to the stated system of OFSTED school inspection. It promotes window dressing and bureaucracy which detract from teaching and learning within schools.” (p. 44)

Ferguson, Earley, Fidler and Ouston (2000) reflect that an impending inspection tends to result in much action in the majority of schools; but their research suggests that as many as 15 per cent of primary headteachers felt that inspection hindered school improvement since staff activity was directed to preparation. They were thus to conclude that

“The effects of the preparation phase on school development are complex and as teachers’ accounts of their preparations have shown, it cannot be concluded that the announcement of a forthcoming inspection usually helps schools to improve.” (p. 33/34)

Thus, for school managers the fundamental questions to be asked prior to inspection may well be:

- how can we ensure that the immediate pre-inspection period does not have an adverse effect on school development and improvement? And
- how can the energy devoted to inspection preparation best be used?

The week during which the inspectors are in school can be tense, although some teachers suggest feelings of anti-climax after a long build up (Brimblecombe, Ormston and Shaw, 1995). As might be expected, lessons are more highly prepared for inspection week (Wilcox and Gray, 1996; Ferguson, Earley, Fidler and Ouston, 2000). Brimblecombe et al. (1996) report that a quarter of teachers planned to deliver a more formal didactic lesson than normal. In the same study one-fifth of teachers noted a change

in their own behaviour and one-half noted a change in pupil behaviour when an inspector was in the classroom.

In a review of the first one hundred inspections (OFSTED, 1994: p.26) it was reported that 'In over half of the schools, staff were disappointed that there was not more opportunity for discussion with inspectors after lessons.' A second OFSTED based report arrived at similar conclusions, suggesting that classroom teachers were the least satisfied group of teachers with the oral feedback they received (OFSTED, 1995d). These findings, combined with the BEMAS research reported by Earley (1996), provided growing evidence for a less than perfect situation regarding the issue of teacher feedback during inspection.

Brimblecombe and colleagues at Oxford Brookes University recognized the importance of feedback in relation to teacher anxiety (Brimblecombe et al., 1995) and intention to change practice (Brimblecombe, Shaw and Ormston, 1995). It was not until 1998 that feedback to teachers on their teaching performance became an integral part of every inspection. The effectiveness of this feedback is yet to be substantiated, but many teachers (and inspectors) doubt the impact feedback has on their practice in its present form:

Inspection weeks are intense and busy times for inspectors and the school. Feedback requires detailed planning and the appropriate atmosphere for teachers to gain the most from it.

This is difficult to achieve during inspection week few

teachers in the case study schools could think of ways in which feedback might have had an influence on their practice. (Ferguson et al., p. 49)

OFSTED has made efforts to improve the quality of feedback by issuing more guidelines to inspectors. The current framework implemented from January, 2000 explains:

You (the inspector) should offer feedback to every teacher you observe. The objective is to improve the teacher's effectiveness. You should try, whenever possible, to give first hand feedback on the lessons (that) 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 be done more effectively. (OFSTED, 1999: p. 127)

These efforts to improve the quality of feedback given by inspectors, endorsed by the Select Committee recommendations of 1999, have been characterised in recent communications from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of schools to the nation's headteachers:

"One clear message is that the feedback which inspectors offer to teachers is welcomed and valued. Teachers want to be clear about the strengths and areas for improvement which inspectors have observed during their lessons. As we develop new arrangements, we shall work closely with contractors to ensure

that there is an important place for effective or constructive feedback, and for the professional dialogue which supports it.”

(Letter to headteachers of schools subject to Section 10
Inspection: 10.12.2001)

Ultimately, it seems that some feedback is better than none because it helps to relieve the sense of isolation that many teachers felt before its introduction (Ferguson et al., 2000). However if feedback is to have a substantial impact on classroom practice the quality must be improved or the relationship between inspection and school and classroom improvement will continue to remain questionable.

5. School Improvement through Inspection

It has been argued that OFSTED has shifted its position from being primarily concerned with public accountability, to one where improvement and public accountability receive a more equal focus. Earley (1996) suggests that there has been very little research addressing the key question of whether inspection actually plays a significant role in school improvement or development. OFSTED itself (OFSTED 1997; OFSTED 1999d) has produced a plethora of literature to support its claim of ‘improvement through inspection’, but despite a growing body of contemporary research within the field this key question largely remains unanswered.

Matthews and Smith (1995) argue that OFSTED inspection promotes improvement at both the national level and also school level. At a national level it is argued that one of OFSTED's responsibilities is to 'use information collected through inspection to provide advice to the Secretary of State'. The implication is that this advice is then used to formulate policy to direct national improvement efforts. This is a perfectly feasible argument, but it is based on the assumption that the information collected is reliable, and gives a true picture of our schools. However, Fitz-Gibbon (1998) claims that OFSTED has failed in its responsibility to be accurate in its judgements:

“(OFSTED's) responsibility (is) to demonstrate that its judgements are sufficiently accurate to be both fair and value for money. This it has singularly failed to do, either in measuring whole school performance or in judging individual teacher performance.” (Fitz-Gibbon, 1998: p.24)

Fitz-Gibbon used a 'fairly average group of schools' to illustrate the point. The average value added scores of the group of YELLIS schools fall largely in the middle half, between the lower and upper quartiles over a four year period, except during the year of inspection. All fourteen schools in the study were placed into special measures and deemed to be failing. Fitz-Gibbon suggests that the reason for this is that inspectors are making inaccurate judgements about progress and the effectiveness of the schools.

This argument suggests that the government may be basing national educational policy on inaccurate data (Fitz-Gibbon, *ibid*; 1996) obtained

through potentially unreliable methodologies (Wilcox and Gray, 1996). If this is the case then priorities for improvement may be incorrectly identified and important opportunities missed.

At school level, Matthews and Smith (1995) highlight the importance of the preparation period before inspection which may contribute towards school improvement. School buildings may be smartened up, new interactive displays of the pupils' work mounted and efforts made to ensure a high quality of lesson preparation and marking by teachers (Gray and Wilcox, 1996). Gray and Wilcox also note the higher levels of stress and anxiety experienced by teachers during this period arguing that:

“Such effects, both positive and negative, are however likely to be relatively short lived with normality returning when the inspection is over.” (Gray and Wilcox, 1996: p.82)

When considering the improvement that a school makes as a result of inspection Matthews and Smith argue that the formulation, production and implementation of an action plan can act as a source of improvement. This plan must be produced within forty days and address the key issues for improvement identified during the inspection. However, the production of an action plan does not in itself guarantee improvement, especially if its formulation fails to involve classroom practitioners:

“Changes designed with little involvement of those destined to use them are rarely effective.” (Goddard et al., 2000. p.55)

Some important assumptions must be made when exploring the contribution that an OFSTED generated action plan can make towards improvement. Firstly, accurate information about the school must have been collected. Secondly, that OFSTED's definition of what constitutes effectiveness is valid; and thirdly that the inspectors' have the skills and knowledge necessary to suggest improvements that are suitable to the particular context of the school. If these assumptions are accepted the amount of improvement generated will be dependent on the school's capacity for improvement (Hopkins et al. 1994; Hopkins, 2001) and the extent to which the school implements the action plan (Gray and Wilcox, 1995; Wilcox and Gray, 1996).

There may, of course, be some discrepancy between a school's perception of improvement and the actual improvement achieved; however, a British Educational Management and Administration Society (BEMAS) study suggests that many schools find inspection a useful tool contributing towards school development. This appears to be the case especially when there is moderate overlap between the post-inspection action plan and the school development plan (SDP). The same study also reports that the majority of schools found that school development remained unchanged or even slowed down in the year after inspection (Ouston, Fidler and Earley, 1996).

Despite the growing body of literature, whether or not school improvement is generated as a result of OFSTED inspection, continues to be a contested question:

“It remains to be seen whether schools improve after inspection. As the first round of inspections of primary and secondary schools has finished and re-inspection has begun, data on improvement will no doubt emerge. It remains to be seen how many key issues (including very complex ones) have been implemented, their effect and whether schools have been given the same key issues again.” (Cuckle and Broadhead, 1999: p. 186)

6. Classroom Improvement through Inspection?

The growing research evidence suggests that variation in effectiveness occurs not only between schools, but also within them (Sammons, Thomas and Mortimore, 1997; Creemers, 1994). What happens at the classroom level in terms of teacher practice appears to be important, and can make significant contributions to school improvement (Reynolds, 1999).

There would seem to be two major opportunities for OFSTED to encourage change at the classroom level. Firstly, indirectly, by indicating issues of teaching and learning as ‘key issues’ for action. This should result in the school preparing an action plan aimed at improving teaching and learning. The limitation of this model is that improvements in teaching practice may only occur in less effective schools where teaching and learning has been identified as a weakness, such as in the case of Brookfield Special School (Aris, Davies and Johnson, 1998). The absence of teaching and learning related issues from the key issues for action does not indicate that teaching is faultless and therefore can not be improved. The only situation where

teaching and learning could not be improved in a school (according to OFSTED's definition of teaching and learning) would be when every lesson observed was awarded a grade one. In reality this appears unlikely, therefore another lever to generate improvement at the classroom level is necessary.

The second, and more direct opportunity that OFSTED has to improve classroom practice, provides the potential mechanism to achieve this. Lesson observations during the inspection must identify areas for improvement in individual teachers' practice and recommendations for specific changes to the teacher's practice must follow. This model for classroom improvement also has limitations. It relies heavily on three factors. Firstly, the ability of the inspector to identify areas for improvement; secondly, their ability to communicate them effectively with the teacher. And thirdly, the teacher must be willing to listen to the suggestions offered and implement the inspector's recommendations.

Brimblecombe, Ormston and Shaw (1996) have carried out one of the few studies investigating the relationship between OFSTED inspection and change at the classroom level. They examine teacher intentions to change practice and their perceptions of the inspection process. They accept that intention to change practice may not necessarily equate with actual changes in practice.

Their findings report that just over one-third of teachers that were surveyed intended to change some aspect of their professional practice as a result of OFSTED inspection, with teaching style and method (especially relating to differentiation) being the most likely aspect of practice to be changed. These reported changes are specifically and directly related to inspection observations and interactions as the questionnaires used were administered after inspection but before the publication of reports.

However, a more recent study (Brunel University and Helix consulting group, 1999) suggests that as many as 58 per cent of schools changed their teaching styles and curricular organization. Assuming that teaching styles and curricular organization equate to changes in classroom practice, the difference between these findings, and those reported by Brimblecombe et al (1996) may be accounted for through methodological differences. Firstly, in the Brunel study, it is not clear when the questionnaires were administered or collected in relation to the actual inspection, but, it is implied that they were collected after the publication of the report, and therefore after key issues were identified and priorities for development agreed. This suggests the higher figure of 58 per cent, compared to the 38 per cent reported by Brimblecombe and colleagues (1996), also includes changes in practice generated indirectly from inspection through the post-OFSTED development plan. This may account for the disparity between the findings.

The second notable difference between the two pieces of research is that the Brunel study only surveyed head teachers. If there had been a void

between school rhetoric and classroom reality, head teachers may have over estimated the changes in practice at the classroom level by assuming all teachers had implemented any changes as requested. It could therefore be argued, that the second difference suggests that the Brunel University and Helix group report of 58 per cent changes in teaching style and curricular organization, is likely to be an over estimate of the actual effect of OFSTED inspection at the classroom level.

Lowe (1998) described the extent of implementation of inspection recommendations one-year after inspection, and teachers' responses to their associated discourses; opportunities for 'real' change in the classroom were then commented on. He reported that only one of his seven case study schools had substantially implemented inspection recommendations related to teaching and learning, while three had demonstrated some implementation, and the remaining three either limited, or no, implementation of the recommendations. Lowe (1998) reports of one case study school:

“OFSTED’s views about the quality of teaching and learning had not penetrated the classroom and teachers still maintained their right to determine the scope of teaching and learning.” (Lowe, 1998: p.106)

It may well be that OFSTED and its inspection system has had a more significant effect upon teaching and learning in terms of its general support of 'setting' and ability grouping in primary schools. Much is made of the view

that setting has the effect of reducing the range of attainment within a teaching group and that this has the potential for enabling teachers to proceed at an appropriately challenging pace suited to the needs of pupils within a particular range of ability. "Setting in Primary Schools" (OFSTED, 1998c) reflected that more schools now utilize this organisational technique, with the greatest likelihood of it being used being at upper junior level and in larger schools. Moreover, OFSTED's review of primary education (1999b) emphasises an upsurge in the use of ability grouping

"It appears that about 6 out of 10 schools at key stage two set for at least one subject, principally mathematics and English." (p. 38)

Whether this has had any significant effect upon standards of attainment is debatable, but what could be argued, given this evidence, is that OFSTED and its inspection system have had some influence upon the way in which the curriculum is delivered.

For OFSTED (1998d) the evidence of improving standards in primary schools is clear. The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools presented at the end of the 1996/97 academic year is quite unequivocal in this:

"In both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 inspectors report that pupils generally make greater gains in knowledge, understanding and skills than in previous years." (p. 1)

Moreover, the evidence of inspection appears to indicate a strong relationship between high academic standards and the subject knowledge of teachers. Indeed, in its review of primary education, OFSTED argues,

“In virtually all of the lessons where standards are good or very good, teachers’ subject knowledge is judged to be satisfactory or good. Where teachers have good subject knowledge they are more confident in planning and implementing work, more skilled at asking relevant questions, providing explanations and using the National Curriculum programmes of study, and more successful in providing demanding work for the more able pupils. They also have a good range of analogies and alternatives for presenting and illustrating knowledge so that pupils can understand the content of the subject.” (p. 34)

Coda

From the literature review it would seem to be reasonably clear that inspection is having some direct effect upon school and classroom improvement (Chapman, 2001). Yet, perceptions and evidence about the relationship between inspection and improvement vary. For example, the Brunel University study (1999), found that just under 18 per cent of heads felt that the inspection process could contribute positively to raising standards in education; whilst 31 per cent disagreed, and a further 21 per cent strongly disagreed.

Consequently, the research study undertaken as part of this doctoral work aims to contribute to this debate by providing some additional evidence about the relationship between improvement and inspection, and about the impact of the inspection process as perceived by a group of practitioners and governors working in, and for, a sample of successful primary schools.

The next chapter describes the methodology used and provides details of the criteria adopted for the selection of the six case study schools. The methods of data collection and analysis are described, and details of the questionnaire response rates and the roles of individuals involved, in their respective schools, are provided. The names of respondents, interviewees and their schools have been kept confidential to encourage everyone involved to be as honest and open in their views as possible. This chapter is concluded with a brief consideration of possible improvements which could be made to the study.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

Introduction

This research project is a qualitative study which investigates the views and perceptions of those working in the field of primary education exploring experiences of the OFSTED process of inspection. The method of research adopted was a case study (Yin, 1994) approach which collected evidence from a range of sources:

- documentation;
- interview;
- site visits;
- direct observation; and
- questionnaire.

All of the schools in the sample provided copies of their most recent OFSTED inspection reports and their summaries. Furthermore, each school offered the opportunity for the researcher to visit both formally and informally whilst they were in session. A sample of teachers and governors were interviewed following the administration and collection of questionnaires.

A multi-method approach to data collection and analysis was utilized involving the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews (Cohen and Manion, 1989). The data gathered were supplemented with additional contextual information provided by the schools.

The Research Approach: Case Study

A case study is fundamentally a holistic method of research that uses multiple sources of evidence in seeking to analyze or evaluate the issue of the phenomenon under consideration (Yin, 1994). This research project sought to look systematically at six primary schools by collecting data, analysing the information gathered, and interpreting the findings within their own specific contexts. Since case study research is essentially data-driven and, at best, seeks validity and reliability through rigour and triangulation, it may be 'generalizable' (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998).

Contemporary primary schools, of whatever size, are complex institutions with many interactions taking place everyday. Because of the nature of schools as organisations, a case study methodology was adopted to gather information. Case study is founded upon the gathering of data in real contexts and has been defined as "a method for learning about a complex instance, based on a comprehensive understanding of that instance, obtained by extensive description and analysis of that instance taken as a whole" (United States General Accounting Office, 1990 p.14). Yin (1994) similarly defines a case study as an empirical enquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context, emphasising that the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not necessarily clearly evident. For Yin (1994), case study deals with a multiplicity of variables and multiple sources of evidence by relying on the convergence of data through triangulation.

Anderson and Arsenault (1998) emphasise that data collection and analysis should be seen as concurrent activities. Consequently the analysis and interpretation of the information gathered was commenced from the outset of the data collection period.

Research Questions

The research questions were derived from an extensive review of the literature relating to the OFSTED system of inspection. Much has been written about the inspection experience of secondary schools and schools in special measures, but this research project sought to concentrate specifically upon a group of effective primary schools. Interest in the topic remains high (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998) and provides an area of research which generates many problems and issues for investigation. Following a review of the literature, the research questions were developed with the aim of investigating the specific area of inspection in primary schools with a degree of abstraction sufficient to facilitate 'generalizability' (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998: p.38).

The need to generate a problem which could be stated clearly and concisely, had a basis in research literature, had practical significance and had not already been investigated sufficiently, resulted in the generation of the following main research question:

- How do those working within, and for, successful primary schools perceive the impact of OFSTED inspection upon themselves, their own schools, and teaching and learning?

This broad question generated the following sub-questions as issues to investigate:

- i) To what extent has the OFSTED system of school inspection influenced the planning and practice of those working within the case study schools?
- ii) To what extent are any differential effects in operation which may be attributable to school size and/or inspection under the new framework?

The objectives of the research underlying the main themes explored were:

- to consider recent literature relevant to the project, including documentation from the Office for Standards in Education and central government;
- to collect and analyse data from a variety of perspectives within school organisations;
- to compare and contrast the impact of the inspection process upon the selected case study schools;
- to reflect pre- and post-inspection effects upon primary education within the limited context of the case study schools;
- to critically examine the contribution made to primary education by the OFSTED system of school inspection in both the literature and in the practical contexts of the selected case study schools;
- to make some contribution to the broad educational debate as to the practical value of inspection in schools already regarded as successful.

Selecting the Schools for the Sample: The Rationale

The aim of this research was to consider the direct and indirect impact of the OFSTED system of school inspection upon a small group of Derbyshire primary schools. A number of schools had expressed an interest in the research and the sample selected was chosen to reflect the variation in school size to be found in a county like Derbyshire. Two of the schools are particularly small with around 60 pupils; whilst at the other extreme, one of the schools is a very large primary with approaching 500 children on roll.

The schools selected are in geographical proximity to one another and they serve broadly similar catchments. All of the case study schools are regarded by their LEA as successful institutions with 'effective' headteachers. The fact that the schools are regarded as successful is an important feature of this study, since much of the limited data on the effects of inspection on primary schools deals with schools in special measures or deemed to have serious weaknesses (Stoll and Myers, 1998).

The headteachers of the six case study schools have served varying amounts of time and range from the relatively inexperienced to the very well-established. In the case of School 1 (S1 – a junior school), at the time of writing an acting head was in service from the nearby infants' school, with the two schools likely to amalgamate by September 2002. Both the headteacher at the time of inspection and the said acting head were interviewed during the course of the research.

All of the case study schools had relatively recent experience of the OFSTED inspection process – all having been inspected during the period 1998 – 2000. Four of the six schools had already had one inspection prior to this period and were therefore providing data following the experience of re-inspection. Two of the schools had been re-inspected under the new framework introduced with effect from January, 2000; and one had had the experience of a short, or 'light touch', inspection. Once the case study schools had been identified and selected, it was necessary to negotiate access to, and use of, their OFSTED inspection reports; and to gain access to key respondents. The schools were asked to provide survey questionnaire responses from teachers and classroom assistants; and to provide volunteers for interviews representing headteacher, teacher and governor viewpoints of the effects of inspection.

Originally, the researcher had considered using more schools as the basis for the project. However, following consultation with a number of headteachers, it became clear that some schools would be rather more enthusiastic than others in their involvement. Moreover, the use of a relatively small number of schools facilitated the establishment of close relationships between the researcher and those involved in the sample; though at no point were the researcher's expectations or views used to influence questionnaire respondents or interviewees.

Whilst the number of schools selected to form the basis of this case study research is relatively small, the size of the sample facilitated the collection of

rich data from various viewpoints and enabled a varied and illuminating picture of each school to be captured. Four of the schools involved in the research were smaller than the average primary school as defined by OFSTED (2000) with fewer than 243 pupils; and two of the schools were particularly small with fewer than 100 pupils on roll.

For Day et al. (1999) the small school is a particularly complex perspective to view from given the extreme blurring and intersection of views, roles and functions likely to be found therein. This is likely to pose its own problems for inspectors since

“.....no single observer, nor the most perceptive of headteachers, can possibly see or hear everything and is considered to view from a particular perspective or ‘angle of observation’.
(Schatzman and Strauss, 1973)” (Day et al., 1999, p.16)

Research Protocol

During initial discussions with the headteachers of the primary schools selected for the research project, the broad expectations of the researcher were expressed openly, outlining the minimum commitment required. During the negotiations individual anonymity was guaranteed to all involved in questionnaire completion and to those participating in the follow-up semi-structured interviews. Schools were asked to provide copies of their OFSTED inspection reports and their summaries. The schools also provided financial data – several of the inspection reports referred to

relatively poor funding for education in Derbyshire. Two of the schools provided development documentation.

Sources of Data

Given that the research sought to consider a variety of perspectives on the inspection process, a questionnaire was distributed to headteachers, teachers and classroom assistants (See Appendix 1). Some of the respondents were able to bring evidence from their experience of inspection at more than one school. Interviews were conducted with headteachers, deputies, classroom teachers, chairs and governors and generally lasted for approximately an hour. With the permission of those involved, interviews were recorded on audio-cassette to facilitate accuracy of reporting and transcription (see Appendix 4). Notes were also taken during the process of interview (see Appendix 5). Inspection reports, formal and informal school visits and, where provided, some other documentary evidence were used to contextualise each school's particular situation and to provide a view of each school's performance at the time of inspection. All of the schools provided information relating to their financial circumstances, and two provided development documentation which was useful in indicating their own institutional priorities.

All of the research data and evidence were gathered between summer 1999 and autumn 2000.

The Questionnaire Format

The decision to use a questionnaire was motivated by the need to collect routine data from a relatively large number of respondents from six locations. The questionnaire items were derived from an extensive literature search which included multiple sources (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998; Brunel University, 1999; Scanlon, 1999). The questionnaire sought to investigate both specific and more general inspection-related issues.

The questionnaire distributed to the case study schools consisted of a range of items covering four main areas:

- the inspection team;
- classroom and observation issues;
- general school issues; and
- inspection in the national context.

The survey was used to provide respondents with an opportunity to consider the main areas of inspection and to provide them with the opportunity to record their views on the stated aspects of the process. A small scale pilot was undertaken prior to the main study to test out the research instruments. This data was not included in the main study.

The survey responses were analysed using a Likert point scale. Five points were ascribed to a 'strongly agree' response, down to one point for a 'strongly disagree'. This enabled the calculation of mean scores for each statement which facilitated data analysis (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998).

Since the project was committed to the objective consideration of perspectives on the impact of inspection on a group of relatively effective primary schools, data was sought from a variety of internal viewpoints and reflected the 'authentic voices' of major stakeholders working within the primary sector in Derbyshire.

The volume and diversity of the information gathered meant data analysis was time consuming, but having the perspectives of different stakeholders made it possible to compare and contrast issues from varying viewpoints within each school community. As each respondent presented their own particular view on the questions and issues presented, the study benefited overall from its reflection of different 'angles of observation' (Day et al., 1999). Indeed, it became clear that even confident, competent professionals, working at all levels within the case study schools, are keen to see their practice and performance validated by inspection; though this does not, in itself, guarantee a positive view of the process.

The questionnaire was distributed to headteachers, teachers and classroom assistants. Some of the respondents were, moreover, school governors and some had experience of inspection in more than one school. The questionnaire elicited a wide range of views and experiences of inspection representing the perspectives of various stakeholders in the education process. Indeed, the significance of different 'active perspectives' on the existing system of inspection can hardly be over-emphasised given its 'improvement through inspection' brief.

Ultimately, it is important to note from the outset of this research project that, regardless of the apparent and obvious demands that the inspection process has on schools

“none of the headteacher, teacher and governor representatives interviewed (or surveyed) were fundamentally opposed to the principle that professional educators should be accountable or that the work of schools should be inspected. It is against this context that the work of OFSTED is held up for evaluation.” (Brunel Univ., 1999, p.33)

Questionnaire Design

Since the research sought to compare and contrast the inspection experience of several primary schools and its effects upon their planning and practice, identical questionnaires were distributed to all of those sampled.

The aim of the project was to consider primarily what happened during and after – or as a result of – OFSTED inspection. The central element of this research project was sampling the experience and perceived impact of OFSTED inspection upon the case study schools. To gain a range of perspectives on the inspection process, headteachers, teachers and classroom assistants were requested to complete the relatively simple questionnaire (see Appendix 1) which provided the opportunity, to those who wished to, to include personal views and comments related to their experience. A compelling argument for the

multiple stakeholder questionnaire has been the appeal of the inspectorate in policy pronouncements concerning the objectives and purposes of the OFSTED system of school inspection (Brunel University, 1999).

The questionnaire, once developed, was piloted at a Derbyshire primary school inspected early in 2000 under OFSTED's new inspection framework. Respondents to the pilot questionnaire were invited to comment on its design and content. No major revisions were suggested. The response rate for the pilot survey was 100 per cent.

Since the questionnaire was designed so that all staff could complete most, if not all, items (Scanlon, 1999), it investigated the perceptions of the range of stakeholders working in the sample of schools. In order to facilitate completion and subsequent analysis, the questionnaire document was divided into sections, commencing with factual information relating to the respondent.

Table 2.1 Questionnaire Responses from the Sample Schools

	No. of Responses	Percent of sample	Cumulative Percent
School 1	1	1.9	1.9
School 2	11	20.8	22.6
School 3	6	11.3	34.0
School 4	27	50.9	84.9
School 5	5	9.4	94.3
School 6	3	5.7	100.0
Total	53	100.0	

The questionnaire response rates from within each school are to be found in the schools' reports in Chapter 3.

Triangulation of Evidence

Qualitative research is an inductive form of enquiry that is founded upon the skill and perceptiveness of the researcher as the main data collection instrument. It is compelled to acknowledge that he, or she, is inevitably bound to a set of experiences, knowledge and attitudes, and that this will, in some way, impact upon what is perceived, what is found and what is reported. As a result, fundamental concerns of the researcher or evaluator are the validity and reliability of the data obtained (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998).

In an attempt to safeguard the validity and reliability of this research project a range of data sources was utilized. This method of using two or more sources of data collection with the aim of ensuring the credibility of the research and its findings is referred to as triangulation. Triangulation thus seeks to guarantee the objectivity of the researcher by consulting various sources of data and in so doing provides confirmation of, and confidence in, the study's conclusions.

The primary data collection instruments used were questionnaire and semi-structured interview (see Appendix 1 and 2); with further valuable information provided by observation and site visits. All of the case study schools provided copies of their full inspection reports and their summaries.

The process of data analysis commenced prior to the end of the period of information gathering. In concurrently gathering and analysing the data generated, it became apparent to the researcher that the quality of information being accumulated toward the end of the interview process was both more detailed and more illuminating than at the outset. This was attributed to the burgeoning experience of the author as a researcher.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with volunteer interviewees from each of the sample schools. Participants were largely drawn from the survey returns, though some governors – who had not been involved in completing the questionnaire – were also keen to be represented amongst the interviewees. It was hoped that, in interviewing more than one representative from each school, a more complete picture of the experience of inspection would be gained. Indeed, it was noted amongst those interviewed, that several were able to report from more than one perspective given their involvement in one or more schools, or their fulfilment of multiple functions within their particular school. Especially in the smaller schools were there examples of individuals with more than one role within their institution. One interviewee, for example, was the school clerk, a governor and a parent; whilst another was a classroom assistant and a governor.

In total, 18 interviewees were selected. The interviews were carried out in order to collect illustrative examples and provide further insights into the questionnaire findings. Because the number of schools involved was relatively small, the interviewees were not expected to provide a representative sample of primary schools (Scanlon, 1999).

Table 2.4 Analysis of Interviewees’ Roles

Please note that interviewees may fulfil more than one role in their respective schools

Schools	Headteacher	Deputy Headteacher/ Teacher	Classroom Assistant	Govern or	Gender	Total Interviewees
School 1	2	1			3 female	3
School 2	1	1		1	3 female	3
School 3	1			1	1 male 1 female	2
School 4		2	1	3	3 male 2 female	5
School 5	1	2		1	3 female	3
School 6	1	1			2 female	2

Analysing the Data

A significant benefit of the concurrent data-gathering and analysis process was that it highlighted the need for more information during the period of interviews. The data gathered during the interview process were thus used to highlight and illuminate many of the areas and issues dealt with in the questionnaire.

The quantitative results from the questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS: version 9.0 for

Windows). The raw quantitative data was processed at the University of Nottingham. Descriptive statistics in the overall results are presented in the appendices (see Appendix 7) and include frequency counts, arithmetic means and standard deviations. Cross-tabulations (with chi-square test) comparing large and small primary schools are also presented in the appendices.

The qualitative responses from the questionnaires and interviews were coded according to issues covered, and statements were then used as quotations to support, highlight and illuminate the quantitative findings.

A number of considerations were used to decide which data should be included. Clearly, the relevance of the quotations to the research questions was considered. It was also necessary to consider the degree to which quotations highlighted or emphasised key issues drawn from the quantitative data. Moreover, judgements had to be made in relation to the intensity of the respondents' views and feelings expressed.

The general process of 'thinning down' the abundant and rich data gathered, involved re-reading the questionnaires and re-listening to the audio-tapes of the interviews on numerous occasions.

Methodological Issues for Consideration

Inevitably, whilst undertaking this research project it became apparent that improvements could be made to its design and methodology. Although the researcher was fortunate that all schools took part in the study voluntarily, the questionnaire data provided by one of the smaller schools was limited. Similarly, one of the smaller schools provided fewer interviewees than initially agreed, with an understandable degree of reluctance explicable as headteachers sought to provide some 'protection' for their hardworked staff. In both instances a larger sample of schools and staffs would have obviated, or at least limited, the effect of a less than enthusiastic rate of response. However, the size of the sample facilitated a positive relationship between the schools and the researcher, and was felt to have been advantageous in terms of the richness of the data provided.

Access to the case study schools was variable. The staff of the large primary school used for piloting expressed particular keenness to be involved in the research. All of the headteachers expressed the hope that, in providing data for research into the impact of OFSTED inspection, something might be done to improve the process – though none stated how they expected this would come about. All of the headteachers were particularly keen to ensure that there would be no direct observation by the researcher of classroom practice; and, though all wished to be kept informed of how the project was

developing, only one wished to read a copy of the findings as related to their own school.

Differential response rates in relation to questionnaire return may be attributable to the method each headteacher employed in distribution and collection. This variation could be minimised by the researcher visiting each school to administer the questionnaire during an in-service training meeting, a post-school staff meeting or a whole-school briefing session. Certainly, comment from the pilot school, whose staff responded to the questionnaire en masse as part of a staff meeting, was that it had taken little time to complete.

The final issue that the author was compelled to deal with was 'reflexivity'. The researcher – having had direct experience of two OFSTED inspections – therefore sought to emphasise a neutral stance on the process to all involved in the study. It was important to ensure that those who completed questionnaires and those involved in interview were aware that their own views and opinions were sought, and that these would be used to provide the data for, and to illuminate, the research project. Care was thus taken to steer clear of revealing personal experience and opinion. Ultimately, every effort was made to avoid bias or misrepresentation in each facet of the study.

CHAPTER 3

The Schools, Their Context and the Evidence Gathered

Introduction

This chapter provides data relating to the six case study schools and includes key information drawn from questionnaire responses; interviews with the headteachers, staff and governors; and data drawn from visits to the schools and from their respective inspection reports. Quotations are used from the schools' reports as necessary. The fieldwork was conducted between July and November 2000, and includes participants' perceptions and judgements about their experiences. As noted at various points in this study, it is important to emphasise that none of those who responded either to the questionnaire or interview were fundamentally opposed to the notion of accountability in primary schools.

In order to illuminate and exemplify the study's findings, quotations are included from both the questionnaire and subsequent interview data. Quotations derived from the questionnaires are referenced with the school number and digits (e.g. School 2:047); those from interview, with the school number and the interviewee's initials (e.g. School 1: AMA). In each case, the respondent's role and/or areas of responsibility are included to provide the reader with an insight into the individual's point of perspective. Quotations from questionnaire and interview respondents are included verbatim. It should be noted by the reader that, for School 1, the **Inspection Outcomes and Information from Site Visits**, and the **Evidence from Interviews and Questionnaire Returns** sections have been combined into

a single section of this study. This was done by the researcher as School 1 provided data from only one questionnaire return and three interviewees. It is hoped, by so doing, that the school's report is given improved continuity. In the reports on the remaining five schools, **Inspection Outcomes and Information from Site Visits, and Evidence from Interviews, Questionnaire Returns and Interviews**, appear as two separate sections.

A comparative table of contextual characteristics may be found in the appendices.¹

SCHOOL 1

General Information

Total Number of Qualified Teachers (full-time equivalent): 4.8
Number of pupils: 124
Number of pupils per teacher: 25.3:1
Average class size: 31
Education Support Staff: 3
Number of hours per week: 26

Table 3.1

Introduction and Context

School 1 is a junior school situated in a small town on the southern fringe of Sheffield, in the county of Derbyshire. It serves a locality of mainly private dwellings, though there is a limited number of properties for rent nearby.

¹ See Appendix 6

The majority of its 120+ pupils are from families which – according to the 1991 Census – are defined as of ‘higher social class’. The school roll has been subject to the pressures exerted by the competition of a number of local schools and though pupil numbers have increased over the last couple of years, its roll remains down in comparison to the situation a decade ago.

The school provided a rather disappointing response to the questionnaire with only one return. This represents a response rate of 12.5 per cent. However, rich data was gathered during the interview phase of the research. Three staff members were keen to be interviewed.

The headteacher at the time of this research project has subsequently moved on to the headship of a larger school. He has been replaced for the moment by an acting head. The headteacher had a substantial teaching commitment during the period of inspection. The headteacher at the time of the inspection, the current acting headteacher (to September, 2002) and the deputy headteacher were interviewed.

Pupil attainment on entry – with most coming from the nearby infants’ school – is defined by inspection as ‘broadly average’. At the time of the school’s inspection, some 21 pupils were listed on the school’s special needs register, with 3 other pupils being subject to statements of special educational need.

Future priorities, expressed in the school’s development plans were:

- to improve on information and communications technology (ICT) provision through the purchase of more hardware and through connection to the internet;
- to implement a new scheme of work for religious education (R.E.) and to develop personal and social education;
- to secure the successful implementation of the national numeracy strategy; and
- to continue the development of the monitoring of teaching and learning through the school so that it becomes 'institutionalized' and so that it directly impacts upon pupil progress and attainment.

Inspection Outcomes and Information from Site Visits, Questionnaire Returns and Interviews

The school's only inspection to date was contracted to Pennine Inspection Services of Halifax and the report's main findings (April, 1999) reflected that:

- standards in mathematics, ICT and RE were good by the end of the key stage as were standards in speaking and listening;
- teaching overall was good, especially in mathematics;
- there was good support for pupils with special educational needs;
- financial planning and administration were good;
- parental involvement in pupil learning was good, as were links with the general and business communities;
- provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education was good, as were relationships and behaviour throughout the school;
- the school was well resourced for learning; and

- the school's procedures for child protection and the promotion of pupil well-being were good.

However, the inspection indicated that the school should seek to improve:

- assessment in order to inform curriculum planning;
- the provision of individual education plans by making them more specific and related to measurable targets; and
- short-term planning – which required greater detail.

The headteacher interview, informal discussion and the inspection report (1999) clearly indicate considerable improvement over the previous two years. Schemes of work had been developed and the school had made improvements in its systems of monitoring and evaluation.

The acting headteacher was particularly pleased with the positive outcomes of the inspection process which seemed to confirm the community's positive view of the school. For her, there were no shocks although some of the school's weaknesses had been missed by the inspection team. However, the timing of the inspection was felt to have been a concern for another of the interviewees,

“We seemed to get a lot of notice, but because it came before the summer holidays, that meant that we spent a lot of the summer holidays in school, just making it look nice.” (School 1: AMA: deputy headteacher)

Standards of achievement had improved significantly – as reflected in the school's performance in national assessment at Key Stage 2. Indeed, the inspection report reflects that the results derived from summer 1998 were 'well above' the national average in English, mathematics and science and were 'above' average in comparison to schools serving broadly similar clienteles and in similar localities. Results had steadily risen over the previous three or four years and indicate improving standards in the core subjects. The view of the inspection team as a result of the evidence gleaned through its observations, suggested that standards of attainment in both English and science were satisfactory; whilst attainment in mathematics was defined as 'good' and above the national average.

The quality of teaching to be found at School 1 was defined as 'good' in English, mathematics, ICT and RE. In science and the foundation subjects teaching was 'satisfactory' overall. Indeed, 93 per cent of the teaching observed was satisfactory or better – with 19 per cent 'very good'. As a result, staff were described by the headteacher as 'elated', whilst parents who had awaited the inspection report 'with baited breath' were described as 'thrilled'.

Behaviour in and around the school was identified as at least good and effective systems of monitoring levels of attendance were clearly in place. The inspection report noted that the school had a very pleasant and well-organised atmosphere and it was commended by its inspectors as having a good ethos with good relationships at all levels.

The inspection report commends the school's leadership and management as providing clear educational direction with well-planned priorities for development. There is a positive partnership between governors, staff and parents and very good links with the community and local business. Special educational needs provision is regarded as good and there is good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education which – according to the inspection report – results in children showing a good understanding of moral values.

The school has a well-qualified and experienced staff; its accommodation is ample, relatively modern (built in the early 1970's) and is well-maintained. It does, moreover, benefit from a very supportive parents' association which enhances the school's tightly managed budget by providing additional funds.

The inspection report recognised that parents and carers are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the school and commended the generally positive views of parents in relation to reporting procedures and information provided:

“..... From the evidence of the inspection, parents are justified in their generally positive views about the school.” (p. 9)

School 1 was commended in its inspection report (1999) for providing a broad and balanced education with appropriate time allocated to all curriculum areas. Suitable policies were observed to be in place, and the school's long-term planning was defined as good. Similarly, provision for extra-curricular activities was commended and the report reflects that staff

give generously of their time to support their pupils' broad education. Homework was set effectively, and appropriately supported and enhanced activities undertaken in class; whilst national curriculum and other standardised test results were systematically recorded and used to monitor pupil progress.

The quality of financial planning was deemed very good, particularly in view of the generally falling roll over the past years and in its consideration of all of the evidence from inspection the report was to conclude:

“In taking into account the average level of attainment on entry to the school, its size, its budget and costs, the deployment of resources, the quality of education provided and the standards achieved by pupils, the school gives good value for money.” (p. 21)

With such positive comments from the school inspection in mind, it is worthy of note that none of those interviewed felt that there had been a significant impact upon the school's organisation or management that could be directly attributed to going through the process. OFSTED had certainly validated what was done, and the inspection findings had raised staff morale and confidence in School 1. The school library had been picked out as an area for improvement and this had raised awareness of deficiencies in the literature and reference stock

‘books were a bit dated and a bit old’ (School 1: NW acting headteacher)

but this was not a surprise to the school which had noted the development of its library as a priority.

No direct staff changes had resulted from the experience of inspection, though it was suggested by the LEA that one member of staff might consider a future secondment opportunity to assist schools experiencing specific difficulties. Another member of staff indicated that she would be inclined to consider retirement prior to the school's next OFSTED inspection.

In general, those interviewed in School 1 expressed a very positive impression of the way the inspection process had been managed. The headteacher's cynicism had been overcome by regular feedback given to staff – including him – at appropriate times. He had, moreover, been impressed by the inspection team's willingness to discuss their findings and the final inspection report's balance of positive and negative judgements

“The Rgl came to talk to me every day. She flagged up anything she thought might be a concern so that I could put it into context. She took notice of that, very definitely, and when we started to look at the draft report, she actually sat down with me, and with the governors, and we went through it step by step and she really took a lot of notice of anything that we weren't entirely happy with

..... She did change quite a number of things. She made sure there was a very good balance of positives in the report

I felt it was very fair at the end.” (School 1: PJ: headteacher)

Overall those interviewed observed that their inspection team had taken notice of the views expressed by staff and that their final report had been balanced:

“I felt the team took a lot of notice of what was fair In terms of the teaching and in terms of the management of the school, I did feel that the judgements were fair.” (School 1: PJ: headteacher)

The wish to provide inspectors with what they may want or expect to see was certainly an issue for School 1. One interviewee (teacher at time of inspection and now acting headteacher) used the registered inspector’s particular subject knowledge and expertise to advantage and, as a result, sought to emphasise a particular aspect of the school’s work to reflect the Rgl’s specialism (performing arts). For her, the experience of OFSTED inspection was akin to gameplaying:

“We knew she would have an interest in drama I’m not sure that the inspection process is valid and reliable. I see it as a game. Some people can play the game well and other people can’t.” (School 1: NW: acting headteacher)

The headteacher, whilst seeking to make the inspection week as normal as possible, expressed concern that the children’s normal entry into assembly, which encourages movement to music being played, might not be well received by inspectors:

“We were worried that OFSTED wouldn’t like the way we were In assemblies and things we encourage the children to move

to the music when they come in; we don't say to them they've got to stand still We use music that means something to the children so it's not particularly classical It can be music from Disney films and we were afraid they (the inspection team) would not cope well with our informalities." (School 1: PJ: headteacher)

Clearly, for those interviewed, the keenness to provide the inspection team with what they wanted had been a concern which, according to the headteacher, had consequently had a negative impact upon the teachers' sense of professional autonomy during the inspection period. This finding is in accordance with that of Brimblecombe et al. (1996) who found that a quarter of teachers planned to deliver more formal didactic lessons than usual during the period of inspection.

Although the interviewees reported 'no new direction' in school practices, it was accepted by the headteacher that an increased emphasis on informal and diagnostic assessment had been the result of inspection, and this was reflected in its post-OFSTED action plan. Moreover, he was also willing to confirm that inspection had been used as a springboard to greater focus on teaching and learning with more school-based monitoring of classroom practice through lesson observation and feedback.

The school's deputy headteacher referred broadly to a positive experience and fair feedback and final judgements, but was disappointed that one of her lessons, described as faultless, was not graded 'excellent'. When this was

queried she was told it was because she was 'an N.Q.T.' (Newly Qualified Teacher), which she had been at the time of the inspection. Needless to say, the teacher in question felt that she was being penalised in a wholly inappropriate manner.

The impact of the findings of an OFSTED inspection are likely to have a significant effect upon the local community. For School 1 a successful inspection outcome had certainly increased 'institutional confidence'. Moreover, the area in which it is located serves several other schools and the influence of inter-school competition upon the local community and, as a result, future pupil admissions, is potentially very significant

"The parents were thrilled. It was a really, really major thing here because there are three, four, five schools very close together so, much as we're all friends, there is an element of competition and the parents were waiting with baited breath to know what the result was If OFSTED had said it (the school) was not as good as they thought, they might well have taken that as 'gospel'. But the parents were 'mega relieved' and they felt very re-assured about the choice that they'd made because they've got such a choice here." (School 1: NW: acting headteacher)

The headteacher was particularly complimentary in that his school's inspection – whilst reflecting the poor general condition of some parts of the building – was critical of the situation that the school found itself in, rather than of the school itself:

“In the report it was mentioned; but it was mentioned that the school had done everything in its powers to try to improve the quality of accommodation and I felt that was very fair. They were actually pointing out that, yes there were faults in the fabric of the building, but they weren’t things that we could realistically address and if anything, their comments added a bit of weight to our complaints to Property Division to be able to get some work done”. (School 1: PJ: headteacher)

Some concerns were raised by the interviewees in relation to the validity and reliability of the OFSTED system of school inspection. The headteacher felt that the inspection framework was largely appropriate but that much that goes on in schools cannot be measured. For him, subjectivity was a significant issue. For the acting headteacher, the issue of whether another team of inspectors would find the same was a difficult one to answer confidently; but she did make reference to a post-inspection discussion with an LEA adviser:

“Her opinion (the LEA adviser) was that if another team came we wouldn’t get the same results I’m not sure. I don’t know that I think the inspection process is valid and reliable.” (School 1: NW: acting headteacher)

The school’s deputy headteacher was similarly uncertain about the reliability of the findings of the inspection, though she expressed confidence that another team would have produced a very positive final report. For the

headteacher, the importance of the personalities involved was a key element in the final outcome of the process, as was the establishment of good relationships with the Rgl and the inspection team in general:

“I think a lot of the inspection (I felt) came down to personalities and relationships with the team. I felt very comfortable with the registered inspector and certainly with one of the other inspectors responsible for doing that inspection I felt that they understood what I was aiming for in the school. With a different team, with different personalities, I don't really know whether that would be exactly the same. I would imagine that if there's any difficulties in personalities and relationships, I would imagine that that could have some bearing on the inspection Our process was a good one, but again, as I've already said, I think it does come down to relationships.” (School 1: PJ: headteacher)

There was agreement in School 1 that inspection had had little effect upon the standard of pupil performance, or upon the quality of teaching in the school, though this may not be surprising given that standards, as reflected in national assessment performance, were already good and had improved over the previous three or four years. However, both the headteacher and the acting head expressed some anxiety about the stress caused by the inspection process and its impact upon the quality of teaching in its immediate aftermath:

“I had a concern that pressures on staff in the build up to an inspection, coupled with the 'flat period' after the inspection, can

have a detrimental effect on the quality of teaching and learning in the school.” (School 1: PJ: headteacher)

“And in terms of school performance, everybody is so drained afterwards that school development stops then for quite a while until you are ready to move on; and it usually takes, I would say, a good term to recover, and it all depends where your OFSTED falls in the year, how that impacts. So, I think, the immediate effect on teacher and school performance is that it actually stops for a while, which actually is not very good.” (School 1: NW: acting headteacher)

Summary

From all this it would appear that those expressing a view from School 1 were generally satisfied with the manner in which their inspection had been conducted. Some concerns were expressed in relation to the validity and reliability of the process and its resultant findings and judgements. The headteacher at the time of the inspection emphasised the importance of the quality of the relationships between the team and the staff; however, the final report was considered to be a fair reflection of the school and its performance.

School 1 had been keen to show itself in the best possible light by considering the expertise of the inspection team and by reflecting upon the expectations of the team. The fact that the inspection had a successful

outcome was regarded as highly significant in terms of the context in which the school operates. As there are a number of apparently successful schools in the locality competing for a limited number of pupils, a positive inspection report was seen as an important ‘selling point’ by the school and a validation of their personal choice by the parents.

SCHOOL 2

General Information

Total Number of Qualified Teachers (full-time equivalent):	13
Number of pupils:	329 + 39 (full-time equivalent in nursery)
Number of pupils per teacher:	28
Average class size:	31
Education Support Staff:	4
Number of hours per week:	105.5

Table 3.2

Introduction and Context

School 2 is a popular primary school serving a large area in a town close to the Derbyshire dales. Some of its pupils come from outlying areas and the school’s nursery serves the whole town. Pupils from the nursery generally attend the main school; but some go to other schools in the town, including School 4 – one of the other schools in this study. There is pressure for places at School 2, as the school has a good reputation in the town. However, at the time of inspection (March, 2000) the school’s standard number of pupils had not been exceeded.

School 2 provided eleven questionnaire responses out of a possible total of seventeen; this represents a 64.7 per cent response rate. The data provided by three interview candidates was rich and illuminating. Along with the headteacher and her deputy, the school's chair of governors provided interview evidence. In addition, there were numerous and varied written comments provided with the questionnaire responses.

School 2 provided copies of both of its OFSTED inspection reports. The first inspection was conducted in July, 1996 and whilst providing the school with a very positive report overall, indicated the following areas for its future development:

- to improve the quality of Key Stage 1 and 2 curriculum planning and monitoring;
- to review policies and provision in art, ICT, music and RE;
- to seek ways of improving the quality of accommodation;
- to produce a more effective and costed development plan; and
- to develop the roles of the senior management team and subject co-ordinators.

The school's most recent inspection (2000) reflected that School 2 is a little larger than the average primary school, and has on its roll 'slightly fewer pupils than average coming from homes with professional backgrounds'. There is a rising trend in the number of pupils eligible for free school meals; though this remains below the national average at just over 9 per cent. As is the case in other schools in the town, there are few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, and consequently, none require support for learning English as an additional language. School 2's inspection report (March,

2000) reflected that fewer than average pupils were registered as having special educational needs, and only two pupils had statements.

At the time of the most recent inspection, the headteacher had managed the school for five years and has no timetabled teaching commitment. The inspection (2000), contracted to Primary Contract Services of High Wycombe, was a 'light touch', or short inspection. School 2 was the only school in this sample to have been subject to the shortened inspection defined under the new OFSTED framework (2000).

Inspection Outcomes and Information from Site Visits

Pupil attainment on entry is defined by the inspection report (2000) as 'mixed' but 'above average overall'. The school is considered to be a 'good school' with pupils achieving high standards in many aspects of their education. Indeed, a larger than usual proportion of the school's pupils achieve standards above those expected for their age in mathematics, English and science. This is reflected in School 2's results in national assessment at both key stages which 'have been rising over the past four years, at least in line with the national trend' (summary of inspection report 2000, p.3).

The school's teaching staff forms a strong and confident team. This is reflected in their inspection report (2000) which refers to teaching having 'improved significantly' to 'good overall and in over a quarter of lessons it is very good'.

The headteacher's leadership is commended; as is the support of the school's senior staff, which facilitates the promotion of high quality planning and the improvement of academic standards. The quality of pupil behaviour is very good and certainly plays its part in the overall level of attainment and standards delivered.

However, like many of Derbyshire's schools, School 2 has found budgeting difficult, though this is noted to the school's advantage in its inspection summary (2000):

"From the relatively low income for each pupil, the school makes good value for money." (p.1)

The school's inspection report (2000) indicates that:

- progress and attainment in English and mathematics throughout the school are good and there is a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy;
- progress and attainment in science at Key Stage 2 are very good;
- the school helps a good proportion of its pupils to achieve above average standards;
- pupils are well-behaved with good attitudes to school and their learning;
- the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good to very good;
- the leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff is good; and
- the quality of teaching is good overall.

The school's inspection report (2000) does however suggest that the following could be improved:

- the governing body's effectiveness;
- the monitoring of the quality of teaching;
- standards in information and communications technology, especially at Key Stage 2;
- standards in Religious Education at Key Stage 2; and
- the consistency of parental partnerships and involvement.

Although reference is made to two areas for development which appeared in the first inspection report – ICT and RE – the most recent inspection clearly reflected that the school had made significant improvement since 1996.

Teaching was found to be good throughout the school and particular reference in the inspection report (2000) was made to marking, which was 'usually carried out conscientiously and provides good guidance for the pupils to improve' (p.2); and to the quality of lessons with many to 'challenge and inspire the pupils' (p.2). Reference is made, however, to 'one lesson in 25' being unsatisfactory – a judgement felt by the school to be unfair given the relatively small number of observations undertaken in total (25) during the inspection (2000). Indeed, it should be noted that in a full inspection a large primary school is likely to receive in excess of eighty classroom observations.

Headteacher interview, informal discussion and the school's inspection reports clearly indicate that School 2 offers its pupils a broad and balanced curriculum, though there is some reference in the latter (2000) to limited extra-curricular activities:

“While the curriculum is enhanced with visits and visitors, there are few extra-curricular activities to provide enrichment, except in the summer term when plans show a satisfactory range of clubs including several concerning sports” (summary 2000, p.2).

Provision for pupils with special educational needs was judged to be satisfactory; as was the school's quality of pupil care.

Discussion with the headteacher and chair of governors reflected that there had been much improvement since the school's last inspection, in July 1996. This was commended by School 2's latest report which referred to improving National Curriculum assessment results; and improved subject management, which had contributed to 'highly effective' planning, organisation and assessment procedures.

The school building dates back to the early part of the last century, but much has been done recently to improve the quality of accommodation, both practically and aesthetically. Parental support has been important in this and work has included the painting, refurbishment and re-equipping of the school's hard play area to the exterior of the main block.

A very positive and supportive atmosphere is noticeable on entry to the school which clearly provides a happy environment for its pupils. School 2's inspection report (2000) notes that as a result, attitudes of pupils are generally good and attendance is satisfactory.

Discussion with the headteacher revealed that the school has a keen approach to evaluating its own performance and the inspection report (2000) reflected that there was a clear climate of improvement pervading School 2 with the headteacher, and her senior colleagues, providing both direction and purpose.

The inspection team (2000) found – through its various interviews, questionnaires and its pre-inspection open meeting – that parents were pleased that their children enjoyed school and had good attitudes to learning. Other aspects of the school's work that parents commended included:

- the good quality of teaching;
- teachers' expectations of their children;
- the progress made by pupils; and
- improving standards.

However, the inspection reflected that some parents would like to see an improvement in information provided about their children's progress. This notwithstanding, School 2's report concludes that 'the school's improvement has been good since the last inspection' (2000, p.3) and reflects that it is 'a

good school' with pupils achieving 'high standards in many aspects of their education' (2000, p.1).

Evidence from the Interviews and Questionnaire Returns

In spite of the very positive outcome of the school's last inspection (2000), some concern was expressed by the staff that the inspectors appeared nervous, since theirs was the first 'light touch' inspection conducted by the team. The headteacher, whilst accepting that the inspectors had been professional in their approach, referred to the pressure that the team had been under as they moved hastily from one classroom to another with no specific timetable. One teacher commented critically upon their impression of the experience and the time constraints under which short inspections are conducted:

"The whole experience is false and not productive. The inspection was a 'short inspection'; the overall effect was rush and a process of ticking boxes and red tape." (School 2: 047: classteacher: I.C.T. co-ordinator)

Indeed, the general issue of time was one taken up by another questionnaire respondent who felt that – regardless of the new reductions in notice prescribed under OFSTED's 2000 framework – the notice for an impending inspection remained too great:

"Personally, I still believe OFSTED should give one week's notice prior to visiting a school which would ensure a true reflection of how the school operates and reduce the futile, time-consuming

over-preparation which contributes to low staff morale.” (School 2: 046: classteacher: P.E. co-ordinator)

Several respondents from School 2 commented negatively upon the expertise of their most recent inspection team:

“The experience of the team who inspected us didn’t relate to the size of our school and our ‘set up’ which the lead inspector made clear he didn’t like at the outset.” (School 2: 051: deputy headteacher and staff development co-ordinator)

The Rgl in this case was, in fact, the headteacher of a small school and the school in question is a large one.

“Inspectors spent less than one hour in the Nursery – half of that was observing a local musician!” (School 2: 045: Nursery teacher: music co-ordinator)

“Due to lack of time given to the Early Years team by OFSTED inspectors we tended to feel left out and as though we didn’t really contribute to the overall report.” (School 2: 043: class teacher: co-ordinator for R.E. and early years)

Clearly, the above respondents felt somewhat short-changed by the process and, if these were fair observations, one would have to query whether the

evidence gathered provided a sound basis for the objective judgement of all aspects of the school in question.

Several respondents, whilst indicating that they had received some post-observation feedback from inspectors, reflected that they had found it to be less than satisfactory. The deputy headteacher, in interview, referred to the use of non-technical and rather vague language; whilst one teacher expressed disappointment in terms of what she saw as little enthusiasm from the inspectors:

“In terms of post-observation feedback – it was very non-specific
..... We felt what the team had done was given themselves scope
to play with the feedback to fit in with some judgements that they
had already made, because they weren’t specific enough for us to
go back and say but you said this was ‘an excellent’ or ‘a good’ ...
They didn’t use those words that we were getting in the grading.
They were far more woolly in terms of the feedback.” (School 2:
KF: deputy headteacher)

“After hard work by all members of the team (school staff) to
produce a good report, a ‘well done’ or ‘great effort’ might have
encouraged our efforts, time and commitment.” (School 2: 049:
class teacher: D.T. co-ordinator)

Another teacher questionnaire respondent felt that the fairness of feedback and final judgements were almost inevitably influenced by the limited time available to inspectors and the all too often limited evidence upon which they based their findings:

“I did not feel that the short inspection was useful to the school. Teachers received minimal feedback and the time available clearly put the inspectors under pressure. They seemed unsure of the requirements of this new system.” (School 2: 050: headteacher)

The chair of governors in interview referred negatively to the general feedback provided to the school’s governing body on the management of their affairs and reflected the view that the expectations on governors who are unpaid and voluntary – are unrealistic; whilst the manner in which feedback was presented had been little short of offensive.

A teacher respondent to the questionnaire summed up, rather succinctly, what was a general picture presented by the staff of School 2:

“The recent OFSTED left me with a negative feeling. The team were looking for anything and everything which would be negative. The observation feedback was insipid; as if they were afraid to praise good practice. I had just been observed by the LEA Literacy Consultant and her feedback made me feel positive about the same practice which was observed by the lead

inspector.” (School 2: 041: class teacher: co-ordinator for literacy and key stage 2)

Indeed, the ‘negative’ perception of the process was an issue emphasised by another teacher respondent:

“Prior to the inspection I was amazed at how much emphasis was placed on performances during the inspection week Following the week and the negative feeling it left in some staff members, I still felt amazed at how irrelevant the whole process was for the school and pupils. The main effect has been division and deterioration of professional relationships within teams and shattering of confidence and self-belief of established staff”
(School 2: 046: class teacher: P.E. co-ordinator)

For one questionnaire respondent from School 2, the broad system of evaluating school performance which includes statutory national assessment at the end of key stages one and two was essentially problematic; whilst the deputy headteacher, in interview, expressed her concerns in relation to the reliability of the OFSTED system of school inspection:

“Whilst acknowledging the need for accountability within the profession, the lack of objectivity and fundamental reliance on external test results as a measure of school performance and effectiveness suggest major flaws in the current system.” (School 2: 048: class teacher: numeracy co-ordinator)

“There was baggage I think it’s inevitable that there are subjective issues brought to bear I don’t think that this helps at all I certainly don’t think it’s an objective process I think it’s luck. If you get on well that certainly helps.” (School 2: JF: deputy headteacher)

At school 2 the feeling of those interviewed was that the short inspection had resulted in the gathering of insufficient evidence upon which to base final judgements. As a result, there was the general view that praise was given grudgingly and that some areas of the school received only a cursory glance – the nursery, general early years’ provision and school display. However, what was worse, in the view of the interviewees, was the somewhat crude inference made regarding the amount of unsatisfactory teaching to be found at their school which, though challenged, remained in School 2’s final inspection report:

“There was one lesson that was deemed to be unsatisfactory and in the wording of the inspection report given afterwards it said one lesson in 25 was unsatisfactory. Well actually that’s not true. One out of 25 seen was unsatisfactory and I think that that caused some problems for us and certainly for the person that had the unsatisfactory lesson.” (School 2: JF: deputy headteacher)

Clearly, from this interview, one can see that the simple inference that one out of every 25 lessons may be unsatisfactory – which is the view that the

report reader is given – is based on somewhat flimsy observational evidence.

It was very clear from several of the questionnaire respondents that, in spite of the generally successful outcome of their inspection, their view of the overall impact of inspection upon their school was far from positive:

“I felt that the recent OFSTED inspection was generally a negative process involving extra paperwork which took time and energy away from actual classroom teaching.” (School 2: 040: class teacher)

“After a positive report the staff at our school were left feeling anything but positive. We were made to feel that we had to justify every tiny last piece of ‘good’ that exists in our school and felt that we were waiting to be ‘tripped up’.” (School 2: 051: deputy headteacher)

“Despite the very positive inspection report, it would be fair to say that morale is lower post- than pre-OFSTED. Can this really be good use of taxpayers’ money?”

The stress caused to staff was not reduced as the duration of the inspection was four days, so levels of anxiety and preparation were the same as for a full inspection.

The findings did not identify any new issues for us to address.”
(School 2: 050: headteacher)

Those interviewed from School 2 were keen to emphasise that inspection had had no real lasting impact upon either classroom practice or pupil standards in their school. The deputy headteacher referred to careful curriculum planning which was, and is, undertaken regardless of OFSTED. The headteacher also commented that practice was directly influenced during the week of inspection only – and that this influence had been far from positive. However, she did concede that OFSTED's most recent inspection framework was useful as a point of reference in discussion with teacher colleagues.

For one questionnaire respondent the experience of inspection had left in its aftermath the feeling of a missed opportunity:

“Our results are excellent, but we had to justify them – they were not accepted at any point as being the result of good and forward looking practice.

Staff at our school strive for the best and we are constantly seeking ways to improve and would welcome some ‘real’ input for development purposes, not this huge waste of money/bureaucracy.” (School 2: 051: deputy headteacher)

The chair of governors was particularly concerned that the contemporary demands of governorship and the criticism governors were open to from OFSTED would have a significantly negative impact upon the governing body of the school. For her, the inspection had been a particularly stressful

experience and had resulted in no real organisational or systemic changes, other than the 'firming up' of the governing body's committee structure.

Summary

The views expressed in School 2 quite clearly indicate that their most recent OFSTED inspection (2000) had been a negative experience overall, which seemed to be compounded by a 'nervous' team of inspectors working under taxing time constraints. The school's previous inspection (1996) key issues had been effectively addressed, and excellent statutory national assessment results at key stages one and two, meant that School 2 experienced a short or 'light touch' inspection. Yet, in spite of this – and in spite of the very positive report that the school finally received – it would appear that both staff and governors had found a potentially positive and validating experience both particularly stressful and limited in its impact upon the development of the school.

Judgements were made, it was argued, with limited evidence to support them and feedback following lesson observations was both vague and non-technical. The feedback provided to the governors was not well received, and the chair referred to unrealistic expectations which failed to take account of governors' unpaid voluntary involvement in schools.

Staff felt that the inspection findings lacked sufficient objectivity, citing both the limited time available to the inspection team and a lack of appropriate expertise as the likely causes. There had not been a good relationship with the Rgl.

The evidence of the interviewees and the data compiled from the questionnaire responses reflected that the respondents from School 2 ascribed no lasting impact upon either pupil performance or classroom practice to their experience of OFSTED inspection. Indeed, the stress and anxiety caused by the process was felt to have had an adverse effect upon staff morale.

Given the fact that the school had been subject to a short inspection and was apparently performing well, such a negative set of responses to the inspection experience may be quite surprising. What would appear clear from all this is that even a successful outcome to an inspection need not, in itself, guarantee a positive view of the process, and that a positive inspection experience is likely to be the result of a complex mixture which includes:

- the relationships established between the school and its inspection team;
- the expertise of the team;
- the quality of feedback provided;
- the perceived fairness of the final report; and
- the overall outcome of the process.

SCHOOL 3

General Information

Total Number of Qualified Teachers (full-time equivalent):	8.8
Number of pupils:	210
Number of pupils per teacher:	23.9:1
Average class size:	26.2
Education Support Staff:	2
Number of hours per week:	38

Table 3.3

Introduction and Context

In total, there were six questionnaire responses from School 3, which reflects a response rate of 54.5 per cent. There were two interviewees – the headteacher and a parent-governor, who is also the school clerk. The data provided was rich; especially so in the case of the parent-governor who was able to relate her own personal experience from more than one perspective.

School 3 is a primary school situated in a residential area in a small town to the south of Sheffield. This Derbyshire school is in the same locality as School 1, serving an area made up largely of private housing, with a limited number of properties for rent nearby. The school is unlike any other Derbyshire school in that its Foundation is made up of representatives of both the local Methodist Church and the Church of England. The majority of the school’s pupils are of higher social class (1991 Census). Similar to School 1, School 3 is situated in a locality in which there is much competition for pupils. The headteacher of the school was resigned to the fact that many

of the children registered as future pupils of School 3 would also be registered at three other local schools.

The school's first inspection had been conducted in March, 1995. School 3 was found to be 'providing a good learning experience for its pupils' and, as a result, was commended for serving the local community well (1995, p.1).

Amongst the school's 'many good features' were:

- the standards achieved by pupils;
- the development of basic skills;
- that children could listen attentively and speak confidentially;
- that pupils had positive attitudes to learning and were well behaved;
- that schemes of work were well used by teachers; and
- that there were very good relationships in the school with strong support from parents and governors.

However in order to improve, School 3's first inspection (1995) indicated that it needed to:

- write policies and schemes of work for **all** curriculum areas to ensure continuity and progression; and
- ensure that roles of staff and governors were more clearly defined.

School 3's first inspection reflected that three children had statements of special educational need; but there was no reference to the number of pupils, in total, on its special needs register.

At the time of the second inspection (1998), fifteen pupils were on the school's special needs register, with two others being subject to statements.

Inspection Outcomes and Information from Site Visits

The school's most recent inspection, in October 1998, was contracted to Pennine Inspection Services of Halifax. The report's main findings reflect that:

- the school has a very good partnership with parents and the community;
- reading has a high priority and this is reflected in the high standards achieved;
- staff work hard, co-operate with, and support each other and have a strong commitment to the school and its children;
- there is a good provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- there is a good range of extra-curricular activities offered including an upper junior residential week at an outward bound centre;
- there are good relationships in the school; and
- good provision is made for the spiritual, moral and social development of the pupils.

The Reception class, in particular, is commended as providing the pupils of School 3 with a 'very good start'.

Discussion with the headteacher and the evidence provided in the inspection report reflected that the school had made a steady rate of improvement

since its last inspection in 1995; with all of its key issues being properly addressed. There had been a commendable development of policies and schemes of work, with further development of the roles of subject managers, including the systematic sharing of knowledge and expertise. By the end of Key Stage 2 attainment in English, mathematics and science was deemed to be 'good' and above what would normally be expected of children of 11 years. This is, moreover, reflected in the school's national curriculum assessment results at the end of the key stage. As a result of all of the above, the inspection report (1998) was thus to conclude:

"The school is well placed to make further improvements". (p. 6)

Teaching quality was deemed 'at least sound'; with some 'good' and 'very good'. The best teaching was observed in English, mathematics, science, music and physical education. The teachers were considered to have good subject knowledge overall; to use direct teaching generally; and to provide regular positive feedback to pupils. As a result, the report was to conclude that teachers were held in high regard by parents.

Behaviour in and around school is clearly at least good, and the inspection report indicated that attendance was above the national average. The pervading atmosphere is both positive and purposeful and there is a strong Christian (St. Andrew's is a Church school) ethos. This is evidenced by School 3's most recent inspection (1998):

"The school has a good ethos with a very strong Christian family atmosphere." (p. 13)

The inspection report commended the school's leadership and management for providing clear educational direction and for bringing about a common sense of purpose through its corporate approach. There is a keenness to improve teaching, learning and achievement. The curriculum offered was found to be both broad and balanced with good provision for pupils with special educational needs, who generally made good progress.

The inspection report (1998) reflected that there was no evidence of any significant aspects of the school that parents were unhappy about. The school was commended for its approachability; for enabling its pupils to achieve good standards; for encouraging parents to play an active part in school life; and for encouraging its pupils to do more than merely take part in daily lessons.

The report reflected that the school had appropriate levels of experienced staff who functioned as a settled and cohesive team within satisfactory accommodation and with resources deemed to be 'good'.

Discussion with the headteacher and the evidence of the inspection reports indicate that standards at School 3 are improving – especially in the core subjects – and that children make good progress through the school which is consistent at both key stages. Pupil behaviour is excellent and opportunities for personal growth and development are offered through the school's impressive extra-curricular provision, its provision of residential opportunities and through its general community links.

The most recent inspection report (1998) identified few areas in which the school needed to show improvement:

- it should review teaching time at Key Stage 2; and
- it should agree on a system of medium term assessment strategies in mathematics, science and ICT.

Moreover, as with many other primary schools, it should seek to 'designate time to enable co-ordinators to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in the classrooms'. (p. 9)

As a result of the above findings, the inspection report commended the school for providing good value for money and for making 'steady improvement since the last inspection in 1995' (p. 6).

Evidence from the Interviews and Questionnaire Returns

The questionnaire and interview respondents from School 3 referred generally to a positive experience of their last inspection (1998). The inspection team were commended for their approachability and professionalism. Indeed, the headteacher indicated that certain clues and hints were given, prior to the inspection week, to reflect what the team would be looking for in particular.

"They gave us, in the preliminary chats that we had, plenty of clues as to the areas that they would be specifically looking at and if I requested information from them and guidance as to questions – for example the questions that the co-ordinators would be asked

– they were quite generous in giving feedback to that. So right from the start the view was that we were going to have quite a fair inspection and although we felt that no stone would be left unturned, we felt that at least the judgements they made would be fairly sound.” (School 3: TS: headteacher)

The parent-governor interviewee (who is also the school clerk) similarly referred to a professional team of inspectors and a satisfactory experience with sufficient notice of inspection being given. However, there was some variability of perception between two questionnaire respondents:

“I found the second OFSTED inspection less daunting than the first one undertaken. In both cases the inspection teams were approachable and pleasant to work with.” (School 3: 064: class teacher: co-ordinator for music and art)

“I just hate them (OFSTED inspections) and find them very stressful and false. You sometimes try too hard to do well and this is often counter-productive. You feel strait jacketed by them. The after effects are not good as it is difficult to remotivate yourself as all the energy has gone into the inspection week.” (School 3: 065: class teacher: co-ordinator for mathematics and staff development)

Feedback was felt to be an issue of concern for teachers. For the headteacher, insufficient time was allowed which, even if the feedback is

given sensitively, may fail to provide the 'full picture' of a lengthy period of observation. The headteacher emphasised the need for honesty in post-observation feedback and commented that it seemed to be provided rather as a result of obligation than willingness to enter into a professionally developmental discourse.

"The amount of time that they were able to spend talking to teachers was very short and they had to be ever so careful as to what they said because they were aware the teachers were going on to teach the next lesson and could not afford to leave them 'in pieces', so the honesty of the feedback was, I think, dubious and I think that they were really just saying the same things for the sake of giving feedback I am sure the teachers also like to have feedback straight away, but I don't think it is actually a particularly valuable exchange and all it can do is just to encourage the teachers a little bit, hopefully." (School 3: TS: headteacher)

The governors, however, were content with the feedback they received which helped them focus on taking a more strategic and long-term view of the school's development. Governors were thus allocated specific roles and the committees already in existence were given more specific functions.

School 3's respondents indicated that they viewed OFSTED inspection as a process of auditing what was being done in schools. For the headteacher, a positive report can help school development by reflecting what needs to be done; though the process remains a stressful one for teachers. No staff were absent during the inspection week but it was clear that staff handled

the process in very different ways. Indeed, the headteacher felt it likely that there would be 'a flurry of resignations in the year before inspection next time.'

The findings of the inspection team were regarded as a useful aid to future planning, though it was interesting to note that school development documentation and the post-OFSTED action plan were presented separately. Indeed, whilst the respondents from School 3 suggested that there were 'no surprises' in their final inspection report (1998), the areas highlighted for improvement –

- to review teaching time at Key Stage 2; and
- to agree on a system of medium term assessment strategies in mathematics, science and ICT –

had not been present in existing school development plans.

The respondents from School 3 felt that there had been no real impact upon pupil standards in their school which was attributable to inspection. This was also the case in respect of teaching and classroom practice. However, given that results in statutory national assessment are particularly high for School 3, one would have to accept that any discernible impact upon pupil performance would be relatively small. Both the headteacher and the parent-governor, when interviewed, felt that there had been a positive effect on teaching and learning across all curriculum areas following the introduction and implementation of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies, booster classes and target setting and that these had outweighed any impact resulting from inspection:

I think what has affected that (standards) has been the more latter development of booster classes and target setting. I don't think the inspection actually had much to do with it They (National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, booster classes and target setting) are the things that have moved things on. But our results have always been quite high anyway. So again, it is hard to say that that (inspection) has had any impact on it (standards)."

(School 3: TS: headteacher)

The parent-governor interviewee reflected that, in her view, OFSTED inspection was important in that it enabled parents to know that their school was doing well and that, as a result, all feedback and judgements were valuable:

"I'd have wanted the school to address the problems had there been problems; and if it didn't address these problems, it would have made me think about the school that I send my child to."

(School 3: PT: parent-governor and school clerk)

For this governor, positive feedback and the school's response to criticism from OFSTED were of central importance to her views on how well the school was managing its affairs.

Some concern was expressed at School 3 in relation to the issue of inspection's objectivity. The headteacher emphasised that the experience inevitably involves dealing with characters and relationships:

“One of the drawbacks of the inspection process which I am not sure that I know how to overcome is that there is still, I believe, a degree of subjectivity within it. We are dealing with characters, and different people have different views; and it is possible to rub one character up in a different way I think the relationship between the head and the Registered Inspector is quite crucial in that it results sometimes in views being expressed that are not necessarily very objective.” (School 3: TS: headteacher)

The headteacher was willing to concede that it would not be an easy task to introduce a more reliable or independent method of assessing school performance, but did express concern about subjective comments made regarding the entrance to his school:

“The only thing I took issue with was their comment on the front entrance hall which they said was not bright enough and didn’t use it to its full advantage. I argued the case with them over this and they said ‘well it could be better’, and I said ‘no, it is sometimes better, but at the moment this is good and it’s different at other times.’ And the other thing is with that it’s such a subjective view. What is art? And what is good? And some people think one thing is better than another. In the end we just had to agree to differ Their view stayed in print They moderated the language about it slightly.” (School 3: TS: headteacher)

When asked about the possible outcome had a different team conducted his school's inspection, he continued

"I think probably the overall tone of the inspection would have been more or less the same, but I think they would have picked up on different things because each inspector has their own little – it seems to me – to have their own speciality that they like to home in on and it's quite possible that another inspection team would have homed in on different things, depending on their own interests." (School 3: TS: headteacher)

This school, like School 1 in this study, was acutely aware of the impact a positive inspection report would have upon the local community. Indeed, in an area of intense local competition for pupils, School 3 quite unashamedly sought to use its successful inspection to its advantage:

"There is a great fear attached to the school report, in as much as it is a public document. So I think every school worries about the impact it will have on the community and the effect it will have on the school roll. We are no different. We were extremely concerned about that. We are in a very competitive position having got other schools nearby. Again, the outcome was very positive so we were very happy for it, as far as a wide audience is concerned, we were very happy to publish it and use it to our advantage in many ways in the wider community

Yes, the press release went out and went down the library

We found

that we had to make the most of every opportunity to focus and publicize our school.” (School 3: TS: headteacher)

Summary

The general view expressed by the respondents from School 3 indicate that their most recent inspection had been a broadly positive experience overall, conducted by an approachable team which was willing to provide contextual clues and hints to the staff reflecting the focus of their evidence gathering. The school had made progress since its first inspection in 1995 and this was reflected in a positive inspection report. However, in spite of this, the experience had been a stressful one.

The feedback provided after lesson observation was an issue of concern in terms of the limited detail provided by inspectors. The headteacher was particularly disappointed that feedback seemed to have been provided as a result of obligation rather than willingness. The importance of a positive relationship with the inspection team was also emphasised by the headteacher who referred to a subjective process in which a different team could come up with different judgements and findings.

Inspection was viewed, by the respondents from School 3, primarily as an auditing process; but one which – by confirming that the school was performing well – had an important positive impact upon a locality in which inter-school competition for pupils was a significant factor. Moreover, it

provided a useful aid to future planning, though the common view was that the final inspection report (1998) contained no real surprises.

Since the school's national assessment results at both key stages have consistently been good, the prevailing view was that inspection had little, if any impact upon pupil performance and classroom practice. Indeed, of rather greater significance in this context, had been the introduction of booster classes and target-setting, and the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

SCHOOL 4

General Information

Total Number of Qualified Teachers (full-time equivalent):	15.6
Number of pupils:	449
Number of pupils per teacher:	28.8
Average class size:	32
Education Support Staff:	12
Number of hours per week:	174

Table 3.4

Introduction and Context

School 4 is a large Church of England (Controlled) primary school located in a small market town in South Derbyshire. The school serves a residential area some ten miles north of the city of Derby. Over the last several years the school has seen a very rapid expansion of its roll – from 260+ in 1993 to 449 by the end of the 1999/2000 academic year. The school roll has in fact

continued to expand and by the end of the 2001/2002 academic year there are likely to be around 470 pupils attending School 4. It is noted in its most recent inspection report (2000) that the pupil roll has increased significantly since the school was previously inspected in June, 1996.

School 4 provided twenty-seven questionnaire responses out of a possible total of twenty-eight. This represents a 96.4 per cent response rate. In addition, the written comments provided by numerous of the questionnaire respondents were both revealing and varied. There were five interviewees from School 4: the deputy headteacher; an experienced classroom teacher; the chair of governors; an LEA governor; and a staff governor, who also happened to be a classroom assistant. At the time of the research, the headteacher was seconded to work with the LEA to support schools in special measures.

In addition to the evidence referred to above, School 4 provided a copy of its pre-2000 development plan (see Appendix 8) and a copy of its post-inspection (2000) action plan (see Appendix 9). The data provided was particularly rich, and the researcher is grateful for the quality of evidence gathered and the degree of openness exhibited by the staff and governors of this school.

School 4's first inspection was conducted in June 1996. The outcome was that the school provided 'satisfactory value for money', but there were a number of areas in which it should seek to show improvement. These were:

- to raise standards in writing, scientific investigation and musical composition;
- to raise teacher expectations at Key Stage 1;
- to develop systems of monitoring and critically evaluating the work of the school;
- to build on existing developments in curriculum planning; and
- to review the organisation and planning of integrated activities at Key Stage 1.

School 4's first inspection reflected concerns in the quality of accommodation provided to its pupils:

"The accommodation is barely adequate for the numbers of children on roll. However, the school works hard to overcome the difficulties, and the atmosphere in the building is orderly and calm and noise and visual distractions are minimal under the circumstances." (p.4)

However, by the time of the second inspection in June 2000, done under the new OFSTED framework (2000), the school had benefited from improved and extended accommodation and resourcing. Furthermore, both teaching and non-teaching staff numbers had increased to reflect the number of additional pupils. Nevertheless, average class size remained in excess of the national situation; and the school was unable to reduce infant class size to thirty (in line with DfEE and LEA targets) at the time of the 2000 inspection.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals was (2000) below the national average at 9.18 per cent; whilst the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language was, and remains, 'low'.

The school serves an area of mixed housing and this is reflected in the rising trend of pupils on the special needs register. Currently (2002) 13 per cent of its pupils are registered, and 12 pupils have formal statements with two others under statutory assessment.

The school is very popular in the locality and deals with many 'out of area' applications for admission. As a result of its popularity, pupil numbers are expected to continue to rise toward the 500 mark and further building commenced on the school site during the 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 academic years.

Inspection Outcomes

School 4's inspection, in June 2000, was contracted to Nord Anglia Inspection Services of Cheadle. The school's second inspection was conducted under the new OFSTED framework (January, 2000) and was the first one done using the new framework by the inspection team. The school's final report reflected that the school serves children with backgrounds which 'encompass the full socio-economic range' and attainment on entry, as reflected in baseline assessment done within pupils' first term in their Reception year, 'is generally average'.

The headteacher has a .2 (full-time equivalent) teaching commitment and has been in post since April, 1993.

The inspection report (2000) reflects that St. John's is 'a very effective school' and that teaching is 'sound' for children under five and 'good' in Key Stage 1 and 2 classes. As a result, pupils 'reach high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave school'. The school had made very significant progress from its first inspection in 1996, addressing all of the key issues for improvement identified whilst maintaining its own set of development priorities.

School 4's inspection report (2000) indicates that:

- speaking and listening skills are very high;
- the overall quality of teaching is good and has a very positive impact on pupils' learning;
- the headteacher provides very good leadership, supported well by an effective team of staff and governors;
- the quality and range of the curriculum is good;
- there is a very wide and interesting range of extra-curricular activities;
- pupil attitudes to work are very good;
- provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good; and
- the school promotes very good behaviour and excellent relationships.

However, the school could improve the following:

- the overall provision for children in the Reception class by reducing the number of pupils in the two classes and by improving resources and accommodation;
- ICT across the curriculum;
- everyday assessment in mathematics and science; and
- the information provided to parents about the progress of their children.

School 4's inspection report reflected that 'There have been many improvements since the previous inspection' (June, 1996) with teaching being 'much stronger' and 'a higher proportion of good and better lessons being seen during the current inspection'. The inspection indicated that the school had largely resolved the issues raised in 1996 and, as a result of improvements, was providing for, and attaining, 'higher standards'. For the inspectors, there was however, still the need to improve further the assessment done in lessons; whilst the accommodation available for an expanding roll remained barely adequate.

Statutory assessment results in 1999 were above average in English and mathematics and were 'very good' in science. Results were, in fact, higher still at both key stages at the end of summer, 2000 and at the end of summer, 2001.

The reporting team (2000) of inspectors was keen to emphasise that accommodation was an issue being exacerbated by the school's rapidly expanding roll and that the school – through the pressure being exerted by its parents and governors on the LEA – was seeking a solution:

“Large class sizes, limited space and resources hamper progress and the school has plans to improve this situation.” (p.8)

Pupil attitudes to school were found to be ‘very good’ as were behaviour and self-discipline:

“Personal development is very good. Pupils are considerate and show initiative to support those less fortunate than themselves. Relationships are excellent and pupils have great respect for the feelings, values and opinions of others.” (p.8)

The school was found to have no unsatisfactory teaching: 34 per cent of lessons were deemed satisfactory; 48 per cent ‘good’, and 18 per cent ‘very good or excellent’. The strongest teaching was found to be in Key Stage 2, but the inspection team noted the constraints particularly felt in the Foundation and Key Stage 1 classes in respect of ‘very large’ groups and limited space and resources. Other aspects of the school found to be good or better included:

- how well the governors fulfilled their statutory duties;
- how the school evaluated its own performance;
- provision for pupils with special educational needs; and
- provision for personal development.

School 4 was, furthermore, found to have effective procedures in place for caring for pupils' health and well-being, though assessment in lessons was not always used effectively to match work to the prior attainment of pupils.

The inspection team (2000) found – through its various interviews, questionnaires and its pre-inspection open meeting – that parents were pleased that their children enjoyed attending school and the progress their children made.

Other aspects parents commended included:

- teacher expectations of their pupils;
- the school's high standards of behaviour; and
- the school's approachability.

However, the report reflected that parents justifiably would like to see improvements in the information provided about the progress made by their children.

School 4 was found by its inspection team (2000) to offer 'very good value for money' and was deemed in a good position to continue and extend the improvements made since its last inspection in 1996.

Evidence from the Interviews and Questionnaire Returns

The questionnaire and interview respondents from School 4 quite clearly referred to a positive overall experience of their last OFSTED inspection in June, 2000. All five interviewees emphasised the professionalism of the

team of inspectors. The deputy headteacher reflected upon a much 'friendlier' and more positive experience 'second time round' – the school's first inspection had been done under the previous inspection framework in June, 1996. However, there were some concerns expressed involving the time allowed for the inspection process and the notice given. The LEA governor interviewee – who happens to be a parent of children at School 4 – felt that adequate notice of around ten weeks was given, but the amount of activity and 'panic' engendered was 'inordinate'. The governor-classroom assistant interviewee felt that the notice of inspection was adequate and reasonable, but that insufficient time was available to inspectors to view all aspects of a large primary school. As a result, members of the inspection team frequently had to be invited to observe particular activities that the school wished to be taken into account. The chair of governors, on the other hand, regarded the period of notice as too long, with too much time for the school to prepare. The teacher-interviewee similarly argued that much less notice should be given since the intensity of preparation and the pressure of the inspection week itself led to an almost unsustainable situation:

"I do feel quite strongly that they shouldn't give the amount of notice albeit it was only ten weeks prior to the inspection. I do feel this causes unnecessary stress because it's almost like a ticking clock up to the event; and I think it would be far more realistic on how schools are run and how schools operate if they were literally just to turn up on the day and do a blanket overall judgement rather than having everything, to some extent fabricated You feel like you are putting on a display for a

visiting teamIt isn't exactly how a school is run because people are walking on glass to make sure things are absolutely precise."

(School 4: JC: classteacher: geography co-ordinator and staff development co-ordinator)

Several of the survey respondents from School 4 provided comment on the time available for such a complex and multi-faceted task as inspecting schools:

"I felt that I did not have time allocated to me to:-

- a) be given detailed feedback on lessons;
- b) justify why I planned a lesson in a certain way;
- c) have a detailed interview regarding my curriculum responsibility in school – there are many more things that I would have liked to have said, but time constraints (from the inspectors' point of view) did not allow me to put forward my thoughts about how I see PE and games developing in the school." (School 4: 007: class teacher: PE co-ordinator)

"I understand that timetables cannot always be in place, but feel that inspectors should stay for lessons' entirety and see the finished result i.e. Art – not dip in and out! (School 4: 002: class teacher: creative arts co-ordinator)

"The whole process is traumatic and upsetting for the whole school. Could not subjects be monitored individually at different

times? Having a school totally swamped with strangers looking at everything for a week is too much altogether.” (School 4: 004: class teacher: art co-ordinator)

The general issue of post-observation feedback attracted critical comment from School 4. The LEA governor referred to ‘shallow’ feedback which ‘split hairs’. For the deputy headteacher, during interview, post-observation feedback was something of a disappointment:

“According to all the training and courses we’d been on we were led to believe we’d get quite a significant feedback. I can only speak from my own experience – I had one positive feedback in which twenty minutes was spent de-briefing the lesson and talking about it. All the other inspectors listened to the lesson, said ‘thankyou very much, that was very good’ or ‘good’ or whatever, and just walked out and that was the last I saw of them.” (School 4: CS: deputy headteacher)

The deputy headteacher emphasised his disappointment in his questionnaire response:

“The feedback was very hit and miss, ranging from detailed to non-existent.

None of the feedback helped to further my professional development.” (School 4: 021: deputy headteacher)

Similarly, the teacher-interviewee felt that the post-observation feedback provided was generally limited in its scope; though she did refer to a particular exception:

“..... on some occasions it (the feedback) was merely a courteous ‘thankyou’ and left, and if you happened to catch somebody around school later, they may review a couple of words like, ‘yes that was fine’ or whatever I only actually received one thorough feedback from a gentleman who was observing maths. He sat down and explained several points which he felt were areas which could be improved on, which I found very helpful and he was very pleasant in the way that he conducted this feedback” (School 4: JC: class teacher: geography co-ordinator and staff development co-ordinator)

She did however continue

“I did receive one feedback from a gentleman who offered some advice which I did not feel was particularly relevant to the lesson that I was teaching and I do wonder, with retrospect, whether he took kindly to the fact that I suggested to him that it possibly was not the right lesson to give that advice for.” (School 4: JC: class teacher: geography co-ordinator and staff development co-ordinator)

Certainly, the limited time inspectors have to complete the complex task of conducting an inspection was an issue for staff at School 4 which impacted upon the ability of inspectors to provide quality developmental feedback:

“The quality of lesson feedback information varied greatly depending on the inspector.

Only one (out of six observations) was a constructive and detailed feedback. During a ten-minute meeting the inspector highlighted strong points, possible alternatives and sensible areas for improvement. Far too often a casual comment was made by an inspector as they left the lesson e.g. ‘That was fine/OK,’ ‘Thankyou’ or ‘They were very good’ - referring to the children’s performance, not the actual lesson.” (School 4: 003: class teacher: geography co-ordinator and staff development co-ordinator)

When appropriate time is given to provide high quality developmental feedback the view of practitioners of the inspection process is likely to be far more positive:

“I was pleased to see they were very interested in extra-curricular activities and out of school clubs and activities which are an important part of the school; and they got a very fair mention, and a very positive mention in the feedback.” (School 4: ME: staff governor and classroom assistant)

For another teacher there was a relatively simple solution which would, at least partially, address the issue of poor quality post-observation feedback from inspectors:

“Written feedback after observations would be of greater benefit than two minutes of chat” (School 4: 002: class teacher: creative arts co-ordinator)

One teacher respondent, in a particularly lengthy, personal response to the questionnaire referred to the negative influence of the inspection process, and the politics surrounding inspection, upon creativity in schools:

“The whole performance is just a political tool, more akin to the proverbial scythe of communist states, who were afraid of innovators and thinkers.

‘The baby is being thrown out with the bathwater.’ Teachers, children and parents will all suffer. How is it we are so keen to follow the Japanese model when they are asking where they are going wrong. They don’t understand where their creative thinkers are.” (School 4: 004: class teacher: art co-ordinator)

Clearly for this respondent, the inspection process is likely, not only to have a negative effect upon creativity amongst teachers, but also amongst the children they teach.

The prevailing view amongst the interviewees was that another team of inspectors would have found broadly the same as the team for School 4’s

most recent inspection (2000), but each interviewee regarded personalities and relationships as important in the process and recognised that individual inspectors will inevitably bring their own attitudes and perceptions into the final outcome. The subjectivity of inspectors' perceptions was a particular concern expressed by the school's art co-ordinator, who received some critical feedback for her focus on the work of L.S. Lowrie in an art lesson observation:

"I felt that much of her (the inspector's) verbal assessment was subjective. She didn't like Lowrie – 'he's a bit boring!' She kept pushing the idea of using I.C.T. despite evidence on the displays that it had been used. She was disappointed not to see mobiles and felt displays were flat. There was 3D work on display in Year 5 and Year 6 classes and evidence in the portfolio." (School 4: 004: class teacher: art co-ordinator)

Other respondents made similar observations in relation to the subjectivity of inspectors' opinions:

"Certain views expressed by inspectors regarding a certain artist being 'boring' result in misguided results. Not objective." (School 4: 002: class teacher: creative arts co-ordinator)

"They (another team) would have had a different perception, because they are different people, of how things are done at the school It's down to the individual concerned who, at that particular time, is looking at that person (the teacher). Again, it

can be down to personalities Perceptions are different and I think that really does have an impact.” (School 4: MH: chair of governors)

“I think certain inspectors, looking at certain areas of the curriculum, come with pre-set ideas of what they are looking for and that’s obviously going to vary from team to team and from person to person.” (School 4: ME: staff governor and classroom assistant)

For the practitioners involved in this research from School 4, it would seem that the process of inspection has a relatively limited impact upon the ways in which lessons are planned and delivered. The chair of governors felt that inspection had been a validating experience and the fact that little substantive change was expected, ‘spoke volumes’. The LEA governor similarly expressed the view that inspection can be beneficial as it provides an independent view of the school – though in the case of School 4, nothing particularly new emerged which would impact upon the curriculum or the management of the school. One interviewee quite succinctly represented the general view of what is presently influencing what goes on both at classroom and whole school levels:

“As a teacher you work as a team throughout the school. It’s pretty much a job where, once you’re in the classroom, you’re pretty much independent anyway The National Curriculum and everything linked in with OFSTED and the whole

educational system is losing an element of independence for teachers because they are constantly having to fit into a set of criteria. Although it does seem that once everything is put into place these rather specific guidelines are relaxed In terms of the inspection impacting upon our independence; no more than the educational system as a whole.” (School 4: JC: class teacher: geography co-ordinator and staff development co-ordinator)

The classroom assistant – governor interviewee referred to benefits in terms of improved morale and teamwork which she felt resulted from the experience of going through an inspection. For her, it provided the opportunity to reflect upon classroom practice and performance. However, the school’s deputy headteacher felt that any implication of criticism in terms of I.C.T. provision was unwarranted since the school’s overall provision, in this context, was regarded by the LEA as a school strength, and a model for other schools to seek to emulate; and that this was the case in spite of the fact that School 4 had received no National Grid for Learning (N.G.f.L.) funding from central government at the time of their inspection, unlike most other schools in the country.

The fact that inspection is likely to influence what goes on in schools during the period in which inspectors are present cannot easily be denied:

“Generally, I felt I was overplanned and could not operate as effectively as usual. I lost all spontaneity and could not relate to

the children as well as usual. They too sensed the change and were unsettled and more precocious than usual.” (School 4: 004: class teacher: art co-ordinator)

“I do not agree with the amount of prior notification given as it allows time for artificial evidence and fabrication of plans, etc and this does not illustrate a true reflection of teaching on a day-to-day basis.” (School 4: JC: class teacher: geography co-ordinator and staff development co-ordinator)

At school 4 the deputy headteacher, when interviewed, referred to a much better experience of inspection in 2000, under the new framework, than had been the case in 1996. The team of inspectors, he felt, had been much more approachable and their expertise was more appropriate to a primary school setting. The questionnaires, however, did reflect a rather mixed view in this respect amongst the rest of the staff, and concern was clear that there remains little chance to challenge inspection findings and judgements. However, the positive impact of an encouraging feedback felt to fairly reflect the efforts of staff are clearly reflected in this statement:

“I think they (the inspection team) were very fair In my case, I was actually doing some group reading in a Year 6 class He (the inspector) was very pleased with the way it was going and the questions I’d asked the children and how we were running this group reading session; so that’s given me a lot more confidence and I feel now that I’m doing that really well and that I can really

contribute to the Year 6 work.” (School 4: ME: staff governor and classroom assistant)

All of the interviewees indicated that the experience of inspection had been a stressful one, and that this was the case in spite of the fact that it was evident, almost immediately, that the inspection was going to go well. The inspection team was commended for its efforts to reduce the anxiety felt by staff. Indeed, in one instance, an inspector took over a class briefly when a teacher felt unwell. The dilemma of seeking to make the process rather less stressful within the given timeframe was succinctly encapsulated by a teacher questionnaire respondent:

“The inspection team made efforts to make the process less stressful. Verbal feedback, however, was not always reflected in written feedback. In some cases inspectors seemed to feel it necessary to comment – if only on trivial matters.” (School 4: 022: class teacher: I.C.T. co-ordinator)

One interviewee came out positively in favour of the process of inspection's impact upon staff morale and collaboration:

“We also noticed that staff were working very well together in their teams in preparing for OFSTED, their planning and so on; and this further helped to reinforce the relationships for each year group which were very strong.” (School 4: CS: deputy head teacher)

Ultimately, it was clear from the respondents to the questionnaire that the anxiety precipitated by the process of inspection had had only a limited return in terms of the further development of the school:

“I don’t think that in our case the experience will take the school forwards in its development I felt that the inspection caused tremendous stress, very long hours, mountains of unnecessary paperwork.” (School 4: 021: deputy headteacher)

“Getting through OFSTED becomes an objective instead of focusing on making our school better.” (School 4: 004: class teacher: art co-ordinator)

“I think you only have to look at the press and to speak to anybody in teaching who has been through an OFSTED inspection to realise that the benefits of an OFSTED inspection are possibly so slight in raising standards or improving teacher performance in comparison to the extreme pressure and stress, not only for teachers, but for their families as well. I do think probably that the stress outweighs the benefits that the inspection has. I said earlier that they do give you a focus on exactly what standards you should reach, but I think you know those anyway and I think it is just somebody rubber stamping it at the end.”
(School 4: JC: class teacher: geography co-ordinator and staff development co-ordinator)

At School 4 the staff and community view is that issues surrounding overcrowding and resourcing have, for some years, been the most pressing areas for future development. Whilst reflecting this quite sympathetically in relation to early years provision, the school's inspection report concentrated rather more on issues which inspectors actually accepted the school already did well:

- communicating with parents;
- increasing the already high percentage of good and very good classroom practice; and
- developing further the good I.C.T. provision to be found in the school.

For several of the teaching staff and the school governors these suggestions were felt to be of limited practical value or significance. Indeed, one questionnaire respondent very clearly expressed her frustration that OFSTED had little to do with practical school improvement:

“We need more sharing between schools and teachers. More time given to training and to absorb all the changes imposed on us. More focus on what we do well and trying to extend it!”

(School 4: 004: class teacher: art co-ordinator)

Similarly, the LEA governor in interview, expressed the view that the whole inspection process lacked depth:

“I thought it was actually – in the broad scheme of things – quite shallow Shallow might be the wrong word quite minor.

They'd come into school and split hairs So the areas that talk about improve this good area, improve that good area, to me are much of an irrelevance." (School 4: KS: LEA governor and parent)

In School 4, pupil standards, as reflected in national assessment performance, were good. The broad consensus was that this was the result of the school's own efforts and development, and that there had been some impetus provided by the publication of results and the introduction and implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In other words, good results were not specifically attributed to the impact provided by either the existence of, or the experience of, OFSTED inspection:

"I think pupil performance is already good here. OFSTED may have highlighted this but it did not necessarily contribute to it."

(School 4: 008: class teacher: Newly Qualified – N.Q.T.)

However, there were positive comments made in relation to OFSTED's contribution to what is provided by schools and at no point did any of the interviewees or questionnaire respondents argue against the existence of a system of school inspection:

"I feel that some form of inspection is necessary in order to maintain/improve standards." (School 4: 003: class teacher: geography co-ordinator and staff development co-ordinator)

“Overall, it’s been beneficial (the existence of inspection) and has changed the way we plan, and it has improved the quality of the experiences we offer children.” (School 4: 031: classroom assistant: with experience of pre-school nursery setting)

A significant factor which is likely to influence the relationship between the school and its inspection team is the staff and governors’ view of team members as individuals and the appropriateness of their expertise. Respondents from School 4 were concerned that their first inspection (June, 1996) had been conducted by a ‘secondary’ team. A similar concern was expressed by a classroom assistant who had experience of inspection elsewhere in a pre-school nursery setting:

“Our first two inspections were traumatic and distressing and we made a complaint about our second inspector. Our last inspection was so much better as the inspector was from pre-school settings and understood the problems of dealing with very young children.” (School 4: 031: classroom assistant: with experience of pre-school nursery setting)

The broad consensus amongst the interviewees was that the OFSTED framework should not be regarded as the only valid yardstick as to what constitutes a good and effective school. Perhaps the following observations reflect most succinctly the views from School 4:

“Schools and teachers and children are not machines and they’re not robots or mechanics and it’s not a manufacturing industry

where we put in one thing and come out with the same end product. So many other criteria have to be taken into account and I don't know what extent the inspectors actually do look at the social background of the children, although I know it's referred to in the report. I tend to think they just cast a cursory glance at that and then move on to their framework on which they carry out their inspection anyway." (School 4: JC: class teacher: geography co-ordinator and staff development co-ordinator)

The staff governor interviewee felt that we should not only look at school success in one way – schools should be judged on more than the OFSTED framework and their examination results. For the LEA governor the quality of a school should be determined by a mixture of criteria including parents' views, inspection evidence, pupil performance and what 'extra' the school offers its children. For him, inspection had been a public validation of the work of School 4. The chair of governors also felt that OFSTED inspection should not be regarded as the only valid criterion upon which the assessment of a school should be made. He referred to a mixture of qualities, competencies, and interactions between the staff, the pupils, the parents and the general community that the school serves.

One of the teacher questionnaire respondents in fact provided an interesting and succinct view of what, to her, would be a rather more valid and representative system of auditing the performance of schools:

“I think the snapshot that OFSTED is able to view should not be given such status. Joint assessment by headteachers and advisers, or other people in school, who have a long term knowledge of the teachers would be better.” (School 4: 004: class teacher: art co-ordinator)

Summary

From all this it would seem that School 4 had a very positive inspection experience in summer 2000 under the new OFSTED framework; and that the process had been a rather more validating experience second time round. The staff and governors were more content with the relationship with the inspection team in 2000 than they had been in 1996, and they felt that the experience and expertise of the inspectors was more appropriate to a primary school setting than had been the case four years earlier.

There were mixed views on the notice provided and the time available to audit a large primary school. For the school to be fully and fairly assessed in all its activities, inspectors must have appropriate time to complete the task properly, and concerns were raised in relation to both the availability of time and opportunity for detailed and developmental post-observation feedback. If feedback lacks depth or focus it is unlikely to yield the impact upon teaching and learning that is sought.

The importance of a positive relationship with the inspection team was emphasised by the deputy headteacher. All of the interviewees indicated the view that inspection was a subjective process influenced by personal

experience and perception. However, the general view was that two different inspection teams would come up with broadly similar judgements and findings.

The school's national assessment results have been good over recent years, especially at key stage two. As a result of this, it is unlikely that inspection has had anything other than a marginal impact upon standards in the core subjects. Indeed, staff and governors felt that there had been little effect upon school development, planning or practice which could be directly attributed to OFSTED. Ultimately, the benefits resulting from OFSTED were considered limited despite the considerable stress and anxiety precipitated by notice of an inspection.

SCHOOL 5

General Information

Total Number of Qualified Teachers (full-time equivalent):	2.4
Number of pupils:	(Yr – Y2) 40 Nursery Unit: 17
Number of pupils per teacher:	16.7:1
Average class size:	20
Education Support Staff:	2
Number of hours per week:	28

Table 3.5

Introduction and Context

In total there were five questionnaire responses from School 5. This reflects a response rate of 100 per cent. There were relatively few questionnaire comments. There were three interviewees:

- the headteacher who, at the time of the research, had close to a full-time teaching position;
- a class teacher who also had responsibilities for the co-ordination of numeracy, I.C.T., craft, design and technology, art, staff development and key stage one assessment; and
- a part-time nursery nurse who was also a general classroom assistant and governor.

All staff at School 5, at the time of the research, had been at school at least eight years, with three approaching 30 years' service. Due to the size of the school, each staff member had multiple responsibilities. There were only two full-time members of staff.

School 5 is a small infants' school situated in a village seven miles from Chesterfield and to the south of Sheffield and Dronfield. The Victorian building is well-maintained and quite spacious and the school benefits from an attached nursery. The nursery is well-regarded in the locality and this has a significant impact upon the character of the school:

“The nursery has become a resource for children with special educational needs from a wider geographical area. Most of the children are referred from the local Child Development Centre. Whilst the number of pupils with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average, the number of statements of special educational need is well above the national average.” (inspection report 1999, p. 9)

The small school roll is largely made up of children from a local estate which is comprised of both private and rented properties. The school's normal

area includes privately owned and rented houses and some farms. The 1991 Census reflected that social, economic and demographic characteristics of the area were close to average; though the percentage of adults with qualifications from higher education was lower than average. According to the inspection report (1999), children's attainment on entry to the nursery varies, but is 'below average', overall. Significant numbers of children display an underdeveloped use of language.

The headteacher is very experienced and is widely respected in the area. At the time of this research, the school had had only one inspection.

Inspection Outcomes and Information from Site Visits

The inspection was conducted in May 1999, by Pennine Inspection Services of Halifax (as were those of School 1 and School 3 in this research project).

The inspection report's main findings were:

- that pupils make good progress overall – both in the school and in the nursery;
- that pupils attain well in religious education in which attainment is good and above national expectations;
- that teaching quality is good and there is a broad and balanced curriculum;
- that children with special educational needs are well catered for and, as a result, they make good progress;
- that there is good provision for the children's personal development;

- that there is good leadership and management, and the governors and headteacher have an effective partnership;
- that the school's accommodation and resources are used efficiently; and
- that the financial administration and management of the school are good, though the school has a tight budget with which to conduct its affairs.

The headteacher interview and the inspection report clearly indicate that the school is making progress. The school has a strong focus on literacy which pervades all aspects of the curriculum. By the end of the key stage the inspection report indicated that attainment in mathematics was satisfactory and in line with the national average – as were standards in science and ICT. The inspection report commended the school for its religious education, design and technology and for its focus on pupils' investigative skills. Standards in geography, history, art, music and PE were deemed satisfactory and in line with national expectations. However, assessment results at the end of the key stage clearly reflected the difficulties in making valid judgements on overall performance with percentages achieving 'level two' differing significantly, from year to year, due to the small numbers of pupils in each cohort assessed.

The school has a very pleasant and lively atmosphere and encourages good behaviour. The inspection report reflected that care and consideration for others are inherent in the school's ethos and that this is, in turn, manifest in

positive pupil attitudes to learning and a happy environment. Pupil attendance at school was good at the time of inspection, and remains so.

The inspection report commends all staff for providing good role models and for their positive relationships. The overall quality of teaching is deemed 'good' with lessons well-structured and with a variety of strategies utilised. Teachers and parents have an 'effective partnership' and it is clear that parents are encouraged to visit the school.

The headteacher is very involved in the day-to-day life of the school, having a major teaching commitment which allows her little non-contact administration time. As a result, much of the time necessary to deal with management issues has to be found out of school hours. The school curriculum is mainly delivered through cross-curricular topics and is carefully monitored by the head who is, by necessity, actively involved in its delivery. The headteacher and staff clearly collaborate effectively.

The inspection report reflects that the school is efficient with sound financial planning within tight parameters. The recommendations of a local authority audit, prior to inspection, had been implemented. Teaching and non-teaching staff were deployed effectively. Similar to many small schools – which are relatively expensive to run – expenditure per pupil is above the national average: this expenditure is, however, comparable to schools of similar size.

The inspection report, in recognising that the school's development planning would benefit from indicating success criteria, was thus to emphasise that School 5 provides good value for money; and that 'The weaknesses are far outweighed by what the school does well' (p. 6). The inspection report concluded that:

'The overall quality of teaching is good in both the nursery and the school. Seven out of ten lessons observed were good or very good and all were satisfactory or better.' (p. 7)

Evidence from the Interviews and Questionnaire Returns

All of the interviewees from School 5 reflected positively on their experience of OFSTED inspection (1999). The team was commended for its professionalism and expertise. They were also complimented for their approachability and the positive relationships established with all members of the small staff team:

"The team were very good, very pleasant and came over in a very professional way and developed a good relationship with the staff, and I have no complaints at all." (School 5: JM: headteacher)

The teacher interviewee referred to 'a lot of notice' which amounted to in excess of twelve weeks. The Nursery Nurse and governor (JW) felt that the period of notice was acceptable and that it had led to little, if any, extra work being done in preparation. For her, the school was already in a good position to meet the challenge of inspection

“We didn’t do any extra because whatever was asked for from the inspection team was already going on in the school.” (School 5: JW: Nursery Nurse, classroom assistant and governor)

This interviewee also reflected the intense experience that the current system of inspection provides in small schools with little, if any, opportunity to ‘escape for a break’:

“With it being a small school you couldn’t get away from them (the inspectors). They were there on site and that was it! You were with them for three days three full days.” (School 5: JW: Nursery Nurse, classroom assistant and governor)

Conflicting views were presented by the interviewees in relation to the quality of post-observation feedback. The headteacher felt that feedback after lessons was poor, but that the final verbal feedback at the end of the inspection had been valuable. The teacher interviewee felt that feedback was brief but of acceptable quality overall, providing some degree of immediate reassurance. For the Nursery Nurse, the feedback provided had been ‘very professional’ and, from her point of view, sufficient. The latter interviewee also reflected the intensely pressurised situation staff in small schools with multiple responsibilities find themselves in:

“You were relieved at the end of the day that you’d not let anybody down. That was my main concern. I’d done everything that was asked of myself from the teacher and not let them down You work well in a team but there’s eyes looking at you from

all over You felt that it (support in lessons) had got to be that bit extra.” (School 5: JW: Nursery Nurse, classroom assistant and governor – referring to her role as a classroom assistant)

The headteacher specifically drew attention to the limited time available to inspectors in her view on the feedback given:

“They didn’t really give any feedback at all, or only to say ‘yes that was alright’ I think they were very rushed. There were two of them (inspectors) whizzing round from class to class, so maybe they didn’t have the time. Perhaps because they were happy with what they saw they didn’t feel it was necessary to give a lot of feedback.” (School 5: JM: headteacher)

All three interviewees felt that the impact of inspection upon school development and improvement was limited. The teacher interviewee referred to ‘minimal changes’ and questioned the significance of the finding that no costings were included in the school’s development plans. There were no staff changes as a result of inspection other than herself being given the responsibility for the development of I.C.T. The teacher interviewee felt that the inspection judgements were generally fair but expressed some concern that the team knew little of the practical implications of the implementation of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies. In so small a school with so limited a number of staff, these implications had been considerable, with full involvement in the changes required from everyone to ensure their smooth introduction.

All of the interviewees reflected the view that inspection should not be the only yardstick of how well a school is performing. Indeed, the headteacher was keen to point out that the school did not possess a copy of the OFSTED framework and that she was rather more influenced by the LEA adviser whom she had confidence in and who had some knowledge of the school built up over several years:

“We haven’t got one (an OFSTED framework). I’ve never seen it. We haven’t looked at it. I was very determined we were not going to teach the way that somebody else thought we ought to teach ... Getting back to the quality of teaching: we have Looked at the quality of teaching on certain areas that we could improve on; and one of the areas we have been looking at this year is actually questioning children in a whole class situation possibly our Q.D.D. (Quality Development Dialogue – an LEA school improvement initiative) adviser suggested we look at that.”
(School 5: JM: headteacher)

Moreover, the headteacher expressed her concern in relation to the validity of evaluating small and large institutions in different localities, with very different regimes, routines and forms of organisation, under the same framework:

“..... to try to have the same framework for a school of our size and larger secondary schools does not work. Bigger schools are very different and there are mixed ideas that schools are there to serve a community. Yet if you are judging them all by the same

criteria, you are assuming that they are all the same and you know that all communities are not the same, so that is unreasonable.” (School 5: JM: headteacher)

The interviewees were in agreement that the experience of inspection had been a stressful one. The Nursery Nurse expressed the view that the inspection had been a validation of what was done in the school:

“It’s nice to know you’re doing your job right” (School 5: Nursery Nurse, classroom assistant and governor)

However, she referred to the pressure felt by everyone during the inspection and felt that the anxiety involved had not been repaid by the outcomes or the ‘new things learned’. These views were in fact emphasised by the headteacher of School 5 during interview. When asked what the main outcomes of the inspection process had been and whether, or not, the experience had been a validating one, she replied:

“None (main outcomes). Just a lot of stress and a lot of stress for everybody in school

I suppose if it has any benefit it lets parents know that you are doing a good job, but it is a very expensive way of finding out. We would rather have the money!”

(School 5: JM: headteacher)

Furthermore, when asked to consider outcomes for the staff she responded:

“As far as I am concerned there weren’t any. We did not say ‘well we learned a lot from that’. It was just ‘thank goodness it’s over’.

We didn't find any of it particularly useful." (School 5: JM: headteacher)

The questionnaire respondents from School 5 indicated quite clearly that they viewed the experience of going through an OFSTED inspection as having a negative impact upon teacher creativity and independence; and little, if any, benefit was ascribed to inspection's impact upon:

- teaching style;
- the way lessons were planned; and
- future classroom practice.

Issues concerning the general effect of inspection upon School 5 received a mixed response from the respondents. However, a teacher emphasised the importance of the inspection outcomes and judgements as an influencing factor upon one's view of the inspection process itself:

"Inspection was a positive experience because our report was good – things would have been different if the report was not good. (School 5: 074: class teacher: school co-ordinator for numeracy, I.C.T., C.D.T., art, staff development and key stage one assessment)

The headteacher also referred to the importance of the outcome on inspection in one's view of the process, and reflected upon the pressure of inspection leading to the premature end of some teaching careers:

“I mean for a school that gets a good report it was stressful. So to a school that gets a bad report it must be horrendous; and I think that is really shown by the number of teachers who have gone off with stress during, before and after inspection. It did not happen here. They were fine, but I have a number of friends who have given up teaching Yes, because of OFSTED. All around the fifties. People who have taught for a long time and have gone through an OFSTED, been alright but are never going to go through that again. And then have taken early retirement which is a huge shame. A lot of talent gone” (School 5: JM: headteacher)

There was general agreement amongst the questionnaire respondents that the issues identified in the School 5’s inspection report were not the most important that the school needed to deal with; though, at the same time no-one felt that the inspectors had missed any significant weaknesses. For the staff, the key concerns for School 5 were generally in relation to its size. The school had, and continues to have, a very tight budget. This inevitably makes the planning of future priorities particularly important. The headteacher’s almost non-existent non-contact time is a matter that needs to be resolved, as is the limited money available to increase the number of classroom assistants.

Standards at School 5 were good prior to inspection and remained so. As a result, the impact of the process upon pupil performance was unlikely to be

more than marginal. The headteacher felt that the effect of the introduction and implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies upon standards had been considerable, and significantly outweighed the impact of OFSTED. Indeed, in her view, there had been no real development in the school in terms of classroom practice, quality of teaching, management or ethos which could be directly attributed to the existence or experience of OFSTED inspection. This view was corroborated by a teacher colleague:

“We’re always trying to raise standards. We’re always trying to do the best that’s available and set targets for ourselves. We’d have been doing that anyway.” (School 5: AP: class teacher: school co-ordinator for numeracy, I.C.T., C.D.T., art, staff development and key stage one assessment)

All of the questionnaire respondents from the school indicated that they felt that the judgements made by one team of inspectors would be replicated by another, and that inspection findings are largely objective. The headteacher did, however, refer to the experience reported to her by her school clerical assistant:

“ our school secretary actually works in another school in the afternoons. She is here part-time. She has been through two inspections. She had a third one at her first school, which was their second inspection, and had an awful inspector who actually had her in tears. She said ‘I cannot believe it. I have been through three inspections and this has happened to me,’ so obviously some inspectors do have negative affects on people.

Perhaps we were lucky. I don't know, but we were fine." (School 5: JM: headteacher)

Summary

Clearly, the experience of inspection at School 5 was a generally positive and validating one. The school had been very well prepared and there was little feeling that inspection had resulted in much, extra preparatory work. However, even in a 'successful' school with good results and a good inspection report, the experience was regarded as a stressful one.

The fact that School 5 is a particularly small one seems to have had the effect of rendering the whole experience of inspection more intense. 'No escape' was reported by staff who felt that their every move was under careful scrutiny. Additionally, each member of staff is burdened by a range of responsibilities which are themselves subject to analysis. As a result, staff are likely to be interviewed and observed numerous times in a variety of contexts.

The value of the developmental feedback provided by the inspectors was perceived as mixed. Indeed, little impact was ascribed to the school's good academic standards or continued development which was directly attributed to OFSTED inspection. The general view was that the introduction and implementation of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies had had more effect on school improvement and classroom practice.

Ultimately, though the general view of the respondents from School 5 was that the OFSTED framework and OFSTED inspection should not be the only valid yardsticks against which schools should be measured, they were content that they had been fairly treated and that the system was, on the whole, objective. As a result, School 5 regarded the present system of school inspection as a reasonably accurate and reliable indicator of school performance.

SCHOOL 6

General Information

Total Number of Qualified Teachers (full-time equivalent):	2.5
Number of pupils: (Y3 – Y6)	55
Number of pupils per teacher:	23
Average class size:	28
Education Support Staff:	1
Number of hours per week:	5

Table 3.6

Introduction and Context

School 6 is a small junior school situated in a village to the south of Dronfield and Sheffield. Like School 5, it is housed in a substantial Victorian building. The headteacher was appointed in 1998, a mere two terms before the school’s most recent inspection. As a junior school, School 6 has felt particularly significantly the effects of Derbyshire LEA’s relatively poor funding from central government. As a result, the headteacher has a full-time teaching commitment and at the time of the last inspection (1998), the

school's budget was only able to sustain five hours of support per week from a single classroom assistant. The majority of the school's 55 pupils were drawn from a local council estate and from some private housing nearby. 32 per cent of the pupils were on the school's special educational needs register with three children requiring statements. School 6 was the only one of the sample schools to have excluded pupils during the year prior to the inspection (that is 1997/98): two pupils had had fixed term exclusions and one had been permanently excluded.

School 6 provided three questionnaire returns from a possible total of four. This represents a 75 per cent response rate. There were no additional comments provided in the questionnaire responses. There were two interviewees. These were the only 2 full-time members of staff at the school. Due to the size of the school, staff had to fulfil a range of different roles and functions. The headteacher and the full-time teacher interviewees thus were able to provide their perceptions of the inspection process from a range of different – though still personal – perspectives.

The headteacher of School 6 is its co-ordinator for special needs, staff development, P.E., science, assessment and monitoring and I.C.T. The full-time teacher has responsibilities for:

- numeracy;
- C.D.T.;
- geography;
- music; and

- history.

Additionally, she is the school's senior teacher and this is reflected in her salary when she deputises for the headteacher.

Inspection Outcomes and Information from Site Visits

School 6's first inspection (March 1996) found that the school provided 'satisfactory value for money.' It indicated that standards in science and art 'were above national expectations' and that in all other subjects standards were 'broadly in line with national expectations.' The quality of learning was regarded as satisfactory and 'for those with special needs it was good' (p.5/6). The school's ethos was found to be good, and its management and the use of its resources were commended. There were however, a number of areas in which it should show improvement:

- to raise standards of achievement in I.C.T.;
- to employ a greater variety of teaching strategies;
- to introduce schemes of work across the curriculum;
- to make more consistent use of assessment; and
- to reconsider the balance of time given to the various subjects in the school curriculum.

By the time of the school's second inspection (1998) it had moved forward significantly. This is acknowledged by School 6's later inspection, which indicated that development was needed in rather fewer areas;

- the achievement of higher ability pupils in English and mathematics;

- a more consistent approach to the setting of homework; and
- the improvement of day-to-day assessment.

The improvement issues raised by School 6's first inspection had largely been resolved.

The second inspection, which was conducted in October, 1998, was contracted to Nord Anglia School Inspection Services of Cheadle, near Stockport and its main findings were that:

- teaching was good in two-thirds of the lessons observed with almost all of the rest being at least satisfactory;
- pupils' personal development and relationships with each other and adults were very good;
- the provision for pupils with special educational needs was good;
- the national literacy strategy had been implemented well;
- pupils' moral, social and cultural development was good;
- pupils received good general support, guidance and welfare;
- the professional development of staff was good and was having a positive effect upon the standard of teaching in the school.

Discussion with the headteacher and the evidence of the inspection report itself reflect that the school is improving. The circumstances of the school's budget make rapid improvement difficult, but for all this, the headteacher revealed that she was keen to purchase an empty building adjacent to the school in order to enhance provision for the pupils. At the time of writing,

this development was still being actively considered with additional sources of funding being sought.

The inspection team recommended (1998), an increase in the amount of classroom assistance provided, but was compelled to recognise that such a policy would be dependent upon the school's financial situation.

As a result of its findings the report (1998) was to conclude that:

“The weaknesses are outweighed by what the school does well.”

(p. 6)

By the end of key stage 2, attainment in English and mathematics was deemed 'in line' with the national average, though the results of the school's statutory assessment in the previous summer indicated that School 6 was, in fact, performing 'well above average' in English and 'above average' in mathematics. In science, attainment was judged to be above average nationally, and this was reflected in the school's statutory assessment performance. However, reference is made in the inspection report to inconsistent performance over the years in the school's end of key stage assessment, though this is clearly far from surprising given the very small numbers in each year's cohort. That 'inconsistency' was referred to in relation to School 6's pupil performance was a source of some frustration on the part of staff, who clearly felt that the size of each Year 6 cohort made this unevenness inevitable.

Standards of attainment in ICT were judged to have risen since the school's last inspection (1995). Pupil progress in art was deemed 'good'; and progress in design and technology, geography, history, music and PE was judged to be satisfactory. Writing skills through the school were found to be adequate and in line with national expectations and there was very positive reference to literacy and numeracy skills being used and developed in other areas of the school curriculum.

The school clearly provides a pleasant industrious atmosphere for its pupils. The inspection report referred to the school as an orderly learning community in which pupils' attitudes were good. Teaching was judged to be predominantly good with 96 per cent of lessons observed satisfactory or better. The quality of teaching was judged to have impacted positively on both relationships within the school and pupil behaviour:

- "Relationships in this caring school are very good at all levels, and based on mutual trust and respect" (p. 14); and
- "Teachers have commendably high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work in the majority of lessons." (p. 15)

The headteacher's leadership and management were commended at various stages in the last inspection report. She was seen as an effective leader with satisfactory support from the school governing body. Day-to-day financial management and administration were judged to be sound; but the headteacher suffers from the difficulties of leading a small school, having to find sufficient time and energy both to teach and to manage. Satisfactory progress is being made in the development of appropriate schemes of work;

but some curriculum policies were judged to require review. The school was commended for its provision of an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which include a successful residential experience. The school was also commended for its use of visits from speakers, visits to places of interest and its use of artefacts which increase and enhance pupils' cultural knowledge and experience. The inspection report (1998) thus states:

“There is a strong sense of direction in the appropriately broad and balanced curriculum provided The schemes of work provide satisfactory continuity and progression which is improved by the close contact between the teachers in such a small school.” (p. 16)

The inspection and discussions with the headteacher and chair of governors indicate a positive view of the school amongst parents. The school receives favourable parental feedback which was reflected in its report (1998):

- by enabling its pupils to achieve well and by encouraging children to get involved in a range of activities outside the classroom;
- by providing an environment which children appreciate and enjoy;
- as a result of being approachable; and
- by providing a clear understanding of what is being taught.

The inspectors' judgements endorse the positive comments of parents and, in addition, refer to a satisfactory partnership between pupils' homes and the school which is enhanced by effective communications.

In view of the above evidence, School 6 was deemed to provide satisfactory value for money. The inspection report reflected that the school had improved on its last inspection in 1996; and that:

‘teaching was predominantly good. In 96 per cent of lessons observed it was satisfactory or better.’ (p. 7)

It should be noted, however, that the school was a little disappointed that, in spite of commendations for its improvement since 1996, it was not recognised as providing ‘good value for money’.

Evidence from the Interviews and Questionnaire Returns

The questionnaire and interview respondents from School 6 provide a rather mixed view on the manner in which their last inspection, in 1998, was conducted. Concern was expressed in terms of the expertise of the team of inspectors and in terms of their taking into account the particular circumstances in which a very small school operates. The team of three inspectors was regarded as approachable and willing to enter into professional dialogue by the full-time teachers, but not so by the classroom assistant. The teacher interviewee referred to a ‘friendlier’ team second time round. However, everyone referred to a particularly difficult set of circumstances under which School 6’s inspection had been conducted.

Firstly, the headteacher (JC) had only been in post for two terms prior to the inspection. Secondly, the expected Rgl was indisposed shortly before the inspection was to commence; and thirdly, though the school opted to

continue with the inspection as planned, the second Rgl did not receive all of the necessary data on time. As a result, the inspectors were left with a difficult situation in which they were not only observing and assessing what was going on in the school, but also were involved in 'catching up' with evidence gathered and submitted to the original Rgl.

“We had some difficult circumstances and taking those into account, when the inspection took place, everyone did the best possible job they could and that included the inspectors In hindsight we were perhaps lulled into a false sense of security It wasn't until afterwards that we thought of things that might have been done differently.” (School 6: JC: headteacher)

The headteacher then reflected on the fact that the new Rgl had not been aware that there were only two full-time members of staff until the final day of the inspection. To miss such a fundamental fact in a very small school had the effect of damaging the credence given to the inspection's findings and judgements as far as the school staff was concerned. Moreover, because the inspection had got under way in somewhat difficult circumstances and because, as a result, the headteacher had not been observed teaching until the final day, the **whole** of the last day was taken up observing the head in the classroom. This created a particularly difficult and stressful situation which again did little to endear the inspection team or the process to the staff of School 6.

The feedback provided was perceived to be quite good overall. The teacher interviewee felt that the feedback given to her was positive and she found the inspectors willing to listen to her point of view. The headteacher was, however, rather less happy with the factual content of the feedback. Some positive evidence given orally was not present in the final report and there was no reference to the school's 100 per cent achievement at Key Stage 2 science national assessment (Level 4 and above).

"There were factual contextual things that had been missed

About the second day, the lead inspector made it clear he didn't think the literacy strategy was appropriate to a school of this size I felt that was a personal opinion rather than a professional judgement After we talked, that didn't come into the report."

(School 6: JC: headteacher)

This view, expressed by the headteacher was used by her as an illustration of the lack of awareness of the inspection team of the particular circumstances found in a small school. Indeed, both her and the teacher interviewee emphasised that, in spite of the school's size, they were determined to ensure their pupils' curriculum was developed at a comparable rate to that of pupils in larger primary schools.

Little credence was ascribed to the teaching grades provided by inspectors following observation and there were neutral views in the questionnaire in relation to the impact of OFSTED teaching grades on personal self-esteem and the usefulness of the OFSTED framework to personal self-evaluation.

The full-time teacher interviewee felt that the inspection report lacked accuracy and provided only a snapshot of what the school does. For her, the evidence for judgements was not always there. The inspection team felt that the school did not cater for high achievers, yet she argued that it does and has had 'some Level 6s in the past.'

"I don't think it's altogether accurate because it's such a snapshot really Sometimes it was difficult to provide all the evidence for them that they wanted to see They said that we didn't cater for high achievers, but we think that we did." (School 6: EK: class teacher: co-ordinator for numeracy, C.D.T., geography , music and history)

The questionnaire respondents from School 6 were critical of the practical value of OFSTED inspection. Statements concerning the impact of inspection on teaching style, the planning of lessons and classroom practice received negative responses. However, there was agreement that the experience of one inspection helped to prepare schools for re-inspection.

Concern was expressed that the final inspection report had not fairly reflected the performance of the school. Indeed, so strongly did the headteacher feel about some of the judgements made that she wrote to the inspection contractors to complain. As a result of this, some of the final judgements were changed – these included grades ascribed to School 6 in its national assessment benchmarking data. However, the changes made to the school's final report from OFSTED were made after some months had

elapsed and once the report had been released to parents and the local community:

“Probably three or four months later we got some change but the report was sent out to parents with the mistakes in it and then an amendment was sent out, which I felt – yes it was an amendment – but it was water under the bridge by then.” (School 6: JC: headteacher)

It is then perhaps hardly surprising that the questionnaire responses revealed negative views in relation to the overall impact of the inspection process on School 6, and in relation to the issue of staff and governors being provided with sufficient time to question the evidence base for judgements.

Both the headteacher and teacher interviewees revealed that judgements had been made without inspectors having observed lessons and, therefore, upon rather flimsy evidence. This view was used by the teacher interviewee to question the reliability of the whole process. Given the nature and range of the difficulties experienced in this inspection, it is hardly surprising that she was to comment:

“They (inspection teams) are all different. I can’t see they’re all the same. Their views (inspectors’) are personal aren’t they?”
(School 6: EK: class teacher: co-ordinator for numeracy, C.D.T., geography , music and history)

The headteacher actually referred to 'losing confidence' in the reliability of the process of inspection due to their flawed experience:

"Because there were factual flaws (in the inspection data) you lose faith in the reliability Having been through two inspections, I've worked with two different teams from two different companies, you are very much dependent on the personnel of the team and the people involved You can have a team that's approachable that puts you at your ease and others that make you feel very uncomfortable." (School 6: JC: headteacher)

School 6 has relatively good results at key stage two national assessment overall; but clearly, its performance is likely to swing wildly from year to year as a result of its very small year group cohorts. At such a small school, staff are sensitive to the need to address the issue of maximising results as a means of continuing to attract pupils. The interviewees were therefore keen to emphasise that their efforts to raise standards were dictated by the practical necessity of keeping its pupil roll as high as possible, rather than as the result of the impact of OFSTED inspection. Indeed, the school indicated that the very limited changes in management, the school curriculum and staffing following OFSTED were more attributable to natural developments and more money being available to the school than they were to the experience of the inspection process; and that these changes would have occurred anyway.

The headteacher commented, in interview, that she had entered into the inspection in a positive frame of mind since the final report would provide her – as a relatively inexperienced head of only two terms – with a plan for the future:

“I went into the inspection, as a new headteacher, with quite a positive outlook. I saw it as being a way for me to address things in school. It was almost giving me a management plan to start off with and it did do that to some extent. There were no great surprises but there were things that upset me.It did give me a tool to address some of the planning, some of the things I wanted to deal with anyway” (School 6: JC: headteacher)

However, much of the school's positive view was lost as the inspection incurred difficulties primarily due to its unfortunate start.

There were mixed views in relation to inspection identifying the most important issues the school had to deal with and in terms of it identifying issues over which the school had control. Indeed, the most important issues identified by the staff that the school had to deal with related to its size, its relatively tight budget, the quality of its accommodation and the need to maintain pupil numbers.

Both of the interviewees felt that inspection had missed significant strengths of the school and that it failed to foster improved collaboration and teamwork. Furthermore, they both expressed the view that whatever the

inspection had found, it would not have changed their own views on their school.

There was no disagreement that teachers and schools should be accountable for their work, but the class teacher interviewee felt that the present system of inspection was not in itself a catalyst for change and development in schools. However, in spite of the difficulties experienced at School 6 during their most recent inspection, both interviewees referred to the positive effect a successful inspection – or a ‘satisfactory’ one, in their case – could have upon confidence in the local community, pupil admissions and on staff morale:

“It’s rather nice to have somebody who’s an outside agency to come along and say ‘yes, that’s fine, you’re doing very nicely, that’s OK.’ Because although you might think it, it’s a good boost, and it’s a good boost to everybody outside the school, if they say – providing that’s what’s being said – that you’re doing fine.”

(School 6: EK: class teacher: co-ordinator for numeracy, C.D.T., geography, music and history)

Summary

The evidence presented by the questionnaire respondents and interviewees from School 6 would indicate that, in spite of a satisfactory outcome, their inspection experience was difficult. There were problems from the outset, caused by the withdrawal of the original Rgl. This placed the inspection

team in a difficult situation as important preliminary data had to be taken on board as the inspection was actually going on. As a result, the positive view, taken by the new headteacher, was soon compromised. This caused her ultimately to regard the process as flawed and lacking in reliability.

Inspectors seemed to find it difficult to come to terms with 'the small school situation'. It almost escaped their notice that there were only two full-time members of staff, including the headteacher. Some judgements on the school curriculum were made with limited evidence to support them – no actual observations, but some discussion with staff and pupils. Inevitably, this had a negative impact upon the school's view of the reliability of OFSTED inspection. Indeed, concerns were expressed in relation to the subjectivity of inspectors' judgements. The headteacher referred to a very personal opinion expressed by the Rgl relating to the appropriateness of the National Literacy Strategy in so small a school.

There was a mixed view of the feedback provided. Although the feedback was delivered in an appropriately positive manner, there were factual inaccuracies. Some inaccuracies appeared in School 6's inspection report which took months to properly resolve.

Ultimately, the staff of School 6 regarded the impact of OFSTED inspection on school development as limited. For them, small school issues concerning pupil roll, staffing and resources were the main factors influencing the drive toward improvement. However, it was accepted that a broadly positive

inspection report had boosted confidence in the school and in the local community.

Conclusion

All of the case study schools had successful experiences of the OFSTED inspection process. Each one was found to be at least satisfactory in their most recent inspection. Indeed, this had been the case during their previous inspection experiences (1995 – 96). Their reports thus indicated that the sample schools were providing, at the very least, satisfactory service, and that they were improving or were in a position to continue improving.

Four of the six case study schools had positive views on the management of their inspections. Their respective teams were found to be professional and approachable. All of the sample schools found their inspections to have been validating experiences and welcomed the fact that their overall performance had been publicly vindicated.

However in studying in detail the inspection reports of the case study schools, several main concerns were inescapable. Firstly, the inspection report on School 6 contained some very obvious interpretative inaccuracies in relation to the school's performance at statutory assessment. Initially, the school was shown to provide average results in English; below average in mathematics and above average in science in comparison to similar schools. In fact School 6 was providing well above average results in both English and science, and average in mathematics. Though these were pointed out

to the inspection team by the headteacher, corrections were made with some reticence and were included in loose leaf only.

Secondly, all of the schools expressed concern about the quality and detail of post-observation feedback. Indeed, there was some general sympathy for inspectors who were seen to be working under considerable pressure to get everything done. As a result, the time available for high quality professional dialogue between inspectors and teachers was extremely limited.

Thirdly, very clear judgements were made in relation to standards and quality in the inspections of School 1, School 5 and School 6 with very limited evidence to support them. In the former school the report openly admits to the observation of one ICT lesson, but judges that teaching has improved on that of the last inspection, and that teaching in ICT is now good. Similarly, a limited number of art lessons were observed, yet the judgement is made that pupils 'learn an appropriate range of art techniques, using a variety of materials' (p. 28). Only one design and technology lesson was observed, two geography lessons were observed; and limited PE was observed with no evidence of swimming, athletics or outdoor activities.

At School 5 the inspection report accepts that 'few' discrete ICT lessons were observed, with reference made primarily to the school's provision rather than the quality of work and pupil outcomes. The quality of teaching in RE is deemed good, yet few lessons were actually observed. It is noted that art is taught largely through topics and there is reference to good quality

display around the school but again few lessons were observed. Only one design and technology lesson was witnessed but the quality of provision was deemed 'good'. In history and geography no lessons were observed and the judgements made were founded upon display, teachers' planning and the ability of pupils to engage confidently in discussion.

Similarly, in School 6 no art lesson was actually observed, yet firm judgements were made about the school's provision based on what was seen on display and following discussions with the staff and pupils.

If there are occasional limitations in the evidence being used by OFSTED to make firm judgements, writers, such as Fitz-Gibbon (1998), may be justified in expressing their concerns about the reliability of inspection findings. Similarly it may not be surprising that the Centre for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Practice (Brunel University 1999) found, in their study, that over half of the headteachers questioned believed two teams would come up with different findings from an inspection conducted on the same school.

Looking beyond these primary concerns, a number of interviewees expressed the view that inspection should not be seen as the only criterion upon which school performance should be judged. Those that expressed an opinion about other important factors which combine to produce the complex mixture upon which school quality should be judged included:

- national assessment results;
- parental views;

- the view provided by the school's LEA; and
- the 'extra' that the school provides its pupils over and above what one would normally expect – its 'broad curriculum'.

Two of the schools reported that their experience of inspection had been negative – School 2 and School 6. The former referred to concerns about the limited evidence, compiled during a short inspection, upon which judgements and outcomes were based. There had been a poor relationship between the school and the Rgl in particular; and the inspection, in the school's view, had resulted in no real improvements in standards or in school development. School 6 had found their inspection experience flawed from the outset. As a result, findings were felt to be unreliable.

The two very small schools in this sample – School 5 and School 6 – felt that their inspection teams had found it difficult to come to terms with their own particular problems which would seem to be very different from the types of problems to be dealt with in large primary schools.

Although all of the schools had 'successful' inspections which validated what was being done, they all also referred to the stress and anxiety caused by the process. Additionally, they all claimed that their inspections had provided them with no new insights. However, the evidence that schools had learned nothing that they did not already know was itself limited. Although all of the schools had development plans only two provided development documentation for the researcher's scrutiny; and of these two,

only one included areas of development as priorities for attention which appeared in its inspection key issues. It may be that, though schools claim to gain no new insights into their own performance and areas for improvement, it actually takes the formal jolt of an inspection to bring these priorities to the fore, and this is most likely to be the case for schools in difficulty (Hopkins, 2002). In other words, just being aware of a problem does not, in itself, inevitably result in its solution, or even the statement of an immediate intention to resolve it.

CHAPTER 4

The Impact of OFSTED Inspection: An Analysis of the Perceptions

Drawn from the Case Study Schools

Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections to reflect the findings from the questionnaire distributed and interviews conducted during the period of data collection. Each section is concluded with a brief final commentary. The fieldwork was conducted between July and November, 2000. Analysis commenced during the course of the data collection period - Anderson and Arsenault (1998) emphasise that data gathering and analysis should be seen as concurrent activities.

As noted at various points in this study, it is important to reflect that none of those who responded either to the questionnaire or interview were fundamentally opposed to the notion of accountability in primary schools. However, it is also interesting to note that relatively little was offered in terms of more appropriate methods of accounting for school performance, beyond or other than inspection, by the representatives of the sample schools.

Section 1: Practical Experiences of the Process and the Team

In broad terms, all of the case study schools reflected positively on the expertise of the inspection teams that worked within their institutions. In interview almost all respondents referred to inspectors' professionalism; the positive relationships established with staff; their friendliness; and their approachability.

Although provided with timetables during their first inspections (Schools 2, 3, 4 and 6), none of the schools received them for their re-inspections. However, this was not the subject of specific criticism from any of the schools, either at interview or in their respective survey responses. The item dedicated to this issue reflected that the larger and most recently inspected schools (Schools 2 and 4) were very satisfied with inspectors' efforts to fulfil their duties in accordance with the prescribed timescales; though 26.7 per cent of the respondents amongst the smaller schools (Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6) were not.

The larger case study schools seemed to accept that inspectors had taken account of their specific needs and circumstances. Inspectors at School 4 – whilst reflecting the need to address overcrowding and resource issues as areas for future development – did so both positively and sympathetically. However, issues concerning the smaller schools did not seem to have been dealt with consistently in a manner which reflected either the size or nature of the particular schools. Concerns were expressed by the interview respondents from School 6 that the expected registered inspector was unable to take up his position due to illness; and that the replacement Rgl. commenced the school's inspection without having received all of the necessary data. As a result, factual information was overlooked and there were clear inaccuracies in the final report which were not corrected until after the last draft of the document was circulated to parents and the general community.

The overall view that inspectors were willing to enter into professional dialogue with staff members at the project schools came through strongly in the questionnaire data. Indeed, none of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement. However, there was considerable variability of perception and experience in terms of the amount of professional dialogue experienced by schools and the manner in which it was conducted.

In interview, there were mixed views regarding the actual amount of notice given prior to inspection. The new framework now stipulates much less advanced warning of an impending inspection than was the case in the past. Now between six and ten working weeks' notice is provided and the general view that less warning results in less time to prepare but less time to worry and, consequently, reduced stress and anxiety, came through quite strongly. One respondent (School 6: EK: class teacher: co-ordinator for numeracy, C.D.T., geography, music and history) reflected on a much 'friendlier' process second time round but expressed initial concerns that the team might have been 'trying to trick you'. At School 6 concerns were expressed about the enforced change of registered inspector (noted above) with little or no notice to the school, and the impact of the inspection process on small schools since there was likely to be more observation and little opportunity to seek or receive 'a break'. For the respondent (EK), this would probably result in a rather more intense experience than would be the case in a larger school. One teacher interviewee from School 4 (School 4: JC: classteacher: co-ordinator for geography and staff development) argued that no notice of inspection should be given since the intensity of preparation

and the pressure of the inspection week itself led to an unreal situation and one that could not be sustained indefinitely.

A governor and classroom assistant respondent (School 4: ME) at the same school felt that the notice of inspection was now 'about right', as did the headteacher of School 1 (at the time of inspection); but the view that an inspection team should give little, or no, advance warning was also expressed by other interviewee and questionnaire respondents, and by the chair of governors of School 4:

"Sometimes they give us too much time so we can prepare and see us not as we really are" (School 4: MH: chair of governors)

Commentary

The issue of timing in its various respects appears to have some bearing upon the perceptions of schools on the inspection process and its immediate impact thereafter. There were mixed views in evidence on the amount of notice given. School 4 has been inspected twice in the summer term (1996 and 2000) and were able to report no 'post-inspection blues'. The reason suggested for this by members of staff was that the summer holiday provided a 'distancing period' from the inspection, enabling teachers to re-charge their batteries prior to preparing an action plan. However, to have notice of an inspection immediately prior to the summer vacation – as in the case of School 1 – posed problems in terms of preparing and presenting the

necessary paperwork which added some stress to the overall experience (School 1: NW: acting headteacher) and led to teachers spending much of their break in school (School 1: AMA: deputy headteacher).

A change in the make-up of the team immediately prior to an inspection is likely to have a significant effect upon schools' perceptions of the process, and this effect may be particularly pronounced in small schools. Although, generally, schools in this research project were satisfied with the expertise and subject knowledge of their inspectors, different teams do appear to conduct themselves in different ways. Some guidance as to what were to be the foci was provided in some (School 1, School 3 and School 4), but not all cases.

Respondents from School 2 commented particularly negatively in terms of the expertise of their Rgl. and the resulting inspection experience for their school. The Rgl. in this case was, in fact, the headteacher of a small school and School 2 is a large one.

These research findings would suggest that the variation between the actual practice of teams – which is perhaps influenced by their expertise – might be a particularly significant issue in terms of schools' perceptions of the impact and value of the inspection process.

Similarly, the fact that the smaller schools in this sample appeared to feel that their particular circumstances and needs were not always taken into

account may be worrying, especially given the evidence of numerous researchers, including Day et al. (1999), who reflect that the pressures and demands on small schools and their headteachers are likely to be more complex and intense than those experienced in larger institutions. If this is the case, then inspection may be an even more daunting and stressful experience for them than for their larger counterparts.

Section 2: Classroom and Observation Issues

A somewhat mixed picture emerged overall as to whether schools 'played it safe' during the inspection week. The tendency in the smaller and less recently inspected schools (Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6) suggested that the respondents did, in fact, tend to be cautious; whereas the larger and more recently inspected schools (Schools 2 and 4) were rather less inclined to do so. It may well be that the two most recently inspected schools felt a degree more freedom than their smaller counterparts as a result of the introduction of the new OFSTED framework which, though rigorous, seeks to provide schools with greater opportunity to show what they do well. Alternatively, it may well be, since schools are now much more involved in self-evaluation, or self-inspection (Ferguson, et al., 2000) and as a direct result of increased monitoring and observation of practice by headteachers and subject managers, that teachers are becoming more self-confident and, in consequence, a little more imaginative in their approaches to teaching and learning.

More than one practitioner in interview referred to the relaxation of guidelines and initiatives once they were embedded in school routines and systems. Now if this is the case generally, then the findings of this research project may be more the result of natural development which has impacted more recently on all schools, whatever their size, rather than the result of any form of differential effect attributable to school size, the recency of inspection, or indeed the existence of OFSTED at all.

The general issue of the quality of post-observation feedback provided very mixed results. In the survey most respondents indicated that they had received some form of feedback immediately. However, it was clear from the subjects interviewed, and from written responses to the questionnaire, that the quality of what was provided by inspectors was frequently disappointing.

Several respondents felt that the post-observation feedback provided was generally limited in its scope – though there were variations. One headteacher (School 3: TS) felt that there had not been sufficient feedback following lesson observations since the time for the whole process was too short. As a result, de-briefing seemed to be provided more as the result of a feeling of obligation rather than actual willingness to enter into a developmental professional dialogue.

Clearly, the views of those directly involved with the management and practice of primary schools in relation to the feedback provided to them is

crucial if the inspection process is to have a positive and lasting impact upon teaching and learning. If, as seems the case, de-briefing is all too often rushed and is perceived to be of limited real value, one has to wonder how inspection can lead to practical improvements in the delivery of the curriculum and teaching and learning.

Given this generally less than positive picture of inspectors' feedback following observation, it is perhaps hardly surprising that there was a somewhat mixed view regarding the credence given by the questionnaire respondents to the teaching grades given to them. The larger and more recently inspected schools (Schools 2 and 4) provided a rather more positive view than their smaller counterparts.

One of the schools (School 4) actually noted numerous errors in the teaching grades ascribed, with several teachers being given grades for working with year groups and classes that they had no contact with whatsoever during the inspection week! As the school's final report was a very good one, and as these mistakes made no significant difference to the final outcome of the inspection – no teaching was found to be unsatisfactory – the school did not challenge the errors.

Several respondents felt, with some apparent justification, that they had not been dealt with entirely fairly in their grading. One (School 4: JC: class teacher: co-ordinator for geography and staff development) referred to a PE lesson which was said to be faultless, yet was not judged to be 'excellent'.

When this was queried, the inspector replied that he was not 'an expert' and was unable to offer any advice to lead to improvement. The same teacher referred to a geography lesson which was judged 'good', with the lesson objectives successfully covered; but in the post-observation feedback the inspector in question made much of how he would have dealt with the lesson's content. For the teacher, this was both subjective and inappropriate.

The view that inspectors' feedback and grading makes a difference to one's view of oneself as a professional came through quite clearly, regardless of the size or type of school, or the recency of inspection. Most of the interviewees, in one way or another, referred to the inspection process as a validating exercise – one that reflected publicly that the school was 'doing a good job'.

The overall view that the OFSTED framework provides a useful guide to personal self-evaluation was broadly accepted by those who responded to the questionnaire. Indeed, an almost identical rate of response was given by both the larger and smaller schools (mean scores of 3.21 and 3.20, respectively). This was particularly interesting given the increasing onus on schools to involve themselves in self-evaluation.

In Derbyshire primary schools the LEA's school improvement initiative (Quality Development Dialogue or Q.D.D.) puts much emphasis on the use

of the OFSTED framework and grades schools according to the inspectorate's four main criteria for assessment:

- standards;
- quality of teaching;
- spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and
- management and efficiency.

It may then be no coincidence that the value of the OFSTED framework was viewed positively given the long-term input of the case study schools' LEA. However, the headteacher of one of the smaller project schools indicated that she paid no real attention to the OFSTED framework since she did not possess a copy and was more influenced by input from her local authority adviser.

The view that OFSTED inspection may have a negative impact upon teacher creativity has been briefly explored in the literature in Chapter One. Concern that such a highly judgemental process might have the effect of making schools and teachers more orthodox in their approach to teaching and learning is, to some degree, corroborated by the questionnaire responses in this study. Indeed, the item dedicated to this issue (see Classroom and Observation Issues, question 6) reflected similar responses across the schools, with this item providing the lowest mean score (2.30) for this section of the questionnaire amongst the larger schools (School 2 and School 4) and the third lowest (2.18) amongst the smaller schools. That inspection is likely to impact negatively upon teacher creativity in the immediate-term was noted

by Brimblecombe et al. (1996) who found that a quarter of teachers planned to deliver more formal didactic lessons than usual during the period of inspection.

The statement that 'teachers' views are represented in the inspection process' resulted in a negative response overall; though it was markedly more negative amongst the larger schools (Schools 2 and 4) which had been most recently inspected. Several of the interviewees referred to experience of having final drafts of reports changed; though alterations made were, by and large, statistical and factual rather than judgemental. Probably the most striking change was that made at School 6. As noted, problems arose from the outset of School 6's inspection due to the indisposition of the proposed registered inspector. As a result of clerical errors and incorrect data being passed to the substitute Rgl., the school's final value for money judgement was totally inaccurate, failing to account properly for the actual number of free school meals and the fact that pupils' results were good – including 100 per cent at Level 4 and above in Key Stage 2 Science national assessment the summer prior to the inspection. The fact that it took several months to secure the necessary alterations to the school's final report, following letters of complaint to OFSTED and following the distribution of the report to parents and the local community, does not seem to reflect a system which is either responsive to clear error or sympathetic to the views of teachers and schools.

Inspectors were not seen to be prepared to re-consider lesson observation gradings even when unable to find a logical basis for the final grade given. Moreover, concern was expressed by interviewees from two schools with regard to the subjectivity of inspectors' comments and judgements. At School 4, the school's art co-ordinator received criticism for the emphasis given to the work of L.S. Lowrie. The inspector apparently did not like Lowrie and made no secret of this. Similarly, at School 3 the headteacher took issue with a particularly subjective judgement on the quality of display found in the school foyer.

When successful schools, like the ones in this research project, express their misgivings about the subjectivity of comments and issues raised in feedback and final reports, one has to wonder whether the inspection system is sufficiently responsive to all of the evidence available and sufficiently receptive to alternative views. Since it would appear that the present system of inspection lacks sensitivity to the views of teachers and schools, it remains quite likely that it will continue to be open to criticism as being overly subjective and frequently based on personal opinions, values and attitudes.

For the practitioners involved in this study, it would seem that inspection has only had a limited impact upon the ways in which they both deliver and plan their lessons. What may be particularly notable from the data gathered is that teachers came out so openly against inspection's direct impact upon what they do, given that all but one of the schools in this study sample claim

to possess a copy of the OFSTED framework and find it useful; and given the apparent keenness that headteachers and teachers have to impress or please inspectors. The evidence from this study suggests that it is actually the highly prescriptive expectations of both the revised National Curriculum (Curriculum 2000) and the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies which, in practical terms, have had the greatest impact upon curriculum planning and lesson delivery in primary schools (OISE/UT, 2000). However, it is also probably fair to argue that inspection does have a significant and direct impact upon what goes on in schools during the period in which inspectors are present.

The impact that the inspection process has on future planning appears to work on several different levels: personal and practical; curriculum and organisational; and whole school. It is interesting to note that although the view that inspection has had an impact on teaching style and the way respondents plan lessons received a somewhat muted response overall and especially in the smaller schools (Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6); the statement that it would influence future practice was more positively viewed in the larger schools (Schools 2 and 4). One respondent (School 4: JC: Class teacher: co-ordinator for geography and staff development) suggested that inspection provides focus and a timeframe within which one has to work, but that this was a very expensive and time-consuming way merely to work out a timetable! Another (School 1: NW: acting headteacher), reflected that inspection findings had been beneficial in that they had focused the whole

school's future planning for development in ICT and that, as a direct result, school provision had been improved.

However what was inescapable from those interviewed was the overall view that inspection has a very mixed impact upon school and individual future planning and that this is probably dependent upon personal experience, one's role in the school, and the context and existing state of development of each practitioner and their school as an institution.

Other responses to this interview item reflected quite clearly that, on a school level, much that was contained within final inspection reports as areas for future development was already known to schools and was reflected in existing planning and development documentation. Indeed, for most of the interviewees their inspection had resulted in no organisational changes and had provided no useful pointers for future planning or personal development. As a result, it had merely provided a validation of their own existing view of the school causing considerable anxiety and costing much in financial terms in the process.

An interesting divergence of opinion emerged between the larger and smaller schools in relation to the perceived fairness of final reports as a reflection of the informal feedback provided. The larger schools (Schools 2 and 4) which had been most recently inspected under the new framework were, by and large, less satisfied than were the smaller schools (Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6). Indeed as many as 47.8 per cent of those surveyed at School 2

and School 4 either disagreed, or strongly disagreed, with the statement that their final report had fairly reflected the informal feedback received; whilst only 8.3 per cent provided this view at the remaining four schools. Given that such a marked discrepancy was found, one might presume that some form of differential effect was operating – though clearly it is possible that views had been moderated as time elapsed in the smaller and less recently inspected schools.

At School 4, the deputy headteacher (CS), when interviewed, referred to a more agreeable experience of inspection second time round; but that there was a mixed view amongst the staff, with still little chance to actually challenge inspection findings and judgements, even when given informally, in spite of the existence of the new framework.

The experience of an OFSTED inspection as useful preparation for re-inspection was commonly accepted by the respondents to the survey, with the level of agreement more noticeable among the smaller schools. As was noted by Fidler and Davies (1998), the experience of an inspection led by one registered inspector may only provide a partial guide as to how another conducted by a different Rgl. may be managed. Yet it would seem that the respondents to the questionnaire from this sample of schools regard even a 'partial guide' as valuable in terms of preparation for subsequent inspections. However, when asked in interview how reliable the process was overall, there was common agreement amongst interviewees that much depended upon the team which conducted one's inspection.

For the headteacher of one of the smaller schools (School 6: JC)), faith in the overall reliability of the inspection process had in fact been lost as a direct result of the numerous factual errors and flaws found in the school's final report and due to the different behaviour of the teams involved in the two inspections conducted there.

There was an interesting divergence of views between the larger and smaller schools in relation to the issue of opportunity to question the evidence base of inspectors' final judgements. This study suggests that the staffs of the small schools (Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6) viewed their treatment by inspectors as more sympathetic than did their colleagues in the two larger schools (Schools 2 and 4). But what may be more interesting is the possible effect of the new framework which was ostensibly established and implemented with a view to providing schools with more opportunity to celebrate what they do well and, in so doing, contribute to their own inspection outcomes – this is perhaps most obviously characterised by the introduction of new 'light touch' inspections. Yet, it appears from this research project that the questionnaire respondents from School 2 and School 4 were somewhat less convinced of the more positive and developmental emphasis of the new framework for inspection than their counterparts at the four smaller schools (schools 1, 3, 5 and 6).

If this is the case generally, one would have to question whether the new framework, as implemented at the two larger schools (Schools 2 and 4), is in any way more sensitive or sympathetic to school situations and contexts

than its predecessor. For School 6, under the previous framework, the need to challenge the evidence base was fundamental to the school attaining a much fairer and more representative final value for money judgement; but this took some months to secure, by which time the school's inspection report had been published and distributed. If the new framework is seen by schools as no more sympathetic to alternative views than its predecessor, it remains likely that teachers will continue to view inspection defensively with a strong attitude prevailing of 'them and us'. (Chapman, 2001)

The issue of the broad effect of inspection upon primary education in general reflected rather mixed views in the case study schools; with a more positive view overall being found in the smaller ones (Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6). However, several respondents emphasised the importance of the inspection outcome as an influencing factor upon one's view of the inspection process. Furthermore, it was very clear from several of the respondents that – in spite of the generally successful outcome of their inspections – their view of the overall impact of inspection upon their schools was far from positive. Some of the interviewees referred to the collective improvement in general collaboration and 'team spirit' brought about by the threat of inspection; whilst several commented upon the positive feeling of validation and justification provided by a broadly positive report.

For those practitioners and schools who seek to fully prepare themselves for inspection, the resultant focus may be beneficial; and if this fosters greater objectivity, reflection and self-evaluation, the overall impact of the process

may be both positive and lasting. However, such benefits – if they do indeed exist – need to be weighed against the enormous energy expended in ‘getting through’ an inspection and the levels of stress and anxiety which underpin the whole experience. Moreover, the potential benefits which may result from improvements in collaboration and mutual support may not be fully realised if certain sections of the school community feel less than fairly treated or ignored; or if the process actually results in unhealthy inter-staff competition

“I felt staff pulled together in some areas, but others attempted to outdo each other.” (School 4: RO: creative arts co-ordinator)

Commentary

A major issue which emerged during the course of this research relates to the quality of feedback provided to teachers following their lesson observations. Several respondents referred to the availability of time to deal with staff in an appropriate manner. It does seem a little contradictory that inspectors expect teachers to provide their pupils with regular, high quality and often written developmental feedback, yet they themselves remain generally unable to do the same.

Ultimately, if teachers’ views of the whole inspection process are to be improved, much depends upon the ability of inspectors to deliver high quality and sufficient post-observation feedback. It is important that teachers feel that inspection can lead to improvements in their own practice and, as a direct result, in teaching and learning. If feedback does not provide a

sufficiently detailed basis to reflect upon what could be improved, or developed, how can it be expected to result in better classroom practice?

Inspectors' final judgements upon teachers and schools must also inspire confidence in the school community, not only in terms of being based upon sufficient evidence, but also upon the use of appropriate criteria. If, in the feedback provided, teachers are told that their lessons have no obvious faults yet are only graded as 'satisfactory' or 'good', then clearly inspectors' judgements are unlikely to be regarded as either appropriate or fair; whilst reference to insufficient expertise in a given area on the part of an inspector will obviously and inevitably call their judgements into question.

This research project seems to indicate that the present system of inspection – in spite of the introduction of the new framework – continues to lack a degree of sensitivity to contextual factors. For those working at School 6 this was clearly an issue of considerable concern, which took some time to resolve. Similarly, those at School 2 were left, quite understandably, feeling somewhat discontent about a single unsatisfactory lesson taken outside its general context.

If teachers are to develop greater confidence in inspectors and inspection, the system must become more sensitive to the data provided by schools and to the context in which they are working. Without this responsiveness it remains likely that many teachers will continue to view inspection as a

hostile process imposed upon them by an organisation which fails to fully trust them as professionals.

Given the views of those involved in this research project in relation to the generally poor quality of feedback provided by inspectors and the overall lack of sensitivity of the process of inspection to alternative views and contextual factors; it is not surprising that there was a mixed response to the issue of the process' impact upon future planning. Indeed, the effect of inspection on the teaching and learning process was generally regarded as less influential than was the impact of the National Curriculum and, more recently, the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. This view is corroborated by Chapman (2001) who noted the impact of nationally imposed changes to the curriculum of secondary schools.

Section 3: General School Issues

In broad terms all of the case study schools reflected that the issues identified in their inspection reports were not necessarily the most important issues for them to deal with. In both the larger and smaller schools it would appear that there was only limited agreement about the importance of the developmental areas indicated. Indeed, a common view expressed by the interviewees was that their inspection report had merely identified areas which the school was already aware of, or were already contained within existing action plans and development documentation.

At School 1 the development of the school's ICT and library provision were felt to be areas to be addressed, and this did help provide a degree of focus for future improvement. However it was felt by one interviewee (School 1: AMA: deputy headteacher) that, because very little in the way of issues for development were identified, an opportunity had been missed to push the school on yet further. For her, the experience of inspection had been a challenging one, yet the outcome had the potential for leading to self-satisfaction and complacency rather than adding impetus to the school improvement process.

None of the schools had experienced staff turnover as a result of inspection; but there was an indication that extra staff had been taken on in areas focused upon by inspection reports. School 1 reflected that there had been some developments in teachers' roles and responsibilities. Similarly, School 2 indicated that there had been developments in governors' roles and responsibilities; whilst at School 4, additional classroom assistant hours had been made available to offset problems in relation to class-size and overcrowding at Key Stage One. However, what was clear from the case study schools, was that changes and developments had largely been the result of existing intention, or the result of the availability of more funding to finance them, rather than the result of specific impetus provided by, or initiated by OFSTED inspection.

There was general consistency amongst the case study schools in relation to the issue of inspection findings reflecting aspects of their activities and

circumstances over which they had some control. However, the greatest level of agreement was expressed in the smaller and less recently inspected schools – Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6. As noted above, the issues of overcrowding and class-size were raised at School 4 but, generally speaking, all of the schools seemed satisfied that they would be able to effect change over the aspects raised by inspectors.

One headteacher (School 1: PJ) was particularly complimentary in relation to the issues raised by OFSTED in that his school's inspection – whilst reflecting the poor quality of maintenance of the building – was critical of the situation that the school found itself in, rather than of the school itself.

Clearly, for schools to have confidence in the value of their inspection reports, the issue of fairness is fundamental and, underpinning this, is that schools should actually have some control over the issues identified in their reports as being areas for improvement or development. If inspection reports fail to critique schools in areas over which they have real practical influence, it is almost inevitable that teachers will feel 'hard done by,' and this will, in turn, limit the overall impact of the process in the schools concerned. Given that the schools in this sample were generally satisfied that their respective inspection findings concerned issues over which they felt a degree of control, it seems that, in this context, they were well served by their inspection teams.

There was generally strong agreement in all of the case study schools that the issues identified by inspection were similar to those already in school development plans and documents, although this research project found only limited evidence to support this. Nevertheless, there was common agreement amongst interviewees that inspection told them little, if anything, that they did not already know.

All of the interviewees agreed that there had been no discernible effect on standards and in the quality of teaching in their own schools as a result of inspection.

There was reference to the findings of inspectors helping to provide a sharper focus, and there were changes in the roles and responsibilities of governors at School 2 and School 3 in relation to functions within committee structures which had been rather loose and informal prior to inspection. However, one interviewee referred to a negative impact in terms of management and efficiency, since the findings of the school's inspection had been so positive that little was actually left to work towards (School 1: AMA: deputy headteacher).

Similarly, none of the interviewees felt that inspection had resulted in improvements in school ethos or pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (S.M.S.C.).

If this is the case generally, the cost-effectiveness of the OFSTED system of school inspection may well be open to question. If schools – the vast majority of which do not ‘fail’ their inspections – are merely having their existing development plans and priorities validated; and if there are few, if any, discernible improvements in the four main areas of school activity upon which the process concentrates – standards, the quality of teaching, S.M.S.C. education, and management and efficiency – this would confirm why some writers regard OFSTED inspection simply as a process of ‘checking up’ or auditing (Lonsdale and Parsons, 1998; Cullingford, 1999).

Whilst the respondents in this study typically regarded the formality of preparing a post-inspection action plan as useful in terms of future planning, on a personal level, those surveyed were rather less convinced that the experience of inspection would have either an impact on the way lessons were planned, or any influence on future classroom practice.

There was some consensus amongst those interviewed that inspection provided a focus or helped in the establishment of priorities. For School 1 and School 4, much seemed to hinge on the maintenance and development of activities already underway, and it seems generally fair to suggest that, in the sample of schools in this research, there was only a limited practical impact upon future direction as a result of inspection. This notwithstanding, a questionnaire item relating to inspection issues dictating the shape and flavour of future development plans received considerable support in the larger schools (Schools 2 and 4); with 67.9 per cent of the respondents

either agreeing, or strongly agreeing, with the positive statement to this effect (see questionnaire item: School Issues 5). Indeed, with 25.8 per cent of those surveyed in the larger schools having a neutral stance on the issue of inspection dictating the flavour of future development planning, the remainder – amounting to one respondent, or 3.2 per cent of this group – was very much in the minority.

The view on this survey item was by no means so clear cut in the smaller schools (Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6), with 42.9 per cent agreeing (none strongly agreed) with the statement that OFSTED will dictate future development plans, and precisely the same percentage disagreeing, or strongly disagreeing.

Ultimately, what seems to be emerging from this research study is a somewhat mixed overall view of the impact of inspection on future planning and development. On the personal level, those surveyed indicated a rather limited practical effect at the ‘micro-level’ of what goes on in the classroom. Similarly, those interviewed broadly seemed to suggest that the impact of inspection findings on future planning at school level was by no means great. However, the survey respondents from all schools seemed to agree that the production of a post-inspection action plan was useful in terms of future planning; and although there was a mixed view in the smaller schools on the impact of inspection on future development plans, the view in the larger schools was clearly positive.

This would seem to suggest that respondents tend to have a different view of the influence of inspection when comparing micro- and macro-situations. The impact of inspection, would seem to be perceived by practitioners as greater at school level than it is at the individual classroom level. Now if the broad view of teachers is that the process has limited influence on the individual, but a strong influence on institutional development planning, it may reflect that a considerable number of teachers view whole school planning as divorced from their own personal experience in the classroom. If this is the case, then the school development planning and action planning processes may be somewhat less effective in influencing teaching and learning in the classroom than many inspectors, L.E.A. advisers and policy makers would actually like to believe.

The case study schools indicated that they felt their inspection reports did not miss any of their significant weaknesses. However, this view was particularly prevalent in the smaller schools with 92.8 per cent of this group of respondents reflecting this opinion. If one accepts this general view as a true reflection of the case in most schools, this is encouraging; with a degree of confidence emerging in the judgement of inspectors and their ability to pick out serious problems. But this does not entirely present the whole picture. Indeed, what clearly emerged in this study was the opinion amongst several interviewees and survey respondents that the existing system is based on 'fault-finding' and 'nit-picking'.

For the interviewees from School 2, the inspection process provided only grudging praise and there was limited evidence upon which to base judgements, since their 'light touch' inspection arguably failed to provide sufficient time for inspectors to complete their task thoroughly. As a direct consequence, little real benefit was ascribed to the process; whilst the level of distress caused by an experience which did little more than validate much of what the school was already doing and planning, was felt to be a serious drawback. This view is supported by the research of Chapman (2001) in a group of secondary schools.

This research project found an interesting divergence of opinion in relation to the ability of inspection to pick out significant strengths of schools. The larger and more recently inspected schools (Schools 2 and 4) seemed rather less content than their smaller counterparts with the process in this respect. This may reveal some general dissatisfaction with the inspection process overall in its ability to reflect schools' strengths as well as their weaknesses – or perhaps, and rather more worryingly – a view that the new framework continues to concentrate more upon fault-finding than it does upon giving credit to schools for what they do well. Another possibility may be the issue of time in relation to the task itself. It may well be that inspection in larger schools is so complex a job that it is quite simply too great a task, under the present format, to do it justice. As a result the onus may well be on inspectors to find what could be improved rather than what is already satisfactory or good.

Several questionnaire respondents and interviewees suggested that inspection should concentrate on specific aspects of schools or particular curriculum areas rather more than it does at present. Were this to be the case, and were the link between LEA link advisers and the inspectorate to be developed and improved, a rather more contextualised and accurate view of school performance could arguably be the result. The use of LEA data, gathered over some time, could be used to augment the snapshot information gathered by inspectors over a few highly charged and pressurised days.

Given what has been noted from this research about the limited practical impact of OFSTED inspection upon future planning and development at school level; and the somewhat mixed view expressed on inspectors' ability to identify significant strengths of schools, it may not be surprising that the view that inspection has resulted in schools becoming more focused and rigorous in their work, was not particularly well supported. Indeed, almost all of those interviewed, at all levels within each school's organisation, reflected that the findings of OFSTED had had little direct impact upon any of the key areas of inspection focus.

Standards in all of the schools were high prior to inspection and remained so. Each school had largely good quality teaching, and there had been little direct impact upon the quality of institutional management and efficiency. The comments made by governors in respect of post-inspection change and development reflected that this was primarily due to changes in governance

regulations and changes in personnel, rather than anything directly attributable to OFSTED inspection.

However, in spite of the views expressed in relation to this (See 'School Issues' question 10) survey item, it would seem fair to suggest that all of the schools were, at the very least, mindful of what they were being judged on in the OFSTED framework (both old and new) and sought, as a result, to present themselves positively by emphasising what they knew were regarded as key aspects of their performance. One of the headteachers in this study (School 1: NW: acting headteacher) actually likened the process of inspection to game-playing, which perhaps should come as little surprise given the view of Lowe (1998) and others that, in practical terms, little progress has been made in transforming what goes on in classrooms in line with the rigours of OFSTED's thinking which can be easily attributed to the existence of inspection.

Ultimately, for primary schools to become more focused and rigorous in their activities, there is likely to be the need to establish systems and structures which will enable subject managers and deputy headteachers much more regular non-contact time than is presently the case.

A somewhat mixed response was noted in relation to the credence attributed to inspectors' views on individual classroom practice. Interestingly however, at the school-level, views were rather more pronounced indicating clearly that the bulk of respondents to the questionnaire would not change their

judgements of their school, regardless of the findings of an inspection. This general view was also expressed by several of the interviewees who similarly reflected that their positive views of their school would not be altered by negative judgements made by inspectors. The broad issue of the reliability of inspectors' judgements provided some interesting opinions, which clearly left one with the view that the majority of those who had given it thought, felt that much depends upon the inspection team itself and their values and attitudes.

For those involved in this study, the issues of the subjective judgement and differences in the behaviour of inspectors were important concerns which, as outlined earlier, would certainly concur with those of Fitz-Gibbon in relation to the flaws in reliability inherent in the contemporary process of inspection.

There was broad agreement in the case study schools that inspection had had limited impact upon pupil performance in their respective settings. Indeed, no respondents at all in the smaller schools either agreed, or strongly agreed, with the view that improvements in pupil performance at their school were the result of OFSTED. Similarly, not one of the interviewees referred to either improvements in standards, or the quality of teaching at their own schools, which could be attributed to the existence of the present system of inspection.

In all of the schools, standards, as reflected in national assessment performance, were good; and much of the impetus for this had been

provided by the pressure surrounding the publication of results and genuine attempts to see pupils do well, regardless of how comfortable teachers felt with the contemporary systems of measuring school and pupil performance. Indeed, if standards are already good in schools, as they are in this sample, it is difficult to see exactly how OFSTED inspection could reasonably be expected to bring about significant improvements. In this sense, the experience of inspection is unlikely to be more than a validating exercise in many schools.

Broadly speaking, the questionnaire respondents were not convinced that the experience of going through an OFSTED inspection had resulted in a positive effect on whole staff collaboration or teamwork (Brunel University, 1999). Indeed, one (School 4: RO: class teacher: creative arts co-ordinator) expressed concern that staff had sought to 'outdo each other'; whilst the headteacher of School 1 referred to a staff 'split' which had resulted from two staff members receiving better post-observation feedback than two others. For the latter colleagues, the whole process was regarded as flawed and unrepresentative. For the former, the inspection had been well-managed and appropriately handled!

Ultimately, the findings from this study do not therefore, fully reflect the findings of the Brunel University (1999) research which suggested that the stress and anxiety brought about by inspection may have the effect of galvanising a staff by fostering stronger senses of collaboration and collegiality.

Both the larger and smaller schools had similar points of view in relation to the value of the OFSTED framework as a useful guide to self-evaluation at the whole school level. All of the schools in the study acknowledged that the framework was useful in this respect. However, there was no reference by any of the questionnaire respondents or interviewees to the value of the framework, either old or new, in terms of general planning and organisation. Similarly, there was no reference to the fact that it had proved useful as a source of guidance or of preparation for the process of OFSTED inspection.

One of the survey schools did not possess a copy of the OFSTED framework, preferring to 'go their own way' in relation to developments in the quality of teaching and learning. Indeed, for those schools that did make comment about what influenced their classroom practice, the clearest effects had actually been as the result of the revision of the National Curriculum (2000) and the introduction of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies.

The results of this study indicate that inspection has had only limited impact in bringing about greater clarity in individual roles and functions in primary schools. In interview, those teachers, governors and classroom assistants who referred to any change or development in roles and responsibilities, generally indicated that the impact of OFSTED was probably outweighed by issues such as changes in governance legislation and regulations; and members of staff leaving. Additional funds becoming available to finance the implementation of initiatives, or the further development of what was already

underway were also cited as reasons for changes in roles and responsibilities.

Commentary

A clear picture emerged from the findings in relation to the impact of inspection on planning. At individual teacher level, the indications were that the effect had been rather limited, and that overall, inspection had had less effect on what goes on in classrooms than the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Yet conversely, the broad view provided from the survey evidence was that inspection had impacted upon the development of future plans and priorities at the institutional level. None of the interviewees expressed a view that inspection had impacted in any way on the quality of teaching in their schools. Additionally, what did seem to come through was a general anxiety to address the key issues and areas for development indicated by inspection reports. For some practitioners the issue of the importance ascribed to key issues was less related to the need to resolve them as such than it was a keenness to resolve them prior to the next inspection, parental complaint, or negative LEA comment.

These research findings indicate that inspection is seen, by those working within schools, to have had little tangible impact upon standards. One could presume, therefore, that any effect upon standards in schools is likely to be a differential one, with the greatest impact being upon those institutions regarded as unsatisfactory, or 'failing'. However, this is hardly surprising

since such schools have the greatest margin for improvement. If this is indeed the general case, it is most likely that inspection, for the majority, is likely to remain little more than a validating exercise, since it appears to have only limited impact upon standards and the quality of teaching.

The limited time inspectors have to complete the complex task of conducting an inspection under the contemporary system was clearly an issue for those involved in this research project. Furthermore, the new framework's provision of so-called 'light-touch' inspections for schools deemed particularly successful, as is the case of School 2, may not have effectively dealt with concerns relating either to the time available to inspectors, or the ability of the system to portray a truly representative picture of contemporary primary schools.

Inevitably, if inspectors and inspection teams have insufficient time available to them to fulfil the task at hand effectively and appropriately, there is the likelihood that schools will feel rather less than fairly treated. At present, time constraints are likely to result in certain areas of schools receiving less than an appropriate amount of time for a truly representative view to be captured. As noted from the experience of School 2, some aspects of their school were virtually ignored. Similarly, judgements were made about practice and provision in some of the study's smaller schools without actual observation.

Without the time to complete the task properly, feedback to teachers is inevitably likely to be rushed and of limited developmental value; and if this

is the case, schools are likely to remain critical of the contemporary system of inspection. However, when appropriate time is made available to facilitate high quality professional dialogues between practitioners and inspectors, the evidence from this study reflects that the view of schools of the process of inspection is likely to be far more positive.

It was very clear from the governors interviewed that governing bodies are now much more involved with what is actually going on in their schools. The governors of School 4, for example, have numerous committees in operation and individual governors are involved in session-time visits to acquaint themselves more fully with school routines and events. But this has led to concern being expressed by some, including the chair of governors of one of the schools in this study (School 2: AA), that expectations are now too great upon a group of individuals who some may regard as generally no more than well-meaning, public-spirited amateurs. However, to suggest that the greater involvement of governors in their schools is essentially the result of the existence of OFSTED would seem to be an over-emphasis of the impact of the inspection system. Indeed, what came through quite clearly from those interviewed was the view that increasing demands upon governors and governing bodies are more the result of changes and developments in governance itself than they are specifically the result of the work and demands of the inspectorate.

Several of the interviewees emphasised the importance of the relationship between inspectors, (and in particular, the Rgl) and the headteacher and

school staff. This view concurs with that of Fidler and Davies (1998), who reflect that a positive relationship between staff and inspectors is likely to result in a more favourable inspection experience. At one of the sample schools (School 1), the relationship appeared to be a particularly positive one with small gifts exchanged at the end of the process. Indeed, the relationships between teams and the schools involved in this study appear to have been both positive and professional, though there were some concerns expressed by the interviewees and survey respondents from School 2 who found the general demeanour of one inspector particularly brusque and unnecessarily critical.

A significant factor which is likely to influence the relationship between the school and its inspection team is the overall view of staff and governors to the appropriateness of team members and their relevant expertise. This was highlighted by the findings of this study. School 2 were unhappy that their RgI was an experienced small school head which, for them, was inappropriate since School 2 is a large primary school. Respondents from School 4 referred to concerns from their first inspection (summer, 1996) in which the team was heavily 'secondary-biased'.

Ultimately, if many schools feel that their inspections are being conducted by inappropriately experienced or qualified inspectors, the impact of messages delivered in final reports is inevitably likely to be limited, and this will have an adverse effect upon inspection as a means of school improvement and development in the national context.

Section 4: The National Context

The data gathered from this research project indicate that little improvement in standards and pupil performance in the national context is ascribed by those working in primary schools (including governors) to the OFSTED inspection process. In the item dedicated to the issue of whether standards have risen nationally as a result of OFSTED, this view was emphasised; though the view in the larger and more recently inspected schools was a little more positive than was the case in their smaller counterparts. Indeed, none of the respondents from any of the survey schools strongly agreed that there had been improvements in national pupil performance as a result of inspection. This general opinion, in fact, concurs with the findings of Brunel University (1999). Yet for OFSTED, the relationship between inspection and improving pupil standards is clear and is emphasised in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools annual reports (OFSTED, 1998d and OFSTED, 2002).

The Brunel University study (1999), in fact, reflects conflicting evidence concerning the existence of any relationship between school performance and inspection, and indicates that the majority of teachers and headteachers who ascribe benefits in terms of average performance, attribute these primarily to the raising of standards in 'failing' schools, with little significant impact upon schools with satisfactory performance already. In other words, those schools with the greatest margin for improvement are seen as likely to gain the most from inspection.

None of the interviewees argued or suggested that schools and teachers should not be accountable for their work. This view was also reflected in the survey questionnaire. Indeed, none of the respondents either disagreed, or strongly disagreed, with the notion of the accountability of teacher and school performance. In this respect, OFSTED has been particularly successful in establishing an 'inspection culture' in which those involved in schools accept that their activities and performance will be judged and audited. However, this is not to suggest that all accept that the present inspection system is the best way of going about it. Many of the comments made within this research study reflect that there are teachers who believe that there are significant weaknesses inherent in contemporary inspection. The most favourable response about inspection came from the larger and most recently inspected schools (Schools 2 and 4), though the margin of difference between the larger (Schools 2 and 4) and the smaller schools (Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6) in the sample was not significant.

The likelihood that the contemporary system of inspection improves school accountability was broadly accepted by the questionnaire respondents, with many comments also made by interviewees reflecting that, for their school, the process had been a particularly validating one. It should be noted that, in areas of competition for pupils, a positive inspection report can be particularly important, since it is likely to influence parental choice. A successful OFSTED can, in crude terms, make a difference to a school's pupil admissions which will inevitably impact upon its budget. Equally

importantly, a favourable inspection is likely to have a positive effect on staff morale.

Perhaps rather less positive, is the broad view reflected in this study that the contemporary system of inspection is fundamentally an exercise in accountability aimed at 'checking up'. In this context, it would appear that OFSTED's claim of seeking 'improvement through inspection' is being regarded with some scepticism by those working in the sample of schools in this research project.

The view that inspection is primarily an auditing or checking up process, is, in fact, expressed by Lonsdale and Parsons (1998) who argue that, at its foundation, is the control of state education. Similarly, Cullingford (1999) emphasises that a checklist of actions, test results and achievements is much easier to measure and quantify than are understandings, abilities and thinking skills.

Although all of the schools within this study indicated overall their view of inspection as a means of auditing what is done, it is interesting to note that this view was rather more prevalent in the smaller schools (School 1, 3, 5 and 6). Now whether this might suggest some form of differential effect exists between large and small primary schools is rather difficult to say, but what does seem likely is that smaller schools, which inevitably operate within a climate of considerable flexibility, feel the auditing or checking nature of the inspection process rather more acutely than their larger counterparts.

An interesting finding from this research was the general view of those involved in the questionnaire that inspection was actually a developmental process aimed at school improvement. That this was felt to be the case was particularly interesting given the view, represented quite strongly by the same sample, that the process was also fundamentally an exercise in accountability aimed at checking what is being done in our schools. However, this apparent contradiction is explicable if schools and teachers view inspection's audit of their provision as the 'first phase' of the school improvement and development process, which is launched following the identification of key issues and the introduction of an action plan to resolve them.

In seeking to explain this rather contradictory view of the contemporary inspection system – apparently both developmental and auditing – one may well have to accept that the process can in fact be both at the same time. Indeed, why can a process that is fundamentally regarded by those who experience it as a means of checking up, not also be seen as a process which may lead to development? That those involved in this research project regard inspection as fundamentally an exercise in checking up on their own schools – all of which are relatively successful – should not lead us to believe that they could not also regard it as a developmental process aimed at school improvement in less successful, or failing, schools.

Similarly, the view that inspection acts as a catalyst for change and development in schools did receive some, but not universal, support. The

statement to this effect contained in the survey was viewed rather more positively in the two larger and more recently inspected schools (Schools 2 and 4) than it was in their smaller counterparts. At School 2 and School 4 in excess of 47 per cent of the sample agreed with the view that inspection provides a catalyst for change and though almost 43 per cent of those sampled in the smaller schools also agreed, 50 per cent did not. Indeed, of the total sampled in all six schools, 26.9 per cent expressed disagreement with the view that inspection actually stimulates change and development in schools.

The evidence from this study suggests that the contemporary system of inspection has provided those working within the sample schools with differing views of what it is fundamentally about. Ultimately, if there is an inherent tension in the view of those involved in this research project as to the nature of inspection, it is probably no greater than the apparent political and practical tension (some might say 'ambiguity' – Brunel University, 1999) of freeing schools from the control of LEAs through local financial management; whilst at the same time, introducing tighter controls on the curriculum delivered through the National Curriculum and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies; and 'policing' this orthodoxy through a highly judgemental and potentially punitive system of institutional evaluation (Brunel University, 1999; Cullingford, 1999; Lonsdale and Parsons, 1998).

Generally the view that inspection judgements are usually fair received support. However, this does not, in itself, tell us the whole story. Indeed, in

the two larger schools (Schools 2 and 4) 16.2 per cent disagreed, or strongly disagreed, with the view that inspection judgements are fair; and in excess of 51 per cent expressed no particular view. In the smaller schools, only 7.1 per cent of those sampled disagreed with this statement, and none strongly disagreed; whilst 71.4 per cent endorsed the view that inspection judgements are usually fair.

The data gathered from the interviews established – with one or two exceptions – that the sample was satisfied that inspection judgements and findings were, on the whole, fair and accurate observations of the state of contemporary schools. As noted, there were some concerns expressed in terms of the objectivity of inspectors' findings. However, the view of the interviewees was broadly a positive one:

“I felt that the team took a lot of notice of what was fair In terms of the teaching and in terms of the management of the school, I did feel that the judgements were fair. There were certain criticisms of certain teachers on just one or two occasions. I had to agree with those criticisms and I think they were handled very delicately in the inspection report so, yes, I would say that it was a fair report.” (School 1: PJ: headteacher)

This study reflects a rather negative view overall of the likelihood that one team of inspectors would make similar judgements to another; though this broad picture does not fully represent the specific findings made from the sample of schools involved. Indeed, the view in the smaller schools

(Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6) was considerably more positive than it was in the larger, with 46.2 per cent agreeing that judgements made by one team would be made by another; though it should also be noted that none strongly agreed. Amongst this group, a further 23.1 per cent expressed no particular view, with the remainder disagreeing with the survey statement (30.8 per cent). None strongly disagreed. In the larger schools however, 56.7 per cent disagreed, or strongly disagreed, with the view that the judgements made by one team would be replicated by another; 35.1 per cent expressed no particular view; and only 8.1 per cent of the sample indicated that they felt that judgements would be the same even if the inspection team was different.

As noted above, the interviewees from School 2, which is a large primary school, expressed concern that their registered inspector was the headteacher of a small school and had his own expressed opinions on how things should be done. Several interviewees referred to the contexts of schools inevitably impacting upon what was done in them. For them, the lack of a contextualised or nuanced system resulted in the inspection process lacking the sensitivity to deal appropriately with different schools in differing circumstances. The headteacher of School 3 felt that the process was inevitably a subjective one which deals with characters, individuals and personal views. For him and others, the relationship between the headteacher and the Rgl is crucial.

Several of the interviewees argued that the OFSTED framework is not the only valid yardstick as to what constitutes a good and effective school. Other suggested criteria included enhanced input from parents, governors and LEA advisers, all of which would facilitate improvements in reliability and make the process of institutional evaluation far less of a 'snapshot in time'.

For one headteacher (School 1: PJ), the OFSTED framework was broadly appropriate as an instrument of school evaluation and he endorsed its various emphases: but for him, it also failed adequately to account for much that can only be observed or felt in contemporary primary schools. For another (School 6: JC), faith in the reliability of the system had been lost because of factual errors in her school's final report; whilst other interviewees commented that their experience of more than one inspection reflected that inspection teams and their manner of running inspections were both different and individual.

Concerns were expressed by almost all of the interviewees in relation to the validity of the OFSTED system of school inspection as either the sole, or the most important, instrument for evaluating the performance of schools. Several referred to a range of factors which should be taken into account, only one of which should be inspection. The headteacher of School 5 (JM) expressed the view that evaluating small and large schools in different localities, with different budgets, regimes, routines and forms of organisation under the same framework was fundamentally inappropriate.

This research project found a broadly negative response to the system's objectivity. The overall view in the sample of schools does not however, provide us with a complete picture of the views of the data gathered. In total one-third (33.3 per cent) of the survey respondents from the larger schools disagreed, or strongly disagreed, with the questionnaire statement that inspection findings are objective; whilst only about one-fifth (21.4 per cent) disagreed with the same statement in the smaller schools – none strongly disagreed. On the other hand, 42.9 per cent of the respondents from the smaller schools agreed with the statement; compared to only 13.9 per cent in the larger schools. No-one strongly agreed in any of the schools.

Also of some interest is the fact that 52.8 per cent in the larger schools and 35.7 per cent in the smaller schools expressed no particular view on the objectivity of inspection findings. This represents 48 per cent of the total sample. The fact that almost half of the sample expressed no clear view on the objectivity of inspection may well be because many involved in our schools have never actually taken any time to consider it. It could, on the other hand, reflect that practitioners are now so resigned to the process that, for them, considerations of objectivity or subjectivity are essentially an irrelevance – OFSTED inspection is quite simply something that one has to 'get through'.

There was an interesting divergence between the large and small schools when considering the issue of whether the use of the OFSTED framework was leading to improved standards in the national context. At school 2 and

School 4 – both large schools - 29.4 per cent of the respondents to the questionnaire agreed that the use of OFSTED's inspection framework by schools is leading to improved national standards. This compared with 53.8 per cent of the respondents from Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6 – the small schools. Quite close to half of the sample in the larger schools (44.1 per cent) and almost a quarter in the smaller schools, (23.1 per cent) expressed no particular view; whilst similar percentages in both sets of schools either disagreed, or strongly disagreed, with the survey statement (26.5 per cent in the larger schools and 23.1 per cent in the smaller).

This study's findings, which reflect an unconvinced sample, do appear to corroborate the view of Ferguson and Earley (1999) that the link between OFSTED inspection and school improvement is far from clearly established; though little evidence was found in this study to support Ferguson et al. (2000) in their argument that the year during which an inspection takes place may see an adverse effect upon the quality of teaching and learning caused by staff putting maximum effort into ensuring that their school receives a positive inspection report.

Commentary

This research suggests that OFSTED inspection is yet to convince many practitioners of its overall value. The latest inspection framework (January, 2000) has established the category of 'coasting' or 'under-achieving' schools, which is a serious concern to the many teachers and schools who, under the previous framework, were regarded as satisfactory or relatively successful. Indeed, the issue of what actually constitutes an appropriate

rate of progress or school improvement is a question that is only likely to be fully addressed as more re-inspections are completed. Concern was expressed in this respect by the interviewees from School 2 and by the headteacher of School 3 who wondered whether, or not, the new inspection arrangements would actually result in more schools being labelled as 'under-performing'. In other words, tension is likely to be increased in those schools which may have had satisfactory inspections under the previous framework, but may not be sure that their rate of progress in the intervening period has been sufficiently rapid for a new set of inspectors working with a new framework.

The stress and anxiety resulting from inspection remain major concerns for schools. Indeed, in spite of the introduction and implementation of the latest OFSTED framework, the experience continues to have an impact upon teachers long after inspectors and inspection teams have left their schools behind. If it could be shown that the impact of the process was a positive one, with noticeable gains in pupil and school performance; or if the use of the OFSTED framework by schools was leading to improved standards, the majority of practitioners would probably concede that the 'temporary pain was worth the gain'. However, as noted, neither the literature (Ferguson and Earley, 1999; Ferguson et al., 2000) nor the results of this study indicate a clear link between OFSTED inspection and classroom improvement (Chapman, 2001).

This research project broadly reflects both the concerns expressed by Fitz-Gibbon (1998) and the results of the Brunel University study (1999) that

practitioners continue to view inspection as overly subjective and lacking in genuine reliability and validity. However, what may be of similar concern is the response of the larger schools (Schools 2 and 4) to the existence of the contemporary system of inspection in its national context. What appeared to emerge from the survey was a rather more negative view of the process at the larger schools (Schools 2 and 4) than that broadly expressed at the smaller schools (Schools 1, 3, 5 and 6). This may have been the result of coincidence; but if this is not the case and there is actually some differential effect operating, it may reflect that the existence of the new framework has done little to ease the concerns of practitioners that they are being evaluated fairly by a system which is truly seeking 'improvement through inspection'.

Where teachers view inspection as a useful tool for improvement they are likely to have the most positive interactions with inspectors. However, what seems clear from this study, is that the new framework has failed to address the continuing issue of the quality of feedback from inspectors fully. Chapman (2001) reports:

“Almost all teachers (91 per cent) who intend to change their practice as a result of inspection do so because of feedback received from a lesson observation.”

If inspectors do not provide the quality and depth of feedback necessary to bring about change and development in classroom practice, it is highly unlikely that inspection, even under the new framework, will have a significantly positive effect upon teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusions

Preamble

The concluding chapter is divided into four sections. The opening section commences with a concise resumé of the main findings of the research by summarising the key points raised in the responses to the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. The second section develops several of the most significant findings of this study in relation to the work of other researchers in the field. The third section offers a brief consideration of the implications of this study in relation to future research.

The final part of the chapter concludes with thoughts and comments which include the re-visiting of the original research questions and reflections upon the development of the OFSTED system of school inspection.

Section 1: A Summary of the Questionnaire and Interview Findings

General Perceptions on the Process of School Inspection

- The case study schools generally found inspectors professional and prepared to build positive relationships with staff.
- The larger schools responded more positively than the smaller schools in relation to appropriate consideration being given to their specific circumstances and contexts.
- There was considerable variability in relation to the quality of feedback provided by inspectors after classroom observation. This was noted, not

only in respect of different teams, but also within teams of inspectors involved in the same inspection.

- The reduced notice of inspection, under the new framework (2000) was generally considered to be positive; though some teachers would prefer no notice at all.
- The timing of inspection is an important consideration. A late-summer inspection may well result in less post-OFSTED tension amongst staff, whilst an early autumn inspection is likely to result in staff working during their summer vacation and a subsequent increase in the level of stress and anxiety experienced.
- The new 'short inspection' may increase teacher anxiety as there are fewer observations of lessons making each one critical.
- Staff that are given little attention by inspectors may feel ignored or inappropriately treated by the process.

Perceptions on the Impact of Inspection upon Practice

- Teachers are likely to 'play it safe' during inspection.
- Some practitioners are likely to emphasise particular aspects of what they do in school to reflect the specialism of inspectors.
- The credence given by teachers to the grades provided by inspectors following classroom observation was mixed, with a more positive view in the larger schools.
- Inspectors' views and grading can make a difference to teachers' professional self-esteem.

- Successful schools may regard OFSTED inspection as a validating experience.
- The OFSTED framework provides a useful guide to school self-evaluation.
- There may be a negative impact upon teacher creativity as a result of inspection.
- The OFSTED system of inspection remains relatively insensitive to error and unresponsive to schools' and teachers' views.
- Concerns remain in schools in relation to the system's inherent subjectivity.
- Inspection may not have a great effect upon what teachers actually do in the long term; though it may well directly influence what goes on in schools during the inspection week itself.
- The influence of inspection on future planning is likely to work on different levels, with greater impact on planning at the macro— than micro-level.
- The influence of inspection upon future practice was viewed more positively in the larger than the smaller schools.
- Much contained in schools' inspection reports was already known to the schools.

Perceptions on the Usefulness and Value of the Inspection Experience

- The larger schools in the study were less satisfied with the perceived fairness of inspection reports than the smaller schools.
- The experience of one inspection is considered to be useful in terms of preparation for subsequent inspections.

- A more positive view on the issue of the effect of inspection upon primary education was found in the smaller schools.
- The case study schools indicated that the issues identified in their inspection reports were not necessarily the most important that had to be dealt with.
- None of the schools had experienced loss of staff through ill-health or retirement which they attributed to OFSTED inspection.
- Inspection findings generally focused upon issues over which the schools had some control. The smaller schools reflected this view particularly.
- Schools felt there had been no discernible effects upon their standards which could be attributed directly to the existence of OFSTED and its system of inspection.
- Changes to the activities of governors were felt to be more the result of general changes in the nature of governance than they were to the inspection process.
- The OFSTED system of school inspection was not felt to have resulted in improvements in school ethos or pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (S.M.S.C.) development.
- The view that inspection issues shape future action and development plans was more strongly held in the larger primary schools than it was in the smaller schools.
- All of the case study schools indicated that the production of a post-inspection action plan was useful in terms of future planning.

Perceptions on the Strengths and Weaknesses of the OFSTED System of School Inspection

- There was general confidence that inspection had not missed any significant issues in the schools in this research project.
- The larger case study schools were less satisfied than the smaller in relation to OFSTED's ability to identify schools' significant strengths.
- There may be too much for inspectors to do, during the course of an inspection, for them to complete the task properly in the time allowed.
- The case study schools were not convinced that the inspection process had a positive effect either on staff collaboration or teamwork.
- The process of inspection had a limited impact in the case study schools in bringing about greater clarity in individual roles and functions.
- The view that inspection is primarily an auditing exercise was reflected in the case study schools.
- The case study schools indicated that the process of inspection was a developmental exercise.
- Inspection findings were generally viewed as fair.
- The schools had a negative view overall that one team of inspectors would find the same as another; with this opinion being most clearly represented in the larger schools.

Section 2: Discussion

Feedback

A major issue for schools – clearly illustrated in this research project – concerns the feedback received following both observation and inspection.

There is quite obviously an issue to be addressed if teachers and schools feel that they cannot readily improve and develop as a result of not being provided with sufficient information on what went well and what did not, when observed. Recent changes, to be implemented from the start of the new inspection cycle (2003), mean that teaching grades will be summarized in inspection reports and will no longer be provided to headteachers or individual teachers. This is clearly an improvement on the past. However, if it remains the case that there is little time for inspectors to share with practitioners exactly what could be improved and how improvement could be facilitated then the likelihood is that teachers will remain dissatisfied with post-observation feedback and will remain unlikely to see any clear link between inspection and school improvement.

Concerns regarding the issue of feedback from inspectors are not restricted to the classroom. Indeed schools, other than those with serious weaknesses or in 'special measures', receive no feedback on the quality of their post-OFSTED action plans; nor do they always even receive acknowledgement of the receipt of what should be an important school improvement document. Headteachers and governing bodies are thus left to presume that their proposed action plans are at least adequate to ensure institutional development and improvement. The fact that the vast majority of primary schools are at least 'satisfactory' in OFSTED terms need not necessarily alter the view that school improvement would most probably be facilitated if impetus was provided to action plans by appropriate feedback or support from inspectors (Chapman (2001).

Key Issues

This research found that inspectors were not always good at identifying areas for development over which the school had real control. Indeed, Ferguson et al. (2000) reflect that many schools find the key issues expressed in their inspection reports particularly difficult to resolve. Some issues, such as those relating to resourcing, building and overcrowding, are in fact more likely to be issues for the school's LEA or central government. As a particularly popular school, School 4 has suffered from difficulties relating to its premises and class sizes. These were noted relatively sympathetically by the OFSTED inspection team. Nevertheless, they appear as issues in the school's final report, although it is perfectly clear that the cost of future building and reductions in class size (particularly at Key Stage 1) are areas of improvement beyond the control of the school itself.

In almost all of the schools in this study, the development of systems of monitoring and evaluation and improvements in I.C.T. are to be found as key issues. For the respondents from School 4, the identification of I.C.T. as a priority for development was felt to be unfair, especially as its own L.E.A. regard its provision as a model of good practice. Ferguson and Earley (1999), like others noted above, express concern about key issues becoming particularly 'fashionable'. The writers argue that there appear to be particular trends which are evident in many reports. Similarly, Ferguson et al. (2000) found, in an extensive piece of research, that four out of ten schools had issues relating to assessment and that issues relating to I.C.T. were particularly prevalent in primary schools. Now it may well be the case

that there generally are problems in terms of schools' practice in these and other regularly pinpointed areas; but there may be a problem with the process itself if inspectors are simply homing in on areas of practice which are being targeted for particular attention, regardless of the actual quality of what is being done in the classroom.

This research project found that schools feel that inspection should not be the only yardstick by which their performance is judged. The headteacher of School 5 (JM) argued that a single framework for the inspection process is inappropriate given the range of contexts and circumstances in which schools of very different sizes operate.

Law and Glover (1999) argue that inspection has little, if any, impact on the socio-economic context in which schools find themselves. As a result, the problems highlighted by OFSTED are frequently beyond the power of the schools to resolve without much help from external agencies. The writers advocate a system which pays greater attention to contextual factors; allows for greater credit to be given for marginal improvement; and encourages greater flexibility in reporting. For Law and Glover (1999) schools are bound, by necessity, to be very different and should, as a result, be judged in different ways. In their view much 'school improvement' work has actually to be done beyond the school itself:

“Essentially, OFSTED needs to create a more nuanced and contextualised methodology which incorporates a slightly wider

range of performance indicators beyond free school meals.” (p. 165)

Fitz-Gibbon and Stephenson-Forster (1999) similarly reflect upon the complexity of schools as institutions working within their own specific contexts, and the notion – noted above – of fashionable perceptions of sound educational practice:

“Is the very construct of a single rating for a complex school reasonable? Is a ‘failing school’, for example, adequately defined? Is it methodologically valid to apply a single label to a whole school given that there is almost certainly considerable variation within every school?” (p.103)

For them, what may be heralded as good practice may well be little more than shared prejudice since ‘views on what constitutes good practice have changed over the years, like a fashion.’ (p. 105)

Clearly, if the views and judgements of OFSTED inspectors are to be credited with greater importance on the part of practitioners, a much more broadly agreed perception of quality in practice is necessary; one which is shared by both practitioners and inspectors alike. Moreover, it would seem that there is the need for the inspection framework to be sensitive enough to accept the existence of, and make allowances for, contextual and practical issues over which the school has little, if any, real control. Schools must therefore feel that their own particular circumstances are being considered;

and that their practice is being observed and judged against valid and reliable criteria when key issues for school development are being prepared by teams of inspectors.

Self-Evaluation

The development of an 'accountability culture' has been one of the main results of the OFSTED process of inspection. Schools have much to gain from 'doing well' in terms both of prestige within the local community and from the perceptions of other professionals, but for Ferguson et al. (2000) inspection, in reality, is fundamentally concerned with accountability and the delivery of change. For them, it seeks to ensure the development of education in accordance with national initiatives and prescriptions by providing a mechanism to check that headteachers, governing bodies and LEAs comply with statutory requirements.

Certainly, there is tacit agreement in education (Fourth Report of the Select Committee on 'The Work of OFSTED', 1999) that accountability is necessary and this research project confirms this view. None of the respondents given the opportunity, expressed the view that an inspection process should not exist. Indeed, many headteachers and their teacher colleagues have actually trained as inspectors, and there is clear evidence that many, if not most, schools accept the new OFSTED framework as a sound basis for in-service training and for school self-evaluation.

However, this is far from suggesting that all about the present system is regarded by professionals in education, as either difficult to improve or entirely justifiable. This research project emphasises the concerns expressed in Ferguson et al. (2000) and Winkley (1998) regarding the observation of parts of lessons, rather than the whole, as a basis for sound judgement by inspectors. Indeed, the former writers even note that the inspectorate and the Select Committee on the 'Work of OFSTED' (1999) agree to differ in respect of this important issue. For Fitz-Gibbon and Stephenson-Forster (1999), the 'observation issue' is particularly important:

"OFSTED has presented no justification for the number of lessons observed, no studies as to whether different subjects require different lengths of observation and no studies of the proportion of a lesson that needs to be observed for the kinds of judgements that are being made The entire design seems to be based on received wisdom rather than checked by proper methods." (p. 101)

The role of school self-evaluation is an area over which there is much debate. These research findings indicate that primary schools tend to use OFSTED criteria to reflect upon their own performance. OFSTED, in its publication 'School Evaluation Matters' (1998), offers much advice for self-evaluation, but seems to remain somewhat reticent in officially accepting the reliability of schools' own evaluations on their performance in final reports. The new framework does facilitate rather more input through its various proformas and enables schools – at least to some degree – to 'make their

own case'. Indeed, this apparent change in emphasis may perhaps be most clearly illustrated in new 'light touch' inspections which rely quite heavily on school-based data and do not require that all teachers be observed in the classroom.

Ferguson et al. (2000) prefer to refer to 'self-inspection' when schools use the OFSTED framework as a set of evaluative criteria; whilst Norton Grubb (1999), in similar style, differentiates between self-evaluation, when schools evaluate their own performance in their own terms, and 'self-initiated inspection'. The latter argues that an increased emphasis on self-review will lead to an improved atmosphere in education since it is possible for it to be rigorous without being either overly judgemental or punitive.

Norton Grubb (1999) like other writers, also contends that inspectors should offer some degree of 'consultancy' which, when set alongside an enhanced internal audit, would provide much more than a snapshot of school performance. By accommodating long-term developmental activities and initiatives, and by giving inspectors a new and enhanced role in 'putting things right' the inspection process would offer the benefit of providing on-going opportunities for a professional dialogue between the observer and the observed. The development of techniques in schools' own internal evaluation or 'self-initiated inspection' would be likely to improve on the following frequently criticised issues:

- the atmosphere and purposes of the inspection process;
- its balance of insiders and outsiders; and

- the period of time over which inspection takes place.

Earley (1998) argues that the reality of the need to improve and develop in our schools has led to something of a polarization of views between those who regard internal audit or review, and those who prefer external mechanisms, as means to enhance educational performance. There are certainly those who would wish to see schools audit their own performance systematically by the predominant use of internal mechanisms in which the school is itself the main agent of its own change and development. However others (e.g. Woodhead) support the use of external forces, such as inspections, audits, the publication of test results and 'league tables', as the most important influences on school improvement. Earley's (1998) view, favouring a combination of both internal and external forces and mechanisms, is a view also held by Wragg (1997) and Hargreaves (1995). For Earley (1998) the value of both is clear:

"OFSTED inspection can contribute to school improvement, particularly in validating agendas for change, but inspection was merely a snapshot evaluation, likely to compare unfavourably with, where it existed, a school's more rigorous and on-going system of self-review." (p. 170)

However it would seem that the fundamental issue underlying the reliability of self-evaluation (or self-inspection) remains how best to ensure that it becomes sufficiently rigorous and reliable to contribute fully to the OFSTED inspection process.

Impact Upon Standards and School Improvement

This research casts some doubt on the view that inspection has had a significantly positive effect on educational standards. Indeed, at the moment, there remains little evidence that OFSTED impacts on standards, save perhaps in 'failing schools' which attract considerable sums of extra money and additional LEA input and support. Alexander (1999) suggests that, for schools performing well – such as those in this study – the disruption caused by inspection may have a negative impact on school and pupil performance and concludes

“Finally, it is pretty obvious that OFSTED's impact on standards is at best indirect. It is teachers who raise the standards of their pupils' achievement, not inspectors.” (p.126)

Cullingford (1999) in fact goes further, challenging the notion that inspection and target setting raise standards at all since, for him, research seems to reflect that a climate of fear and stress impairs performance. He thus argues that educational standards are not rising – whilst both truancy and the rate of pupil exclusions are. Moreover, he asserts in conclusion, that 'OFSTED lowers standards' (p.213). For Winkley (1999) the process fails to foster improved performance because it discourages both imagination and risk and, as a result, it 'eliminates the opportunity for dialectic and exploration' by exerting 'a highly controlling, and bureaucratic approach which presumes that all is known about successful teaching and learning' (p. 52).

For Close (1998), the relationship between inspection and raising standards is not an obvious one since, for him, like Fullan (1991), school improvement is founded on those working within the classroom:

“Whatever the leadership and management, whatever the supportive system any school remains vulnerable to factors outside its control. Quality learning is delivered primarily by teachers, not by managers or systems let alone inspectors or consultants.” (Close, 1998: p. 85)

This study found significant benefits in terms of staff confidence and morale as a result of having their practise and performance validated by inspection. Similarly, Cuckle and Broadhead (1999) refer to potential benefits of schools having their direction and achievements affirmed by inspectors, and reflect on resultant improvements in school confidence and staff morale. They also argue that OFSTED may contribute to school development and improvement when there is perceived to be agreement between inspection findings, key issues and the school's own view, as reflected in its development documentation and related action planning. However, even in apparently successful schools, this study found that there are likely to be pockets of disappointment in areas or departments who feel that they have been either directly criticized or dealt with less favourably than others (Schools 1, 2 and 4). This study reflected that teachers at one school in particular (School 2), felt that the inspection process effectively ignored their contribution to the development of pupils by providing them with very little time either to show or discuss their activities.

Ultimately, the degree of ownership felt by schools of their inspection report and its findings is likely to dictate how it will be used as a development instrument. If schools and teachers feel unfairly treated or that the issues raised are a long way from their priorities, inspection is likely to have limited practical improvement value.

Concern was expressed by those who took part in this study in terms of the validity of the present system of inspection and in terms of its position as the single most important yardstick of school effectiveness and performance. Inspection, like other forms of educational measurement and evaluation is never likely to be unassailable and, as a result, retains persuasive rather than definitive validity. Thus Gerran Thomas' view (1999) that inspection can lead a large number of teachers to reassess their methods' would appear to be rather optimistic; especially given the somewhat mixed degree of credence given to inspectors' observations of classroom practice expressed by the practitioners in this study (see also Chapman, 2001). The degree of positive value ascribed by heads and teachers to the inspection process in general is likely to depend – to at least some measure – on one, or more, of the following:

- the conduct of the inspectors, their professionalism and their ability to demonstrate relevant and appropriate knowledge and experience;
- the extent to which inspection provides a new focus for development;
- the residual effect on staff morale; and
- the extent to which schools feel able to implement the report's key issues.

For Fidler, Earley and Ouston (1996) however, institutional improvement is much more an 'in-house' activity since, whatever approach is taken, the commitment to change and develop must come from within the school itself. Certainly, the production of post-inspection action plans was found to be advantageous to schools in this study, but more at the general systemic and organisational level than at the practical level of the classroom. Of greater perceived impact on classroom practice were the changes to the National Curriculum (2000) and the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies according to the schools in this research.

The fact that inspection has a positive impact upon failing schools and schools with serious weaknesses would seem to be broadly acknowledged, but for effective schools, like those in this research, the benefits are far less certain. Parents are likely to see the overall impact on educational quality as more positive than headteachers and governors (Cullingford, 1999); and governors and parents seem to accept more strongly the validity and reliability of inspection findings than do headteachers and their teacher colleagues (Cullingford, 1999). However, even if parents do accept the validity and reliability of inspection, this research suggests that few ever request the full unabridged version of their school's inspection report. Indeed, only seven copies of School 4's complete inspection report were requested by parents in 1996 and none were requested in summer, 2000. It should be noted that School 4 is a very large primary school with 450+ pupils on roll.

What this research suggests is that inspection is not necessarily an effective catalyst for change in successful schools. Indeed, in the pre-inspection period for all of the schools in this study, time and energy was expended in trying to get things right for OFSTED. Development was largely put on the 'back burner' as headteachers, teachers and governors sought to consolidate rather than improve. Similarly, in the immediate post-inspection period a sense of collective relief that the ordeal was over limited the likelihood of rapid change and development. This was noted particularly at School 4 where the school's final report was received during the final days of the summer term – a time when no-one was ready or willing to consider future development.

Ferguson et al. (2000) liken the process, as it now exists, to a game in which players exhibit more or less skill:

“An impending inspection can be seen as the start of a game in which skilful players will seek out the information that will enhance their chances of obtaining a good report. Those who, for a variety of reasons refuse to 'play the system' may approach the inspection without seeking such 'advantages'.” (p.32)

The acting headteacher of School 1 similarly likened the inspection process to a game in which advantage was sought by concentrating an amount of time in emphasising the Rgl.'s particular specialism. It could be argued that OFSTED inspection, and the apprehension and tension caused by it amongst those that work in schools, has resulted in some inappropriate

behaviour and reactions from both teachers and governors. Schools may be more keen to be seen in a good light by seeking the 'right responses', than they are to take the necessary risks to move their institutions on rapidly.

This study found that for small schools, the pressure exerted by the process may be magnified as fewer colleagues exist to share the various responsibilities that running the institution dictate. In Derbyshire, it is far from rare for headteachers to teach a very significant percentage of the school timetable, and this is the case in four of the schools in this sample. It is small schools which are likely to feel the greatest pressure from an inspection system which is less than tolerant of unique, independent and flexible ways of managing. Day et al. (1999) reflect and define the problems to be faced by the headteacher and staffs of small schools which are likely to magnify the anxieties exerted by the OFSTED process of inspection:

“The fact that heads in small schools tend to have significant classroom teaching commitment results in tensions between teaching, leadership and management which create unique sets of development issues. The ‘teaching head’ may be a phenomenon in large schools also but the time spent on teaching by such heads is usually minimal. The teaching loads of heads in very small schools leaves little time for managing or leading the school.” (p. 174)

Ultimately, it is evident that the demands upon the headteachers of small primary schools are likely to be different from those exerted on heads of

larger schools. Even with the '2000 framework', the inspection process may not be flexible enough to accommodate what would appear to be relatively self-evident. The scale of the school as an educational organisation seems inevitably to place differential pressure upon those managing it – pressure which OFSTED may not fully appreciate.

Conversely, it could be argued that the inspection process now fully accepts that some schools require rather less in terms of external audit than others. Indeed, the arrangements, under the new framework, for differentiated inspections quite sensibly and appropriately acknowledge that not all schools require a full inspection. Thus some schools – like School 2 in this study, with a record of high performance in statutory assessment done at both key stages, and with particularly good previous findings – may receive a short or 'light touch' inspection. However, this need not necessarily be seen by those schools as either advantageous or any less stressful. Indeed, the teachers of School 2 found the experience of a short inspection unsatisfactory in several ways, and actually felt responsible for preparing much of their final report themselves. Perhaps controversially Ferguson et al. (2000) suggest that the full inspection process should concentrate rather less on teacher observation, as is the case in short inspections:

“Inspectors should not attempt to observe teaching unless it is necessary to sample the performance of a few teachers to evaluate the school's quality assurance processes. The proposals for 'light touch' inspections have already recognised that in 'good' schools, it is not necessary for every teacher to be

observed. We need to ask whether observing several twenty minute excerpts from the lessons of the majority (or all) of the teachers in the school is ever justified.” (p. 152)

Less emphasis on classroom observation would, on the face of it, appear a development of the system likely to reduce the stress and anxiety experienced by teachers during inspection. However, the view expressed at School 2 was that the pressure on those observed – precisely because they were going to be observed less frequently than for a full inspection – had the effect of actually increasing the pressure to perform. Staff were thus anxious to ensure that all went particularly well as they were unlikely to be observed more than once or twice, and a poor lesson could make the percentage of unsatisfactory lessons seen during the inspection, critical.

Reliability

This study reflects general concern about the perceived match between the experience and qualifications of inspectors who judge primary schools and their ability to make valid and reliable judgements on the balance of what is seen. It is noted in this research that inspectors have been prepared to make firm judgements on the basis of limited evidence and it is clear that members of a team may suffer from one, or more, weaknesses, including:

- inconsistency;
- lack of knowledge of the OFSTED framework;
- lack of appropriate subject knowledge; and
- lack of appropriate school experience.

Ferguson and Earley (1999) reflect what would appear to be a relatively common complaint:

“..... we have encountered cases where the evidence base has been so inadequate that, in the school’s view, it was not possible to make a sound judgement. (For example, primary schools that taught geography and history in different school terms still received a grade for both).” (p. 23)

This study found – particularly in the small schools – that some judgements were made founded upon limited evidence.

If LEAs were to take a more meaningful role in inspections, the system could be developed and refined to facilitate the monitoring and validating of schools’ own self-evaluation systems, as well as the quality of the inspectorial and advisory input from the LEAs themselves. The fact that schools and LEAs gather and share much useful data for evaluation purposes is, no doubt, recognised as a strength by OFSTED, but this is far from finding a place for this information within the inspection process. Since there is concern expressed by schools and by educationalists relating to the appropriateness of some inspectors’ experience, qualifications and knowledge, it would seem an obvious step forward to directly involve the LEA in the inspection of its own schools. Given that LEAs gather large quantities of data on their schools over lengthy periods, an inspection system involving LEA-accumulated information to influence the outcome of

final reports, would seem to constitute a definite step forward by making inspections both more representative and more predictable.

A more predictable inspection process which involved both clearer and more reliable findings and judgements would be appreciated by all working in schools. Indeed, if headteachers and governing bodies can reflect that they have addressed issues from previous inspections, and have made other systematic, organisational and classroom-related improvements, why should they not feel confident that the final judgement on their schools should be at least 'satisfactory'?

Governing Bodies

The OFSTED system of inspection has had a significant impact upon all areas of school activity, not least the functioning of governing bodies. This is, in fact, reflected in this study. The information gathered by inspectors, in respect of the activities of governors, has generally been the result of interview rather than – as in the case of teachers – observation of actual practice.

OFSTED's view of what constitutes the fundamental functions of an effective governing body were established in 1995 (in its publication, "Governing Bodies and Effective Schools", DfEE/OFSTED, London) as:

- providing a strategic view;
- acting as a 'critical friend'; and
- ensuring accountability.

Yet it is probably fair to suggest that it is the inevitability of inspection that remains the single most important factor in ensuring that governors take an active and participative role in what goes on in their schools. Certainly, this study noted that governors were keen to ensure an 'audit trail' existed, by which their participation in the decision-making in the school, could clearly be followed by inspectors. In all of the schools in this sample, committee meetings were carefully recorded and minutes taken primarily to ensure that there was evidence to reflect that their role and responsibilities were being taken seriously.

The governing body is legally responsible for the preparation and implementation of the school's post-inspection action plan; though it is quite evident that, in practice, these activities are likely to be delegated to the school's headteacher and the institution's senior management team. This is perhaps unsurprising given that, traditionally, governors have been far more comfortable in practical matters related to staffing and resource and premises issues, rather than the school curriculum and matters concerning the teaching and learning process. But Ferguson et al. (2000) argue that governors are now less likely to accept that everything can be left to the headteacher and provide an excellent definition of what seems to be the action-planning process in many primary schools:

"Primary school governors explained that they were involved in discussions of the implications of the inspection report but usually expected the head and senior staff to produce a draft action plan for their approval. The draft plan was discussed at governors'

meetings (both in committees and full governing body meetings) when suggestions were made and incorporated as amendments to the final version of the post-OFSTED action plan. The responsibility for its implementation was also delegated by the governing body to those who were seen to be in the best position to implement its provisions, namely the head and the school's administrative staff. Governors did, however, receive regular progress reports on the implementation of the plan and reported that they contributed actively to monitoring progress on the key issues." (p. 85)

The evidence from this research appears to corroborate Ferguson et al. (2000) in their broad description of the practical role of primary school governing bodies in relation to post-inspection action planning.

Section 3: Implications for Future Research

There are relatively few studies that have sought to investigate the relationship between OFSTED inspection and classroom practice, and the impact of the experience of inspection upon those working in primary schools (Lowe, 1998). This study has sought to consider perceptions on the OFSTED inspection process of those working within a sample of successful primary schools in the county of Derbyshire.

This research area could be developed by comparing and contrasting schools' perceptions on the impact of the contemporary system of inspection

across several LEAs. Research which compares primary schools, the standards they achieve and their respective inspection findings might be particularly interesting, especially if this took account of schools in more than one LEA given the varying levels of funding currently available to schools across the country. It is worthy of note that all of the schools in this sample achieve good results and had successful inspections even though Derbyshire remains amongst the poorest funded LEAs in England and Wales. Research investigating the existence of any significant relationship between school budgets and performance in OFSTED inspection might yield some interesting results and contribute to the on-going political debate centring on the issue of differential rates of funding across the country's local authorities.

Further research could well be undertaken to investigate the overall impact of 'light touch' inspections. Indeed, a fascinating finding from this project was that the one school investigated that had experience of a short inspection found it anything but an anxiety-free ordeal, with intense pressure upon teachers resulting from the limited number of classroom observations being primarily responsible for this. Other areas which offer potential for future research include:

- the relationship between school culture and inspection experience;
and
- the relationship between teachers' perceptions of inspectors and the subsequent impact felt upon classroom practice or future planning.

This study found broad dissatisfaction with the quality of feedback provided to teachers by inspectors and limited credence ascribed to teaching grades following classroom observation. If the inspectorate can improve the quality, quantity and timing of feedback given to schools, more practitioners may be encouraged to develop their practice in accordance with the judgements and evaluations resulting from the inspection experience. These considerations could generate research into the likelihood of teachers changing their practice if guaranteed formative developmental feedback in an environment and at a time that facilitated reflection upon their teaching.

Section 4: Final Commentary

In the last analysis, the present system of school inspection inevitably has both strengths and weaknesses and this is reflected in the related literature, research evidence and in the findings of this study.

There are, for example, likely to be benefits resulting from the process of self-evaluation and self-examination which precedes an inspection; though the stress and anxiety provoked amongst staff may not be entirely advantageous. From the point of view of schools' accountability, the temporary discomfort of teachers may be partially justifiable since it may be seen as valuable to have an external perspective on performance, management and general output. However, justification would appear to depend upon schools' ability to develop and improve as a result of inspection. But benefits in this context are by no means universally

accepted, and evidence for the existence of a link between inspection and higher standards seems, at best, tenuous.

Several of the respondents in this study have referred to an increase in mutual support and collaboration which they have attributed to the pressure exerted on staff by external inspection. There was also some evidence to suggest some improvement in self-esteem as a result of the public affirmation of the work done in schools. This does not, however, appear a universal view, particularly since the existence of a common framework against which all schools are judged may be felt to place unreasonable expectations upon the systems, management and organisation of small schools. Certainly, a universal framework has brought with it greater awareness of the respective expectations upon, and roles of teachers and subject managers. It has, moreover, probably facilitated the development of greater clarity about the responsibilities of governors. However, in the case of the latter group, there still appears to remain the view that governorship is voluntary and unpaid and, because of this, heavy criticism from educational specialists (OFSTED), is unfair, and may be counter-productive.

The existence of an established and universally applied inspection framework is likely to benefit schools by promoting improved management systems and structures; and it may be argued that it is valuable as an aid to self-evaluation and in-house development. However, this presumes that the 'OFSTED way' is the right way; and that the contents of the framework are the best means of ensuring school improvement. Moreover, as is clear, the

universal acceptance of the OFSTED framework for inspection is far from a reality, both from writers and researchers in the field, and from practitioners, as exemplified in this study

Improved systems of school self-evaluation may enable schools to contribute more fully to their own inspection findings. However, for internal self-evaluation to be recognised in an atmosphere free from suspicion or the presumption that it is likely to be flawed, will require a significant change in the way the inspection service views what is done by schools to reflect on their own performance. For Ferguson and Earley (1999), this will depend on how OFSTED and the schools it inspects work together:

“Self-evaluation is unlikely to be successful without fundamental changes affecting the relationships between inspection teams and headteachers.” (p.24/25)

Kogan and Maden (1999) have found that most governors feel school accountability has been improved as a result of the OFSTED system of inspection; but that few headteachers or their teacher colleagues are likely to share this conviction. However, this research clearly suggests a more positive view in relation to this issue, from all levels of respondent.

The findings from this study reflect that the lack of developmental input was an issue with the present system, and the view at School 2 was that inspectors should be involved in school improvement in the institutions visited. This is, in fact, an opinion shared by Ferguson and Earley (1999):

“Inspectors should act like consultants in industry or, if inspections included a separate ‘consultancy phase’, then inspection teams could be expected to work with school staff to bring about improvements, use their expertise to give advice and suggest changes for which they would feel responsible to school management.” (p. 25)

If school improvement is to result from school inspection, findings must indicate areas for development in teaching and learning (Chapman, 2001). It is unlikely that improvement will result from systemic changes and developments, though it may be facilitated if efficiency and effectiveness are enhanced. Chapman (2001) argues that improvement is likely to rely fundamentally upon three factors:

“.... Firstly, the ability of the inspector to identify areas for improvement; secondly, to interact and communicate them effectively with the teacher. Thirdly, the teacher must be willing to listen to the suggestions and implement the recommendations.”
(Chapman, 2001: p.60)

However, school improvement is not likely to be facilitated unless changes are made to the manner in which inspectors communicate with teachers and to the timing of post-observation teacher-inspector interactions.

Ultimately, many of the OFSTED system’s drawbacks may be rooted in its clear intolerance of alternative approaches to school improvement and development: an intolerance which results in it failing to fully or partially use

to its advantage the data locked within school self-evaluation systems and the data compiled by LEA link advisers. For those working within schools, inspection – notwithstanding all the changes embedded in the 2000 framework – remains an experience to be dreaded and survived, since a positive outcome requires a huge amount of hard work and enormous dedication and commitment.

OFSTED (2000) defines its role in evaluating achievement as:

“..... judging whether pupils are doing as well as they can in all they do?” (p. 4)

However in practice the positive effects of inspection upon primary schools remain unclear in a variety of contexts. Improvement and development may suffer initially as schools recover from the inspection experience; whilst Ferguson and Earley (1999) and Ferguson et al. (2000) express the view that practitioners gain little practical advice from the feedback provided by inspectors – a conviction that is clearly evidenced in this study.

It is because the contemporary system of inspection seeks to consider the quality of learning, and the teaching that promotes it in our schools, that much inspector-time is spent in gathering first-hand evidence from classrooms. However, the inevitable effect of this approach is the operation of a process which causes much stress and anxiety, as well as much action, in schools. As this study clearly reflects, the effects of inspection are multiple and complex and it would appear that the announcement of an

impending visit of inspectors should not necessarily lead to the presumption that school improvement will inevitably follow (Ferguson et al., 2000).

This study found that teachers are less likely to be creative during the period of an inspection. Chapman (2001) argues that the inspection process, as it stands at present, has the effect of making teachers defensive:

“During interviews, it was apparent that teachers had a lack of respect for inspectors and there was a strong ‘them and us’ attitude. One classroom teacher reported ‘There was no relationship with the inspector’individually they (teachers) were defensive, and wary of the process.” (p. 68)

If schools are ever to become more confident that inspection is not in place fundamentally to ‘trip them up’, the atmosphere in which it is done will have to change considerably.

There is little or no dispute that teachers and schools should be held accountable. Indeed, the regular evaluation of schools may be viewed as an element of the wider socio-political culture, and that increased public accountability of professionals in the public services is an inevitable result of the audit explosion (Power, 1994). However, it would seem entirely appropriate, as well as fair, that in return for the recognition of external accountability, teachers have the right to expect to be involved in a more humane and developmental system of school inspection. This could be achieved by the implementation of a system which takes more account of

internal methods and mechanisms of evaluation. However, perhaps Adams (2000) provides us with a particularly succinct view of a system which could be considered and which would, if tried, provide us with a fairer, more appropriate and less intimidating experience; and one which offers greater consistency and reliability by relying less on 'a snapshot in time':

“Possibly a lighter and leaner approach, based on regular audits of data, with a much less intensive programme of visits. The relationship between systems of self-evaluation and OFSTED's external checks might be reconsidered, as should a more explicit link between inspection and improvement. The current framework points in this direction but could well be developed further.”

(Adams, C. in Times Educational Supplement, 10.11.2000)

Ultimately, this research project found that those working within the primary sector regard inspections and inspection teams as both approachable and professional. This view is corroborated by Chapman's research (2001). However, it was clear that there appears to be the likelihood of quite considerable variation within and between OFSTED inspection teams in terms of the quality of post-observation feedback provided. For Chapman (2001) this is also a concern,

“If teachers' intention to change classroom practice as a result of inspection is to be increased, an appropriate level of high quality feedback must be provided.”

He continues by pointing the way forward:

Most cases of feedback appear to be short, non-formative positive reassurances of teaching quality, although there are some examples of inspectors employing 'best practice' by finding a suitable room and time to conduct a professional discussion including suggestions for improvement." (p. 69)

Staff must feel that they have been treated fairly and objectively if inspection is to have a positive effect upon schools. This research project discovered instances where teachers felt that they had been criticised due to prejudice rather than practice and instances where judgements upon quality were made with little evidence to support them. The credence given to the awarding of teaching quality grades was mixed, with a more positive view notable in the larger schools. However, having said this, the large primary school that experienced a short inspection (School 2), expressed concern that the pressure felt by staff as a result of fewer classroom observations and the necessity of getting what was seen by inspectors right, was itself problematic.

The view that OFSTED inspection findings impact upon future practice found a greater level of acceptance in the larger institutions; but there was a mixed view expressed by the whole sample in terms of their effect upon future planning – with more impact likely to be manifest in relation to whole-school organisational and systemic issues than in relation to individual practical classroom-based ones:

“Our long-term planning was perhaps only actually for the future year (before inspection), whereas we now look at a five year plan – or we ‘try’ to look at a five year plan. We look at things that are happening and could be happening, although a lot depends on finance I think things that have been implemented like the Literacy hour and the Numeracy hour have had more effect on the way that the teachers teach than the way inspection has.”

(School 3: PT: school clerk and governor)

The evidence provided by this research project suggests that inspection findings and judgements are generally regarded as fair, but concerns were expressed in terms of inspector subjectivity and in terms of the likelihood of one team of inspectors finding much the same as another during an inspection.

Concluding Comment

With the pressure on today's schools increasing year-on-year there have been numerous 'casualties' amongst headteachers and their teacher colleagues (Richards, 2001). Inevitably, the impact of OFSTED inspection has been felt by many in terms of professional anxiety, personal anguish and a certain amount of confusion. Indeed, even with the most recent inspection framework (2000) teachers are likely to experience stress if they perceive the agency and inspectors involved to be uncaring and in possession of a 'deficit model' of teachers and schools. If the system of inspection is to be improved to meet the hopes and expectations of professionals who clearly

seem to accept the need for accountability, the OFSTED agenda is likely to need to become both more sympathetic to individual school and teacher needs, and more developmental in its critique of schools and the activities going on within them. There may need to develop a system of inspection which may be seen by practitioners as working 'with' or 'alongside' them, rather than 'against' them. Moreover, with increasing amounts of data being compiled by schools on their own performance it would seem both logical and expedient to make full use of this information through some form of external validation or accreditation.

For OFSTED to provide a more balanced range of judgements, the system of inspection could be developed to include within each team of inspectors a representative from the school being inspected and/or a representative from the school's LEA.

These research findings suggest that the reconsideration of the composition of inspection teams to provide a more sympathetic – though not necessarily less stringent view – would facilitate a rather less threatening and less adversarial experience. Richards (2001) emphasises the need for appropriate expertise and training to ensure that inspectors receive sufficient support to fulfil their demanding roles effectively. For him, the system needs to concentrate upon developing the contribution made by the most able inspectors:

“If OFSTED is to continue to operate and regulate a system of nationwide inspections of whatever kind, it needs to strengthen and support the expertise of its registered inspectors, perhaps by ending contracting out to private agencies and employing its most effective inspectors as a permanent cadre operating regionally as part of a national service.” (p.12)

Moreover, he argues unequivocally that the OFSTED system of school inspection should more accurately reflect the situations and contexts of the schools it judges:

“Inspections need to be more closely tailored to the needs and circumstances of the individual schools.” (Richards, 2001: p.13)

For Richards (2001), inspection is a valuable exercise, but only through the development of a more nuanced and collaborative process can it effectively critique schools in a way that is rather more fair and less threatening:

“It (OFSTED inspection) does have its uses but cannot offer the range of definitive, authoritative judgements on standards and quality that it claims to be able to provide accountability through inspection is not sufficient; it needs to be accompanied by improvement planned as an ongoing process for which schools themselves are responsible but which needs a degree of external monitoring and support.” (p.13)

Ultimately, with the broad acceptance that inspection is here to stay, and with changes in the leadership of the inspectorate, the time for a reappraisal of the system and development beyond those contained within the '2000 framework' may be upon us. Certainly, if Fidler and Davies' (1998) view of inspection as 'an opportunity' is to be fulfilled, more needs to be done to ensure that school improvement ensues. The crux of the problem would appear to be that, while the current model of inspection can support improvement in some contexts, in others it appears to provide a wholly inappropriate mechanism.

Central to the impact of inspection upon teaching and learning is the perception of teachers, headteachers and governors of the process. Chapman (2001) suggests that schools themselves, each with their own unique cultures, traditions and contexts, may play a major role in developing teachers' views of inspection. If this is the case, then school culture is likely to constitute a very significant factor in determining individual teacher response to inspection and its findings. The results of Chapman's (2001) research into a group of secondary schools have encouraged him to argue that:

"..... the schools with more positive school cultures tended to have a more positive perception of the OFSTED process. This may suggest that OFSTED as a process is a mechanism to endorse positive cultures whose performance is high (though not necessarily in terms of exam results) and where people are successfully working together in response to the changing wider

educational context. In these schools with positive cultures, OFSTED offers a 'pat on the back' and allows the school to more or less follow its own journey of improvement." (p. 68)

However, it could be argued that this 'pat on the back' exacts a heavy price in terms of teacher stress and anxiety. The development of a more positive and supportive relationship between schools and OFSTED teams would certainly benefit the atmosphere in which inspection is conducted. Furthermore, OFSTED assistance in resolving some of the issues found to be problematic in schools would encourage them to look more positively upon the process, and may result in more teachers viewing inspection as a school improvement opportunity. Ultimately, if schools remain anxious and defensive during inspection, and if the perception of teachers is that inspection has only limited impact upon teaching and learning, then the degree of development in classroom practice likely to be generated by OFSTED will inevitably be limited. If this is the case, then the effectiveness of the current model of inspection as a means of classroom and school improvement remains debatable.

Yet the report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools for 1999/2000 (2001) reflects the following:

- in 1999/2000 some 95 per cent of lessons were taught satisfactorily or better, compared with 80 per cent in 1994/95;
- the proportion of good and very good teaching has increased from 40 to 60 per cent;

- in excess of 40 per cent of all primary schools had no unsatisfactory teaching;
- leadership is satisfactory or better in nine out of ten schools; and
- improvements in teaching and leadership have precipitated improvements in standards in national tests and public examinations.

For Tomlinson (2001) the role of OFSTED inspection in these positive developments in schools has been significant:

“I firmly believe that inspection has made an important contribution. The second inspection of schools is revealing substantial improvements since the first, as a result of vigorous action on any weaknesses identified. I believe an external, objective inspection system is a vital part of the improvement cycle.” (p.12)

In the last analysis, the challenge for the continued development of the OFSTED system of school inspection would seem to lie in several directions as the conclusion of the present cycle of inspections approaches (July, 2003). Firstly, it is possible that all schools would welcome change built upon the premise that inspection should be done *with* schools and not *to* schools. Secondly, schools are likely to welcome inspection taking full account of their own self-evaluation data and the objective information held on schools by their LEAs. Thirdly, as evidenced in the research findings, fundamental to inspection leading to school improvement and higher

standards, is the necessity of providing high quality developmental feedback to teachers and heads.

Without such developments, it will remain questionable whether inspection is likely to significantly impact upon schools' future planning, teaching and learning or pupil performance. Clearly, further research is needed in this area if OFSTED's claim of 'improvement through inspection' is to be substantiated.

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APPENDIX 1: Questionnaire

THE IMPACT OF OFSTED INSPECTION ON PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Questionnaire compiled by P.A. Blunsdon

University of Nottingham

About yourself

1. Name:

2. Gender:Female ☐ Male ☐

3. School:.....

4. Class/Year Group Taught:

5. Experience (approximate in whole years):

6. List any particular responsibilities you have in school:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Inspection Team					
1. The expertise of the inspection team matched the needs of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Inspectors adhered to their timetable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Members of the team had sufficient subject knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Inspectors took account of the specific needs of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Members of the inspection team were approachable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Members of the team were willing to enter into professional dialogue with staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom/Observation Issues					
1. I 'played it safe' in lessons during inspectors' observations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Immediate feedback was provided by inspectors following observations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I give particular credence to my 'teaching grades' following observations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. OFSTED feedback and teaching grades make a difference to my professional self-esteem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. OFSTED's inspection framework is a useful guide to self-evaluation at a personal level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. OFSTED’s inspection has made me more creative as a teacher/head	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Teachers’ views are represented in the inspection process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The experience of inspection has had an impact upon my style of teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The experience of inspection has had an impact upon the way I plan lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. OFSTED inspection feedback will influence my classroom practice in future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. OFSTED feedback was valuable and informative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. The final written inspection report was a fair reflection of the informal feedback received	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. The experience of an OFSTED inspection prepared me for re-inspection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Staff and governors were given ample opportunities to question the evidence base for judgements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. The overall impact of inspection has been positive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
School Issues					
1. The issues identified in our inspection report were the most important issues for the school to deal with	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The issues identified in inspection were aspects of school life over which we have control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The issues identified in inspection were similar to those already in the school development plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The production of a post-OFSTED Action Plan was a formality which will have use in terms of future planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The issues identified by OFSTED will dictate the shape and flavour of future development plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The inspection report missed significant weaknesses of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The inspection report missed significant strengths of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. As a result of inspection, the school has become more focused and rigorous in its work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I would change my views of the school if these were different to those expressed by an inspection team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. There have been improvements in pupil performance at school as a result of OFSTED inspection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Inspection has led to improvements in whole staff collaboration and teamwork	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. OFSTED's inspection framework is a useful guide to self-evaluation at a whole-school level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. OFSTED inspection has brought about greater clarity in individual roles and functions in school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The National Context					
1. There have been improvements in pupil performance as a result of OFSTED inspection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. OFSTED inspection is leading to improvements in school performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Schools and teachers should be accountable for their performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. OFSTED inspection improves schools' accountability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. OFSTED inspection is fundamentally an exercise in accountability aimed at 'checking up'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. OFSTED inspection is fundamentally a developmental exercise aimed at school improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Inspection acts as a catalyst for change and development in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The judgements made during inspection are usually fair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The judgements made by one team of inspectors would be made by another team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Inspection findings are objective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. The use of OFSTED's inspection framework by schools is leading to improved standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Should you have any other comments to make regarding any aspect of the OFSTED inspection process, please do so below. Please feel free to append additional sheets of paper as necessary.

APPENDIX 2: Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

THE INSPECTION TEAM/PROCESS

1. How was the inspection conducted at your school?
 - notice given
 - manner/professionalism of team
 - personal impressions of post-observation feedback
2. In your opinion, how accurate were the inspectors' observations on you and on the school?

OUTCOMES OF THE PROCESS

1. What were the main outcomes of the inspection?
 - for you
 - for staff
 - for school
2. What staff changes, if any, have been made which you would attribute directly to OFSTED inspection?
 - retirements
 - changing roles
 - extra staff
3. In your view, how fair were the judgements made about your school?
 - About your practise

THE IMPACT OF INSPECTION ON YOU/THE SCHOOL

1. What, if any, organisational changes have been made as a result of OFSTED inspection?
2. How useful were the inspection findings in relation to future planning?
3. Inspection focuses on 4 particular areas of school activity –
 - standards
 - quality of teaching
 - spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
 - management and efficiencyHow have these been influenced by your inspection?

EVALUATION AND REFLECTIONS

1. In your view, how beneficial to teacher and school performance is OFSTED inspection?
2. What are the main benefits of inspection?
 - Drawbacks
3. To what extent does inspection impact upon a teacher's sense of professional autonomy?
4. The inspection process aims to be valid and reliable. How well are these aims achieved?

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS/REMARKS

Have you any other comments to make regarding the inspection process?

Thank you for taking the time and trouble to take part in this research.

APPENDIX 3: Example of Completed Questionnaire

**THE IMPACT OF OFSTED INSPECTION ON PRIMARY
SCHOOLS**

Questionnaire compiled by P.A. Blunsdon

University of Nottingham

About yourself

- 1. Name:
- 2. Gender:Female ☒ Male ☐
- 3. School:.....
- 4. Class/Year Group Taught:3.....
- 5. Experience (approximate in whole years):25 yrs.....
- 6. List any particular responsibilities you have in school:

Resource manager
Art & coordinator
Display

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Inspection Team					
1. The expertise of the inspection team matched the needs of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Inspectors adhered to their timetable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Members of the team had sufficient subject knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Inspectors took account of the specific needs of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Members of the inspection team were approachable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Members of the team were willing to enter into professional dialogue with staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom/Observation Issues					
1. I 'played it safe' in lessons during inspectors' observations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Immediate feedback was provided by inspectors following observations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I give particular credence to my 'teaching grades' following observations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. OFSTED feedback and teaching grades make a difference to my professional self-esteem	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. OFSTED's inspection framework is a useful guide to self-evaluation at a personal level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

what timetable?

Some

sometimes

not

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. OFSTED's inspection has made me more creative as a teacher/head	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7. Teachers' views are represented in the inspection process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The experience of inspection has had an impact upon my style of teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The experience of inspection has had an impact upon the way I plan lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. OFSTED inspection feedback will influence my classroom practice in future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. OFSTED feedback was valuable and informative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. The final written inspection report was a fair reflection of the informal feedback received	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. The experience of an OFSTED inspection prepared me for re-inspection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14. Staff and governors were given ample opportunities to question the evidence base for judgements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15. The overall impact of inspection has been positive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
School Issues					
1. The issues identified in our inspection report were the most important issues for the school to deal with	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The issues identified in inspection were aspects of school life over which we have control	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The issues identified in inspection were similar to those already in the school development plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The production of a post-OFSTED Action Plan was a formality which will have use in terms of future planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The issues identified by OFSTED will dictate the shape and flavour of future development plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The inspection report missed significant weaknesses of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The inspection report missed significant strengths of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. As a result of inspection, the school has become more focused and rigorous in its work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I would change my views of the school if these were different to those expressed by an inspection team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. There have been improvements in pupil performance at school as a result of OFSTED inspection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Inspection has led to improvements in whole staff collaboration and teamwork	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. OFSTED's inspection framework is a useful guide to self-evaluation at a whole-school level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. OFSTED inspection has brought about greater clarity in individual roles and functions in school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The National Context					
1. There have been improvements in pupil performance as a result of OFSTED inspection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. OFSTED inspection is leading to improvements in school performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Schools and teachers should be accountable for their performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. OFSTED inspection improves schools' accountability <i>to whom?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. OFSTED inspection is fundamentally an exercise in accountability aimed at 'checking up'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. OFSTED inspection is fundamentally a developmental exercise aimed at school improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Inspection acts as a catalyst for change and development in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The judgements made during inspection are usually fair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The judgements made by one team of inspectors would be made by another team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Inspection findings are objective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. The use of OFSTED's inspection framework by schools is leading to improved standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX 4: Transcripts of Selection of Interviews

Transcription

Thanks for helping Jenny.

Thank you.

First of all about the Inspection Team and the general process. How did you feel in general about how the inspection was conducted in general at St John's School?

I felt that all of the team members were very pleasant and professional, polite. Not overpowering in the way that they carried out their role and on the whole pleasant to work alongside.

OK. Any thoughts on the notice given?

I do feel quite strongly that they should not give the amount of notice, all be it, it was only ten weeks prior to the inspection, I do feel that this causes unnecessary stress because it is almost like a ticking clock up to the event and I think it would be far more realistic in how schools are run and how schools operate if they were to just literally turn up there and then and on that day, and do a blanket overall judgement or be it that they stay for a whole week or less but they see the school in operation as it really is.

So you would actually like them literally just to turn up?

Yes. I would. Because then they can see literally how schools are run rather than having the thing which I feel to some extent is just fabricated or falsified or putting on, you feel that you are putting on a display for an inspection team which realistically is not, although you try to do your best normally every day, but it is not exactly how the way it is run because people are walking on glass to make sure that everything is absolutely precise.

So, have you any thoughts on the post observation feedback that was given to you?

Are you actually referring to the actual feedback from individual lessons or after the report had been issued?

The feedback from individual lessons?

This varied enormously and on some occasions it was merely a courteous thank you and left and if you happened to catch somebody around school later, they may review a couple of words, like, yes that was fine or whatever particular lesson they referred to. I only actually received one thorough feedback from a gentleman who was observing Maths. He sat down and explained several points which he felt were areas which could be improved on which I found very helpful and he was very pleasant in the way that he conducted this feedback. I did receive one feedback from a gentleman who offered some advice, which I did not feel was particularly relevant to the lesson that I was teaching and I do wonder with retrospect whether he took kindly to the fact

that I suggested to him that it possibly was not the right lesson to give that advice for. But on the whole I think they could improve the feedback. I think there should be allocated time set aside for feedback rather than just catching one or two minutes here and there.

In your view, you have touched on this to some degree. how accurate did you think the inspector's observations were of you and on the school? You have already expressed that one of them was not very accurate.

I do feel that on the whole that lesson observations and the comments they made were a fair process. After I had spoken to you before and given you the notes, and when they said that I was very good and could not fault me and could not give me any areas for improvement, I did actually question this, as to why this was not excellent. If there were no areas for improvement and no faults, then I felt that I justifiably deserved an excellent but he was not prepared to do that and I felt that was a bit unfair. But on the whole their observations on me personally were very accurate. Yes. I would have gone along with, yes, if I had done that lesson, that is how I would have judged it myself, because some lessons are successful and some are not quite so successful. This is just part of the job, I think you cannot always guarantee one hundred percent success all of the time but you can be critical as well.

Do you want me to comment on the school as a whole?

Yes, please.

I was about to come back to that.

I was pleased to see that they seem to actually pick out the points where we actually do well in school and they are quite accurate on what they thought. I don't think a lot of it, we could not have told ourselves without them coming but they did seem in the week to pick up on quite a few things that we were doing well and the school was doing well and also that the areas that the majority we knew already we were not doing quite so well, they did find those out as well. So if that was to be a true reflection of the standard and the state the school was in, I would say, yes, they were fairly accurate.

A key question in relation to OFSTED is, if a different team was to come. do you think they would have arrived at the same results, in other words I am looking now how reliable the process is, what is your feeling on that?

I think the moment the team of inspectors come through the door, they get a feel for the school and from looking at results and various data. I do think that if another team had come, they would have found the same. I think the only different areas that is noticeable when a different inspection team would have been noticed is when it comes to personal preferences or personal observations during individual teachers lessons observations because then there were instances, for example, one particular lady said, that she did not like a particular artist's work, and she thought it was drab and dull, and that was bringing her own personal opinions into it, and it was not actually my class that was being observed, but I did think, that was her personal opinion and had somebody else particularly liked this artist, they might not have

judged the same lesson to be dull. I think also that everybody teaches a different style and we are not robots and we are not going to teach children as if we are robots and I think there can be some personality classes there, particularly if a person does not like the style of another teacher's work, and I can imagine that that could potentially cause problems.

What in your view were the main outcomes of the inspection? First of all for you and for the whole school?

I think it probably makes you realise exactly what is expected of you and if you are able to give 150% all of the time, then you do realise that, yes, this is exactly how you should be teaching. It does make you realise that it is a impossible thing to have every single lesson running absolutely like clockwork to maximum potential because there just are not enough hours in the day like to prepare to the extent and to the level at which OFSTED would expect on an everyday basis.

Are you saying then, that it is impossible to keep up that level of intensity?

That is exactly it. And I think a lot of teachers feel, I am speaking from myself personally, but I feel that they feel like it is running a marathon. And for those five days, it is like you take on water at lunchtime and you keep going and the pressure of actually keeping that pace in lessons and that organisation and everything going, it is a very intense time, which I think is not a human possibility for the number of weeks that we work in the year, which is why I feel that OFSTED should come in on a drop in basis. Then they would see the realistic situations it has to work to and several OFSTED inspectors actually did comment to me, 'gosh, I don't know how you keep this pace up, it must be incredibly tiring, it tires me watching you', and that I think is, they are not actually seeing, I did actually turn round to them and say, well I don't actually work at this rate all the time, because it is not possible, but that is not real.

What are the main outcomes for the staff in general?

For the staff really, I don't think they did tell us anything that we did not know already. It probably puts things in black and white and it was a good focus point to have to actually realise where we did need to improve on and to have actually have a time limit in which to act upon those key issues. To act upon the key issues. For example, we as staff were aware that the assessment was not as good as it could be, we now have to work on that, because we were have been basically instructed to do so through OFSTED, so that gives us a timescale in which to improve things, that I think we probably already knew about and things like the staff issues of having extra EPO's if possible and improving the play areas for the Key Stage I children. They are all things that we knew about but now we do have to focus as a staff and it gives us an extra incentive to make sure that it gets done.

Anything to add really generally for the school?

The school in general as a whole or what?

As a whole?

As a whole. Organisational changes.

Whichever way you want to choose it. You have actually covered already, changes for the staff, outcomes for yourself and for the staff. Is there anything that you picked up for example in relation to Governors or parents?

Yes, with the parent things, I think again, the report writing, we were again, that our reports were not up to standard that they should have been. I think that again is a good point that we have to link in a school. I did find sometimes, again it is the parents who come and speak at the meeting, to the OFSTED inspectors, tend to be as normal, the small core of parents that are involved heavily with the school already, therefore, we are not reaching through an OFSTED inspection those parents that we probably ought to. It is just a hardened core of parents that get involved with the inspection process, so I don't think they actually intend to target the parents. I don't think they actually do, again, it is a small number of people.

You have referred to a small number of parents. Were you aware that perhaps some of those parents were there because they had a particular axe to grind?

Obviously, I did not attend the meeting, so I did not hear any particular axes being ground but I am sure that I any parents, I think that parents tend to bring lists from hearsay, I think that is probably what did happen, I think they tend to bring minor issues into a meeting like this as if it is their opportunity to air their grievances or to put their point across about a minor issue, which was really unnecessarily raised to OFSTED inspectors and should have been brought directly to the school, and with an 'open door' policy like we have, then that should not have caused them any problems. but I think they probably misunderstood the role of the OFSTED inspectors and almost felt that they had got a 'Big Brother Manager' coming over to watch over us and I think they should have been told that these things were not right for this.

OK. Thanks.

Have there been any staff changes that you would attribute particularly to the OFSTED inspection, anything like retirements, changing roles and responsibilities?

I am hoping that from the OFSTED inspection we will possibly get some extra EPO allowance particularly at the lower end of the school, due to the large class of over thirty, but due to the restrictions that are in Key Stage 1 children, etc. There has been one staff change and one leaving and one being employed but I don't think this was as a direct result of the OFSTED inspection.

OK. Thanks.

In your view, how fair, I think you have touched on this quite a lot already really. How fair would you say the judgements were about the school?

I think they are a true reflection really.

And about yourself?

Yes. I do. On the whole pretty good. But as I say, I did have a little axe to grind.

You say you have an axe to grind, could you elaborate on that a little more?

Would you like me to say the incident that happened in the lesson that was observed or my reasons for it? There are two actually.

OK. Go on then.

There are two lessons. One was a Geography lesson that I was observed in, and I cannot remember whether they said it was good, or very good, which I thought was fine. I just thought that the gentleman observing me was unfair in the way that he was trying his ideas into a lesson where they were not applicable and they were my objectives at the start of the lesson and I do feel that he was finding something to say after the lesson. The children had performed very well. The lesson had run smoothly. I felt the children had learnt the objectives that I had intended them to learn. I almost felt that at the end of the lesson, when he did have a little chat with me, it was almost as though he had to find something to say, which I thought was possibly unfair. I would have rather he had not said anything or rather not offered the advice that I did not feel was applicable. The other incident was a PE lesson which I talked about, which I was assessed as being very good in. And then I questioned the gentleman, as I said before, and he said there was no faults in the areas in which to improve, but I said well surely, should that not be an excellent then, and he said, well we will leave it at very good, and I said, but why, there is nothing I could improve on and there are no faults, I said, if that is not an excellent, then what does make an excellent, and he said, well we will leave it at very good. So I said OK, we can only try. Later on, the weather was quite wet, and I said, I had intended to do, but I changed because of Health and Safety reasons, and I asked him if the original lesson that I had intended to do which entailed having two groups of children, one doing rounders, one doing quick cricket on the grass, I asked him whether he thought that would have been good practice, to have two different activities going on, due to the size of my class being so large. In the end due to the weather I had one activity of rounders, and throwing and catching skills and field skills on the playground. When I said would the original idea have been suitable, he said I don't know, you would have to ask an expert, and I am not an expert. And I felt that for him to judge a lesson, one which he was not prepared to give me an excellent for but he was to pass comment, I thought if he is not an expert and he is judging on my teaching, then I felt this was a little but unfair that he was there to be able to criticise or comment although he did not as it were, and I think that an expert should be put in place because otherwise it is not a true judgement, unless you have an expert doing it.

Right. Thanks.

What was the impact of the inspection on you and the school? What if any organisational changes have been made as a result of the OFSTED inspection?

Well, as it is early days yet in terms of the impact that the inspection has had on the school, we are starting to make changes. We are starting obviously to have different strategies. There are proposed plans to have the Deputy Head released for management duties so that will obviously therefore have organisational implications

in terms of class covering whilst he is doing his duties as Deputy Head. Also I realise that we are going to have opportunities for the Curriculum leaders to go round and observe their subject in more detail, which I do think will be a valuable opportunity to give a better feeling about what is going on throughout the school in their particular subject area. And apart from that I am not sure of any more.

OK. Thanks.

How do you feel about the inspection findings in relation to the future?

I think as I said earlier, I think it is really that they give us an actual date and a focus of when these things need to be achieved. We are probably aware of most of the issues but actually for future planning it gives us a timescale of which to work to.

Is it not a very expensive way just to end up with a timescale?

Yes, exactly. Yes, I honestly feel, I think we could as a staff, sit down and say, these are the areas, as a staff that we feel we need to improve on and somebody could drop in and say, I have had a quick look at the school, I would agree, you are right, get these done by such and such a date, and we will come back and see how you are getting on and I don't think we honestly need the huge amount of money spending on the people coming in to actually look round and spend a week with us. The Head and senior teachers would be quite able to judge the standards of teaching from their experience and the other areas are fields, as I said before, that we knew anyway and we cannot perform everything at once, we know that we have got to things to do, if there was never anything to do, we would not be in the job we are in. There is always something to do and we did not really need somebody else to come and tell us that.

In your view then, should OFSTED just be like a validating exercise to look at schools in terms of internal evaluation?

I think there is nobody better to judge how good a school is going on, in most cases, than the people who are actually working within the schools themselves. Possibly, School Governors, could be involved if there is any difficulty with any sort of management experience in the actual running of the school on that side of it and again an occasional visit from an Inspector on the teaching side, particularly if faced by a Head with concern. I can see there being problems though if it is a school self evaluation process. It is OK if the school is doing OK, but for those schools that are failing or those schools that are not achieving they could just turn round and say, well we are doing fine, thank you very much and in that case, that would defeat the object of a school, you know, doing their own evaluation and having OFSTED coming along and saying, yes you are right. Because it could be that they fabricate their performance.

Would that perhaps lead to a role for the LEA who perhaps have regular contact with the school and have a good idea of the context of which it was working and an idea of what actually happens?

Yes, I think as we actually have our QDD Officer coming in, I think for somebody in his role, who comes and looks at the targets and discusses it with the Head what is

going on, I think they are in an ideal situation already to actually carry out that role and if that could actually be increased then there would not be the need for the inspection on the scale that they currently are.

Right. Thanks.

Inspection focuses on four particular areas of school activity.

1. The standards
2. The quality of teaching
3. Spiritual, moral and social and cultural development
4. Management and efficiency

Have these been improved by our inspection? First of all standards.

I think as a teacher on the whole, you always try to do the best you can for the children in your class. If for nothing else, for a sense of personal satisfaction and getting the children to a level that you think they are capable of but again, having people sort of taking in targets and looking at levels and achievements of targets, then it could possibly, but I think there is already an element of it already.

Quality of teaching, it does possibly make you more aware what is expected of you and therefore probably strive towards achieving the perfect lesson on a more frequent basis, which is what I said earlier, but I still don't think it is physically possible, to work at that pace all the time. I think within our school, we have a very good sort of spiritual atmosphere and the social and moral thing, so I don't think it had any impact on that at all.

Management and efficiency, again, outside external visitors from the LEA etc, already judged this and therefore if there had been any problems before that would have been picked up on, so I think the only sort of things there would be possibly employing extra staff. But again issues that not necessarily OFSTED needed to tell us.

We are nearly at the end.

So onto evaluations and reflections now. In your view how beneficial to teacher and school performance is OFSTED inspections? So we are looking at the general situation now not specific things.

I think you only have to look at the press and to speak to anybody in teaching who has been through an OFSTED inspection to realise that the benefits of an OFSTED inspection are possibly so slight in raising standards or improving teacher performance in comparison to the extreme pressure and stress not only for the teachers but for their families as well, I do think probably that the stress outweighs the benefits that the inspection has. I said earlier that they do give you a focus on exactly what standards you should reach but I think you know those anyway and I think it is just somebody rubbing stamping it at the end.

School performance on the whole, I have to say that OFSTED has been running every since I have been teaching, so I cannot speak what it was like prior to OFSTED

inspection. They do give a school a focus and they do give you something to work towards but I think again they are limited for such a small amount of time. I think there are other ways of doing it rather than the way that it is currently carried out.

OK. Thanks.

Main benefits of inspection? If you feel you have not already covered these already.

I think I have covered them already really. The main benefits is that it gives you a set period of time to work to and they put in black and white what you have to do but again it could be covering other areas and the drawbacks are far more extreme in terms of financial costs and pressure on staff, upheaval for the children as well. I just think it causes an unnecessary amount of premeditated stress.

OK.

I think I have covered the next question as well in terms of a sense of professional autonomy and not being robots.

Yes I think you have. Would you say that the OFSTED inspection has helped you to become more independent or less?

I think as a teacher, you work as a team throughout the school and it is pretty much a job where once you are in a classroom, you are independent anyway. I do feel it has taken the National Curriculum and everything linked in with OFSTED and the whole educational system, losing an element of independence for teachers because they are constantly having to fit into a set criteria. Although it does seem that once everything is put into place these rather specific guidelines are relaxed soon afterwards when they realise that every child is different and every class is different and every teacher teaches with a different style.

In terms of the inspection impacting upon independence, no more than the educational system as a whole.

OK. Thanks.

The inspection process aims to be valid and reliable. We touched on this quite early on. How well are these aims achieved? Validity and reliability?

I don't know what to say that I have not said already.

Do you think for example, do you think there is an OFSTED framework? Do you think that framework sets out as what is a good school is actually valid?

Yes. Probably. Obviously the research has gone into what makes a good school but I do think again, it goes down to individuality and for one school, that is a good school and for another school to be a good school has hugely different things. It depends on geographical location, social background and everything in schools and for some schools achieving great academic targets are probably not the main criteria that they would judge their school on. If they have happy healthy children who are learning to

the best of their ability but not achieving Level 4, I am sure for some schools that is far more a valid reason to be there than to just gain the results.

Your view then is the framework because it seeks to judge all schools on the same standard? does that mean that in all the cases it is not valid?

Well, yes. I suppose it is not. Again, I just have to go back to the thing that all teachers and children are not machines and they are not robots or mechanics and it is not a manufacturing industry where we put in one thing and we come out with an end product, there are so many other criteria that have to be taken into account and I do not know to what extent the inspectors do actually look at the social background of the children, although I know it is referred to in the report, I tend to think that they just cast an a cursory glance at that and then move onto their framework in which to carry out their inspection anyway.

So, unreliable. We have touched on that already.

To finish off. Is there anything that you would like to say that you have not had a chance to say before?

Just to reiterate the fact that I do think, I don't like the way that we are told in advance that they are coming because it does not give a true picture of school. I don't think it gives a true picture of schools throughout the country, it would create an impression that schools are working at full pace 100% of the time in unrealistic conditions and it also gives the teachers, I am not hiding anything, but it gives teachers the opportunity to fabricate things, to make things look like this is how it always is and this is what actually happens and obviously OFSTED have the ability to see these things for themselves but I do think it is too long and they are better just dropping in on a casual basis.

OK. Jenny.

Thanks very much for your help.

OK. No problem. Thank you.

NW: ... school
acting headteacher

✓ subjectivity → no problem with it
observed and took a school.

Transcription

First of all I am going to ask you a general question about the Inspection Team and the process that you went through.

Right.

How was the inspection conducted at your school, in your view.

The notice we were given was, it was probably a couple of months but it was during the summer holiday, so it came right near the end of a summer term. So we only actually had, before the Inspectors came in, it only actually worked out at about five or six school weeks and I think that did possibly make a difference. But the notice was fine. The team themselves, I did not have any problems with the Team really. They were professional, they were very accommodating, they were happy to work anywhere and not sort of intrude on our normal arrangements, in that they did not want our staffroom, or any of that sort of thing. It was a lady and two men. The lady was the lead Inspector. The man was a Head, he was seconded, or out of school anyway doing the Inspection and the Lay Inspector was suppose to be a lady but dropped out at some time, and the Inspectorate said do you mind if someone else comes. We said that was fine. They were friendly from the beginning but friendly in a professional way. I did have a little bit of trouble, with it going into the Summer Holidays, and because of the documentation, we needed to be working on the documentation and things during the school holidays, but I think I actually found that more worrying than they did, because I was constantly trying to contact them about it whereas I think they were more aware that it was the school holidays and were not too worried. In terms of myself, I was worrying that they would think, you know, that I was not getting in touch with them and that sort of thing.

What else was there about the team? We did not really have a problem with the team, we felt that the Lead Inspector did know what she was doing, we felt that she did know what she was looking at, even though her background was not particularly primary education, she had a very strong dramatic background and she was also like wonder women as I expected everybody else to be.

Can I just question you on the fact that you said, she was not specifically primary?

She had come from, her background was more Performing Arts College, so looking at her background, we know she was going to be interested in drama, dance, music and all that sort of thing. The Lay Inspector was lovely. He was a lovely as you could wish for. He went round school, he got involved with the children. He looked at everything and asked questions and in the interview with myself, it was professional and then afterwards he sent me some cream cakes. So that was good. So in terms of the Inspection Team, I have no problems as to the way it was carried out.

Right.

What about your personal impression of the post observation and feedback that you received?

The post observation as oppose to the whole process?

Post observation?

Were you watched at all in a lesson?

Yes. I was watched. I had quite a few laughs. I was teaching head at the time. 60% teaching. Everything was normal whilst they were here, we had no extra supply cover etc. You were given a general feel but I think all the class teachers felt that they got more feedback from me than they did from the Inspectors, from what Inspectors had said to me rather than to them about their lesson.

Was it fair to say that impact to help with these observations was limited?

Yes, it was limited and tended to sort of come in a lesson and go out of a lesson and although they had been professional and friendly, you were not really sure whether it had gone well or not gone well at the time.

Right.

That did affect your performance really.

You are not really sure whether you are doing OK or alright.

In your opinion, how accurate were your Inspector's observations on you and on the school?

I felt on the whole it was accurate and fair. The one thing that I sort of had to fight more for was having a newly qualified teacher in school and I felt that there was a very definite opinion that a newly qualified teacher could not have very good lessons, or excellent lessons, from the nature of them being newly qualified. Because I actually felt that they did not sort of make any allowances for newly qualified teachers being just that much more nervous even though the quality was just as good. So, I would probably think, it would have been easier if they had not known they were a newly qualified teacher because then their judgements would have been the same across the board.

So in a sense a certain amount of baggage was held?

Yes.

imparting
I think there were some opinions formed by looking at the profile of the teachers really and there is an expectation of how, this is a newly qualified teacher, you know and they are immediately looking differently to how they are when they are observing teachers who have been teaching ten years. And in my opinion, ten years does not make a better teacher, but I don't think they had quite the same attitude.

Thanks.

Moving onto the outcomes of the process. What were the main outcomes of the inspection, first of all, for you?

It was positive. Yes. The outcomes were positive. To start with, I was very pleased with the process. The processes were very painless, very positive feedback and it concerned what I hoped the school was. So they really confirmed my own opinions. there were no shocks or surprises. I think probably, like most people, may be missed the odd thing, that you know, and you are just glad about that really. So, yes, I would have said yes. It was positive.

What about the outcomes for the staff and for the school?

Because it got a little mixed up, the actual inspection, people were obviously very tired afterwards but in terms of the school. The parents were thrilled and it was like a really, really, major thing here, because there are three, four, five schools very close together, so, much, as we are friends, there is an element of competition and the parents were waiting with baited breath to know what the results were and they were very supportive of the school, and they thought it was a very good school, but if OFSTED had said that it was not as good as they thought, they may well have taken a different attitude and taken away that support.

So the parents were mega relieved and they felt that everything had been confirmed about what they thought and they felt very reassured of the choice that they had made because they have got such a place here, it was almost as though, yes, we made the right choice and it was harder for parents who had not made the same choice. So obviously within the community it causes a lot of discussion. So far as, I think they were very pleased as a school and we were elated afterwards. But we did not feel like we thought we would. We did not feel so much on a high because we were so tired. Which is always the problem. So, they gave us advice and help. Although they did not give us key issues, they still gave us sort of space to make what they thought was good, better. It was helpful and some of their advice was taken on board.

OK.

Thanks a lot.

Have there been any staff changes that you would say as a result or as a direct result of the inspection. For example, retirement, change of roles, extra staff because OFSTED wanted this in a particular direction?

There has been extra staff due to OFSTED pointing in a different direction, there has been no retirement due to OFSTED at all. The retirements have been natural, early, but nothing to do with the OFSTED process. In terms of changing roles, since OFSTED and directly because of OFSTED, County asked myself to move to a more difficult challenging school that needed help. They also asked the Deputy to move to another school. Neither of us did.

Secondment?

Yes.

Both for a secondment. Both of us refused because for many reasons it was just not appropriate at the moment and we were challenged in what we were doing, so I don't think so. There could have been changes in roles but there has not really been anything that is due to OFSTED. The newly qualified teachers that we had were three or four years ago now, so she has been teaching a while, and is qualified and she is now Acting Deputy here. So I suppose, if you like, OFSTED confirmed for the Governors and Parents and everything else, that she was very good, good quality, so that when we needed an Acting Deputy, there was no question, everybody felt complete trust in her ability. So I guess that OFSTED did affect that.

I think you have already touched on this one really.

In your view, how fair were the judgements made on your staff?

Yes, I think they were fair. Yes. I don't really think there is anything else that I can add to that and when I did not think they were fair, when we got the initial draft of the report, they did listen to what I said and changed things. Well, we agreed on a change, even if it was not exactly what I had asked for, we agreed on something that was fair. So, yes, I think they were fair. I think it is just the way you read it.

Moving onto the general impact of the inspection on your and on the school? What if any? I think you have actually touched on this one too. What if any organisational changes have been made as a result of the OFSTED inspection?

Again, not really any, which is terrible isn't it? Even, the biggest issue that we had, when OFSTED came was, that we had a Year 1 class with a newly qualified teacher with 37 pupils. Parents questioned this with OFSTED and everything else, so our school organisation needed to be looked at because we had got a very small reception class but 37 in Year 1. So in effect we had only got ten at the time or twelve in reception, so we could have made two smaller classes and then moved them round, but we felt it was the best organisation and OFSTED actually confirmed that and they said that although there were 37 Year 1's in the class, the education that they were receiving was good. So, we did not really change anything as a result of that. I honestly cannot think of anything else as a result of OFSTED that we have changed.

Right.

How would you score the inspection findings in relation to future development?

They were useful and OFSTED were probably very kind to us, in that they put in the report that the school would benefit from us having Computers with CD roms facility and things like that, and so because that was in their PTFA, it was like, right, we are going to get this money raised and get CD roms in all the classrooms and everything like so. So they basically provided a focus, and very quickly after that, we had got PC's and CD roms in every class. So, yes, the Action Plan that we wrote to the County, although, in effect, we did not need to write one, because we had no key issues to address it to, what we actually did, was to go through the report, looked for

recommendations such as that and wrote an Action Plan based on those. So, yes, it did. It was useful in terms of future planning and I think it had a positive impact in that very quickly we had CD roms. It also said things about the Library, like the Library was fine but that some of the books were getting a bit dated and a bit old and that we would have to think about it fairly soon and I think we knew that. It was in our School Development Plan, but it highlighted it as important. Someone else had noted it and it was in a report. Everybody was made aware of it. So when we were raising money everything we needed was forthcoming.

Inspection focuses on four particular areas of school activity.

1. School standards
2. Quality of teachers
3. Spiritual morals, social and cultural development
4. Management issues

How have these been influenced by the inspection? First of all, what would you say about standards?

What I would say is that when OFSTED came it was a totally different ball game to what it is now and that was very much the case with us. Because it was just prior to the introduction of literacy, so we were running a school that was very much integrated day, getting all subjects out of very much topic related activities and when OFSTED made their judgements of us, standards were very high. But as they went away, when the introduction of Literacy came in, followed by Numeracy, it was actually very different to the way we were teaching then. So, standards we had to try to maintain, even though we had got very high standards, and OFSTED recognised that, we were having to change our ways of teaching but maintain the same standards.

Anything else about standards or do you want to move onto the quality of teachers?

Yes. I think that is probably it. But it did challenge us because we liked the way we taught but because we were told we had got to change the way we were taught, we felt we had to and had we been inspected under the Literacy and Numeracy now but having said that, I think we have managed to work round so that we feel as happy in the new way, as we did in the old.

Quality of teaching, came out very, very high. It was predominantly excellent and good. It was ludicrous. They were all in the 80%, excellent and good. There was no unsatisfactory and it was a case of maintaining that and again the inspection came along and confirmed basically what we already knew. We all liked teaching that way and were very confident with it and in an open plan environment. But they had to teach a new method. So, it also puts pressure on, because you have got to keep your quality of teaching at that standard and you have also got to be realistic and it is the quality of teaching at that time in your school and everything else.

I think the biggest impact came on spiritual, moral and social and cultural development in that OFSTED recognised that that was very good but was almost something that was just natural to people within the school and to put that into a policy and to try to identify what it was, is really difficult. So on the talks we had with

them about personal and social education, that is what we sort of moved on them. to develop and we tried to develop ourselves as a staff.

Did you have a policy before or did you develop a policy as a result of OFSTED?

It was in with the other policies but we did not have separate policies for personal and social and moral.

So you actually developed a new policy?

Yes, we did. So although, you know, they had no problems with it, if one person in the school changed, how could you be sure that it would be maintained if it was just something that was naturally there. So that did happen as a result.

Management and efficiency? Let's have a look. Nothing major. I suppose the biggest effect is that it makes you feel good about yourself.

Yes.

I mean it comes down to management, and efficiency comes down really to the Head and Governors and Governors take a fair lead from a Headteacher, so you feel very on show with that part but it was fine.

Good. OK.

Finally, evaluation and reflections.

Right.

In your view generally how beneficial to teacher performance is an OFSTED inspections, generally?

They have so many, people have so many different experiences during inspection that I am really not sure about the benefits. The benefits here in our experience. I mean, it did not really, they sort of came and looked at everything and in some ways that could have been nice if it had not been quite so threatening and so judgmental. It could have been a nice process that we could have welcomed, but there is so much fear of it and threatening and the public nature as well is really worrying. And in terms of school performance, everybody is so drained afterwards that school development stops then for a quite a while until you are ready to move on and it actually takes, I would say, a good term to recover and it all depends where your OFSTED falls in the year. how that impacts. So I think the immediate effect on teacher and school departments, is that it actually stops for a while, which actually is not very good. I also have my doubts on the fact that OFSTED come and see teaching and school performance at its best. They expect to see it at a level that you cannot possibly maintain on a normal regular basis which I guess is why it stops for a while afterwards. But due to the fact that we had a few problems with County on the way, yes, morale was very low after our inspection even though it had been a positive experience. So it did not actually make a lot of sense but it did take us quite a long time, to feel that we had got over it. even though it was very positive.

What were the main benefits of inspection and its drawbacks? I think you have answered quite a lot of this.

The main benefits in a way is that, I would have said that the parents, particularly. It is really hard for them to know what makes a good school. They need somebody that is not connected to the school to give some form of judgement for them.

It is good to have an objective view you are saying?

Yes. It is good for an objective view because they are not connected to the school and it is harder to get that from anywhere else. The difficulty then comes is where if the objective view is not very fair because then you have got all that to deal with but in our case the view we felt was fair and was very good of the school. There are benefits. What are they? There are benefits. It sounds daft to say you are looking forward to it but in some ways, sometimes you feel that people don't know how much effort you put in to your job and how much you actually do do and things, and so to have someone come and recognise that has its benefits.

Drawbacks. Drawbacks are the amount of pressure it puts people under and the amount of preparation that you do because from the moment you know to the moment they arrive, you are preparing for that time. It just leaves everybody so tired so that school and teacher development stops for a while. So I don't actually think it moves the school on or forward any quicker at all.

Thanks.

To what extent do you think inspection impacts upon a teacher's sense of personal independence?

I think teachers were really worried about it and I had a lot of people asking me, am I doing this right. I don't know whether I am doing this right and it really sort of knocked my confidence. So from a staff that I had that were very confident about what they were doing, it did shake their confidence, because they felt would OFSTED think it was right. But we believe in a whole school approach so in things like planning and assessment, we all did the same thing in any case so basically it came down to if OFSTED found something that they were not very happy with, it was not going to be an individual, it was very much going to be a comment made on the whole school, so therefore, I think that the teachers felt secure in that and that it was not really going to be a personal comment provided that we were all doing the same thing. I was going to say something else. Oh yes. When OFSTED came, we did not try to do what we thought they wanted, or anything like that in terms of the framework and things like that, we did not even intend to play safe or anything like that at all because we decided that because you got a lot of notice or a fair amount of notice and because OFSTED know that people prepare for it and plan for it, they expect to see the best you could do, and we went out to show them what was the best we could do, and it was risky, the things we did, you know, but it worked out because that would be a normal way of education for us because you do things and if they don't work out, well then, you have tried. Nine times out of ten, they do work out but we just decided to do our normal sort of approach whilst OFSTED were here. There

were many things we were worried about but rather than a teacher sense of professional autonomy it was that we were worried that OFSTED would not like the way we were and the way we were was sort of quite relaxed and informal, so assemblies and things, we encouraged the children to move to the music when they come in, we don't tell them that they have got to stand still and things. We use music that means something to the children, not particularly classical and things, music from Disney films and they were afraid that they would not go with our approach, but I think the teachers felt secure that they were not so much an individual because of the fact that we all did the same, I think.

Thankyou.

Have you got any tape left?

The inspection process aims to be valid and reliable. How well are these aims achieved do you think? For example, if another team came and did the inspection, would they make the same comments?

Well, that is an interesting questions because that is definitely the question asked by our County Advisor afterwards. That her opinion was that if another team came, and we did not get the same result, which on what judgements she made that, I really don't know, because this was prior to QDD and actually she had had very little knowledge of the school. I am not sure, I don't know that I think inspection processes are valid and reliable. I see it as a game and you know, some people can play the game well and other people cannot. Some teachers do not respond very well to these sort of situations and we were lucky in that there were four teachers in the school and three of us are people who would respond well to this situation and manage to carry the other people who would have been a bit more nervous. So I do see it as a game and how many things that we did.

Right. Nancy, thanks for that. Just to conclude are there any other comments that you would like to make about the inspection process that you have not had the chance to make up to now?

Just going back to them being, as to the inspection process being valid and reliable, having read reports of schools that I know well, and you just don't recognise the school that you are reading about, I don't know how they can be valid and reliable. You need to know a school well to be able to do that and usually it is only with your own school but if you do either take over another school and you get there and read that report, at that time, you do have some idea of how valid and reliable it is. The other problem with the reports is that they report on that moment in time and a report does not actually apply long term because it is a report on that week and that moment, you know, and as soon as a new class joins the school or a new member of staff joins the school it has changed straight away, so how the report can stand for up to three years, I don't know. Because things would be different because everything changes so quickly but for a report like that to stand because even judgements on things like behaviour can change if you just happen, well it depends on what children you have got in school at that time very much so, because you could get a poor judgement on behaviour but you might just have difficult pupils in the group in the school at that time. So I am not sure about valid and reliable.

Thanks very Nancy.

Thanks very much for your help.

A pleasure.

headteacher

Important Standards
Use of framework
Benefits of inspection / Drawbacks inc. stress & subj.

Transcription – 5

OK Tim. Thanks very much for taking part in this research.

First of all I am going to begin by asking some questions about the Inspection Team and the general process.

How in your view was the inspection conducted in your school?

Would you like me to address these points?

If you wish.

The notice we were given was around about six months, they gave us a long leading time. We were down under the old schedule so there were differences from the current practice was done. The process for us was quite a positive one. Plus it gives a different slant, because if I was a Head of a school which had problems, then I am sure my views would be different. The Team itself that did us was one from the Pennine Group and they were very approachable and yet had the air of being quite professional as well. They gave us, in the preliminary chats that we had, they gave us plenty of clues as to the areas that they would be specifically looking at and if I requested information from them and guidance as to questions, for example, the questions that the co-ordinators would be asked, they were quite generous in giving feedback to that. So right from the start the view was that we were going to have quite a fair inspection and although we felt that no stone would be left unturned, we felt that at least the judgements they made would be fairly sound.

Can I ask you, you already mentioned about the feedback. As regards the observation feedback, were you observed as a teacher? How did you feel about the feedback about this? Was it sufficient?

They spent at least 60% of their time sitting and observing in the classes. There is always the issue of feedback to teachers after observations. I did have on one occasion, one of the teachers ended up in tears on the first day, because of the feedback that was given to her. Obviously, tensions are very high at that time, stress levels are higher and I think it did not take very much for that teacher to tip over the edge. I think, in general, though, the feedback was given quite sensitively and it was reassuring for the teachers to get quite positive feedback from quite an early time in the week. The time spent observing is, the more time they spend observing is better. It was good. I would much rather them have a full picture of the school than have less observation going on.

In your view did the process of observation and feedback go into sufficient detail to teachers and was there enough of it?

Not really. The amount of time that they were able to spend talking to teachers was very short and they had to be ever so careful as to what they said because they were aware the teachers were going on to teach the next lesson and could not afford to leave them in pieces, so the honesty of the feedback was I think dubious and I think that they were really just saying the same things for the sake of giving feedback. From

their point of view, I am sure that they would have rather not given any feedback at all and left it to their final judgements. Government say that they should give feedback so they feel obliged to do so. I am sure the teachers also like to have feedback straight away, but I don't think it is actually a particularly valuable exchange and all it can do is just to encourage the teachers a little bit hopefully.

In your opinion then how accurate were the Inspector's observations on you and on the school? So really we are looking at accuracy.

I think in the final report, they were accurate in what they gave. There are some things that they did not find out about which is jolly good and there are things that they picked up on which I suppose we were surprised at and I argued the case on one particular issue but they would not have anything of it. So we begged to differ on that one but generally speaking their accuracy was very good.

So moving onto outcomes of the process. What were the main outcomes of the process for you, first of all?

I suppose it is an audit really. An audit of the school. Where it is. Confirms my view of where we are as a school and what needs to be done and as I said, it was quite a positive outcome. It meant that I was not deluged with lots of additional work suddenly to do. So it was a good outcome really. The teachers, although they suffered during the week, managed to maintain their composure and continue to teach the following week. It was not too disastrous for us.

Did it make any difference to absence or attendance during the immediate post inspection period?

I don't think so. No. Again, I think that because of the positive report, people were buoyed up by it rather than ground down by it and there was a sense of relief afterwards.

Were there any particular moments where staff got an awful lot out of positive feedback or the other side of the coin? Maybe too less.

I think maybe running up to inspection there is, teachers handle it in different ways. There are those teachers who will ignore it, or pretend to ignore it and think I am just going to carry on teaching the way I am, that is suitable and if they do not like that, that is tough. There is also the view of teachers who will go overboard and get so stressed and try and dot every 'i' and cross every 't', that they wear themselves to a frazzle. Fortunately, we did not have any of those but you also get the middle ones who are extremely conscientious and they worry that although they are doing a fine job, they are not doing quite enough and that can be very wearing for them. The teacher that I am thinking in particular of, who probably was exhibiting those characteristics is one of the best teachers in the school and it is quite often that they, because they are conscientious but in fact that teacher ended up getting scores of one's for their lessons so for them it was a great affirmation. Despite all the worry, in the end they came out having it affirmed about their skills.

Would you say that the fact that she was validated in what she does, has that had a really positive effect on her in longer terms in confidence?

Yes. I think it has built on her confidence in her abilities and she can see herself as somebody who is able to lead and assist others.

Thanks.

What about outcomes of the process for the school at large?

There is a great fear attached to the school report, in as much as it is a public document. So I think every school worries about the impact it will have on the community and the effect it will have on the school roll. We are no different. We were extremely concerned about that. We are in a very competitive position having got other schools nearby. Again, the outcome was very positive so we were very happy for it, as far as a wide audience is concerned, we were very happy to publish it and use it to our advantage in many ways, in the wider community.

Did it go into press at all?

Yes the press release went out and went down the library, a copy to the library. We found that we had to make the most of every opportunity to focus and publicise our school.

What staff changes, if any, have been made, which you attribute to the OFSTED inspection? I am thinking now in terms of things like retirements, for example, possibly somebody with computing experience, changing roles, extra staff taken on as a result of key issues, etc?

None, in a word. We have not had any staff changes at all. Bearing in mind of course, that it will be a period of six years from the last inspection to the next one. It may be that there will be a flurry of resignations in the fifth year. Who knows?

OK Tim. I would like to move on now to judgements made about the school and your views.

Basically, how fair do you feel judgements were?

The only thing I took issue with was their comment on the front entrance hall, which they said was not bright enough and that we did not use it to its full advantage as far as display was concerned and I argued the case with them over this, and they, and they said, no, well, it could be better. I said no, it is sometimes better, but at the moment this is good and it is different at other times and the thing is it is such a subjective view about what is ours, and what is good and some people think one thing is better than another. In the end we just had to agree to differ.

Did their view actually stay?

Yes. Their view stayed in print. Yes it did. They moderated the language about it slightly. But it stayed in print but I think if you can pick, you need to pick your

arguments carefully and it is better to pick on something that is a little less vital because what I have found is that if you are argue with other cases they might delve a little deeper and find out something out that you do not want to find at all. You have to be circumspect.

OK.

Thanks a lot Tim.

Now moving onto the impact of the inspection on you and the school? First of all what if any organisation changes have been made as a result of the inspection?

None.

Not a single one?

No.

How useful then were the inspection findings in relation to the future of the school?

They only confirmed what we knew already and I cannot actually bring to mind now what they were. They were very lightweight and nothing of any significance. I think it was things like 'to further develop' and to 'further improve' and they were to type up and word process the policies that had not been done and things like that which were really insignificant.

Did you find any of the issues raised were already somewhere contained in school action plans and such?

Yes.

So in that sense nothing new really came out of the inspection?

No.

Moving onto what the inspection focuses on. It actually focuses on four areas of teaching and school activity.

1. Standards
2. Quality and teaching
3. Spiritual and moral and social cultural development
4. Management and efficiency

How have these been influenced by the inspection? So first of all standards.

Not through inspection, I think what has effected that has been the more latter development of booster classes and target setting. I don't think the inspection actually had much to do with it.

Is it your view then that the National Literacy and the National Numeracy strategies, have they had a greater impact?

Well they have brought the school about writing down, yes, which I think is a general trend. But, well, yes. They are the things that have moved things on. But our results have always been quite high anyway. So again it is hard to say that that has had any impact on it.

As regards the quality of teaching, has there been any impact there?

I think that the quality of teaching was very much under scrutiny at the time of the inspection and I think it did develop the teaching to a certain extent. Again that has been enhanced by the Numeracy and Literacy strategies with the clear setting of objectives at the beginning of lessons and the plenary sessions but I think that did have an initial 'kick start' when we began inspection and we looked quite closely at the content of the lessons.

Did you use the framework at all to define the ways that the lessons were structured?

Yes. We used the frameworks quite a lot as reference for the sort of measures that were being used.

Do you still use the framework and now even though you are now two or three or four years away from your next inspection?

No.

Put it away. I am sure it will be changed anyway, before the next one comes round.

Spiritual, moral and social and cultural development given of course that this is a Church School, any impact?

Not really, because, I think we have always been quite strong on that and both inspections highlighted that as a strength of the school. So it is not something that we felt we needed to concentrate on and develop as a result of the inspection.

Did your Section 23 Inspection come at the same time?

Yes.

Did that raise any issues for you which were a surprise or any other issues which were in some way different or contradictory to the others?

No. It was very positive and they did not raise any issues with us at all.

Management and efficiency. Has that been affected?

No, we are still managed badly and not very efficiently. No, they just quoted the normal quote at the end, 'this school is good value for money' or whatever it is.

OK.

Right, finally, moving onto to general reflections and evaluations. Please say in your view how beneficial to teachers and school performance is the inspection process?

I think it sharpens everyone's view. It makes everyone look carefully at what they are doing and hopefully moves on from there. I do believe that OFSTED is a gruelling process but I think that it has benefits for the school and for individuals as well and as I mentioned earlier, Jean has a great affirmation of teaching through it. So I think, yes, it has benefits for the school, in terms of getting processes correct, sorting them out and if coming from a good inspection report it can have a positive moral boost on the staff. The opposite of that of course is that if you don't, then it can really lower the moral of the staff.

Looking at benefits and drawbacks of the inspection process. First of all positive. What about the benefits of the process?

A free audit of the school and of you. As to how the school is and that hopefully is, puts it in context with other schools and that can be useful.

Drawbacks?

Drawbacks. The stress that it causes I think. That is a drawback. The amount of paperwork that it generates is a hindrance to the management of the school and the money that it costs to do it.

Do you think that money could be better spent elsewhere?

I don't know about better spent, but I think they are heading in the right direction with sort of proposals to do a light touch and a heavier touch depending on previous reports. I think better targeting of the money.

To what extent to you feel inspection impacts on teacher's professional autonomy or individual confidence?

I think teachers are now moving into an area where they are not so autonomous which they were and now that we have got the National Curriculum and the Literacy and the Numeracy strategies which are very clearly defining what teachers should do, some teachers would say that that has caused me to lose my autonomy. I cannot teach in the classroom what I want to teach, which I think is valuable to them and to the children, so I think we are moving away from the autonomous teacher. I think that the inspectors bring that wider view to bear on the teachers and I think that teachers can sometimes think they are doing a great job on their own in isolation and it takes somebody else to come along and say, well actually relative to the school down the road or the teachers next door to you, you really need to sharpen up a bit. I think that is quite a good thing.

So you think the comparison element is actually a good thing?

Well, I think it is very easy to teach and become isolated and become blinkered because you are so busy in your class with your children. So yes. I do.

The inspection process aims to be valid and reliable. How well do you think these aims are achieved?

One of the drawbacks of the inspection process which I am not sure that I know how to overcome is that there is still I believe a degree of subjectivity within it. We are dealing with characters, and different people have different views and it is possible to rub one character up in a different way and I think the relationship between the Head and the registered Inspector is quite crucial in that. That results sometimes in views being expressed that are not necessarily very objective.

Just to sort of develop that question a little bit more, as your inspection went well, do you feel that if another team had come in, would it have marked and changed the final outcomes in your view?

I think that the overall tone of the inspection would have been the same but I think they would have perhaps picked up on different things because each inspector has their own little, seems to me to have their own speciality that they like to home in on and it is quite possible that another inspection team would have homed in on different points depending on their interests.

Looking for validity in the process, framework effectively defines what a school is. Is that the only view of what a good school is? Or is that the right view of a school?

I think there are other views. I think you need to appreciate the basis on which these views are made. If they are made by parents, it is the view of their experience with their particular child, for the child, that can be a very different experience. If it is the Governors, they have a view, a partisan view, if it is the staff, they will certainly be biased. It is quite difficult to find a more independent and thorough view than an inspection team can offer.

Right.

Basically concluding now. Have you got anything that you would like to say that you have not had the chance to say in relation to the inspection?

Yes, I think the longer I stay at the school and the more OFSTED reports that I have to endure, or inspections I have to endure, the harder it becomes. Standards, their standards, they seem to be 'tweeking' up all the time and I have a fear that schools that are successful will be made to feel that they actually could be doing a lot better when they are already working pretty efficiently and pretty flat out and I fear that there is always this demand for more and more and I think in the end it may be counter productive.

OK Tim.

Thanks very much for that.

APPENDIX 5: Examples of Interview Notes

C S. ~ 22/9/2000.

Conducted ~ professional / relationship
on time / timetable
unknown.
friendly manner.
relaxing
feedback — 1 positive feedback only
others did. 6 or 7 obs.

Accuracy ~ positive. score.

Main outcomes ~ overall pleased
unfair re: ICT network.

expected issue re: assessment
in maths / science
overcrowding we knew.

We knew what was going to
be in rpt.

Ofsted focuses

Nothing new.

Mixed view among staff.
Little chance to challenge

Staff Changes ~ one tech

change in staff position
good collaboration / relationships
b/w yr. groups

Fairness of Judgement

Well balanced but a snapshot

ICT plans there but no NAFL.

Tremendous work rate

Only 1 inspector provided feedback

Interviews with inspectors limited

value / no suggestions

chg scores tell nothing

Organisation

No major changes

but findings speed us up / focus.

good team spirit vs. energy

* no impact on standards from inspection.

* planned well / tried / delivery has
changed / more aware of what

we're trying to achieve.

lasting benefit of experience. Validation.

* no impact in SMSC already good
* noticed it was good

* limited budget but we go forward.
We had to manage £ efficiently -
not because of OFSTED

Reflections

OFSTED is driving force / it sharpened focus
Pressure is great

Standards have risen overall but no
especially because of OFSTED

Benefits

Again, driving force

Evaluate school / performance

Governors are helped.

" have a role to play in
management emphasised in inspection

Independence

" inspection can destroy a school "

Inspection reduces flexibility & is
a process of checking up.
We have to be accountable - no
problem with that.

Flexibility has ~~gone~~ gone — not
necessarily a bad thing.

Validity / Reliability

// HMs monitor OFSTED teams. This is
pressure for team. Team also under pressure.
Different teams might have had
different results. Depends on experience &
baggage.

- * We didn't enjoy OFSTED
- * pleased with outcome
- * OFSTED agreed with our issues
- * teamwork improved / support
- * Rg1 helped a struggling
member of staff - human

**APPENDIX 6: Comparative Table of Contextual Indicators Relating
to Case Study Schools**

Contextual Indicators: Characteristics of the Case Study Schools

School	School Type	No. of Qualified Teachers (f.t.e.)	No. of Pupils	No. of Pupils per Teacher	Average Class Size	No. of Education Support Staff	No. of Hours of Support Staff per Week	Location/L.E.A.
School 1	Mixed Junior	4.8	124	25.3:1	31	3	26	Derbyshire
School 2	Mixed Primary and Nursery	13	329 + 39	28:1	31	4	105.5	Derbyshire
School 3	Mixed Primary	8.8	210	23.9:1	26.2	2	38	Derbyshire
School 4	Mixed Primary	15.6	449	28.8:1	32	12	174	Derbyshire
School 5	Mixed Infant and Nursery	2.4	40 + 17	16.7:1	20	2	28	Derbyshire
School 6	Mixed Primary	2.5	55	23:1	28	1	5	Derbyshire

APPENDIX 7: Statistics

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
INSPEC1	47	1	5	3.53	.88
INSPEC2	47	1	5	3.40	.90
INSPEC3	49	2	5	3.53	.71
INSPEC4	50	1	5	3.32	.89
INSPEC5	51	1	5	3.80	1.02
INSPEC6	51	2	5	3.80	.87
Valid N (listwise)	42				

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CLASSRO1	44	1	5	3.00	1.12
CLASSRO2	43	1	5	3.35	1.17
CLASSRO3	30	1	5	3.00	.87
CLASSRO4	38	1	5	3.68	.99
CLASSRO5	43	1	5	3.21	.86
CLASSRO6	38	1	5	2.26	1.00
CLASSRO7	39	1	4	2.54	.82
CLASSRO8	37	1	4	2.46	.93
CLASSRO9	37	1	4	2.59	1.09
CLASSR10	36	1	5	2.94	1.01
CLASSR11	42	1	5	2.93	1.00
CLASSR12	35	1	5	3.06	1.06
CLASSR13	47	1	5	3.47	1.16
CLASSR14	40	1	5	2.55	1.06
CLASSR15	46	1	5	3.00	1.21
Valid N (listwise)	22				

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SCHISS01	40	1	4	2.88	.85
SCHISS02	40	1	5	3.25	1.08
SCHISS03	40	2	5	3.60	.87
SCHISS04	43	2	5	3.60	.66
SCHISS05	45	1	5	3.44	.89
SCHISS06	39	1	4	2.26	.91
SCHISS07	40	1	5	3.00	1.18
SCHISS08	44	1	5	2.64	.99
SCHISS09	51	1	4	1.94	.70
SCHISS10	46	1	4	2.26	.80
SCHISS11	50	1	5	2.64	1.19
SCHISS12	48	1	5	3.23	.95
SCHISS13	50	1	4	2.70	.93
Valid N (listwise)	33				

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
NATCON01	48	1	4	2.46	.92
NATCON02	49	1	4	2.67	.88
NATCON03	50	3	5	4.06	.55
NATCON04	49	1	5	3.22	.85
NATCON05	51	2	5	3.80	.69
NATCON06	51	1	4	3.22	.99
NATCON07	52	1	4	3.17	.88
NATCON08	51	1	4	3.25	.80
NATCON09	50	1	4	2.54	.95
NATCON10	50	1	4	2.84	.87
NATCON11	47	1	4	3.06	.87
Valid N (listwise)	41				

Group 1 – Large Schools

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
INSPEC4	36	2	5	3.19	.82
INSPEC2	32	2	5	3.34	.70
INSPEC3	36	2	4	3.44	.69
INSPEC1	34	1	5	3.47	.86
INSPEC5	36	1	5	3.78	1.10
INSPEC6	37	2	5	3.84	.83
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CLASSRO6	27	1	5	2.30	1.03
CLASSRO7	28	1	4	2.32	.77
CLASSR14	28	1	5	2.32	1.06
CLASSRO8	27	1	4	2.63	.97
CLASSRO9	27	1	4	2.81	1.14
CLASSR12	23	1	5	2.83	1.07
CLASSR11	30	1	5	2.87	1.07
CLASSR15	34	1	5	2.91	1.26
CLASSRO1	35	1	5	2.91	1.15
CLASSR10	26	1	5	3.15	1.01
CLASSR03	20	2	5	3.20	.77
CLASSR05	33	1	5	3.21	.93
CLASSR13	35	1	5	3.37	1.29
CLASSR02	33	1	5	3.42	1.17
CLASSR04	28	1	5	3.86	.93
Valid N (listwise)	13				

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SCHISS09	37	1	4	1.89	.74
SCHISS10	32	1	4	2.37	.83
SCHISS06	25	1	4	2.52	.87
SCHISS11	36	1	5	2.75	1.20
SCHISS08	30	1	5	2.77	1.04
SCHISS13	36	1	4	2.78	.90
SCHISS01	26	2	4	2.92	.80
SCHISS02	28	1	5	3.07	1.15
SCHISS12	35	1	5	3.23	.97
SCHISS07	26	1	5	3.35	1.09
SCHISS03	26	2	5	3.65	.80
SCHISS04	29	2	5	3.66	.61
SCHISS05	31	2	5	3.71	.59
Valid N (listwise)	22				

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
NATCON09	37	1	4	2.32	.88
NATCON01	34	1	4	2.68	.88
NATCON10	36	1	4	2.69	.86
NATCON02	35	1	4	2.86	.91
NATCON11	34	1	4	2.97	.87
NATCON06	37	1	4	3.08	1.04
NATCON08	37	1	4	3.11	.81
NATCON04	35	1	5	3.17	.89
NATCON07	38	1	4	3.26	.83
NATCON05	37	2	5	3.76	.72
NATCON03	38	3	5	4.11	.56
Valid N (listwise)	31				

Group 2 – Small Schools

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
INSPEC2	15	1	5	3.53	1.25
INSPEC4	14	1	5	3.64	1.01
INSPEC1	13	2	5	3.69	.95
INSPEC6	14	2	5	3.71	.99
INSPEC3	13	2	5	3.77	.73
INSPEC5	15	2	5	3.87	.83
Valid N (listwise)	12				

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CLASSRO8	10	1	3	2.00	.67
CLASSRO9	10	1	3	2.00	.67
CLASSR06	11	1	4	2.18	.98
CLASSR10	10	1	4	2.40	.84
CLASSRO3	10	1	4	2.60	.97
CLASSR11	12	2	4	3.08	.79
CLASSR14	12	1	4	3.08	.90
CLASSR07	11	2	4	3.09	.70
CLASSRO2	10	1	4	3.10	1.20
CLASSR04	10	1	4	3.20	1.03
CLASSR05	10	2	4	3.20	.63
CLASSR15	12	1	4	3.25	1.06
CLASSR01	9	2	5	3.33	1.00
CLASSR12	12	1	4	3.50	.90
CLASSR13	12	2	4	3.75	.62
Valid N (listwise)	9				

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SCHISS06	14	1	4	1.79	.80
SCHISS10	14	1	3	2.00	.68
SCHISS09	14	1	3	2.07	.62
SCHISS07	14	1	5	2.36	1.08
SCHISS08	14	1	4	2.36	.84
SCHISS11	14	1	4	2.36	1.15
SCHISS13	14	1	4	2.50	1.02
SCHISS01	14	1	4	2.79	.97
SCHISS05	14	1	4	2.86	1.17
SCHISS12	13	2	5	3.23	.93
SCHISS03	14	2	5	3.50	1.02
SCHISS04	14	2	4	3.50	.76
SCHISS02	12	2	4	3.67	.78
Valid N (listwise)	11				

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
NATCON01	14	1	3	1.93	.83
NATCON02	14	1	3	2.21	.58
NATCON07	14	2	4	2.93	1.00
NATCON09	13	2	4	3.15	.90
NATCON10	14	2	4	3.21	.80
NATCON11	13	2	4	3.31	.85
NATCON04	14	2	4	3.36	.74
NATCON06	14	2	4	3.57	.76
NATCON08	14	2	4	3.64	.63
NATCON03	12	3	5	3.92	.51
NATCON05	14	3	5	3.93	.62
Valid N (listwise)	10				

Frequencies

Statistics

		GENDER	SCHOOL	YEAR	EXPER	GROUP
N	Valid	53	53	44	50	53
	Missing	0	0	9	3	0

Frequency Table

GENDER

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	6	11.3	11.3	11.3
	2	47	88.7	88.7	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

SCHOOL

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	School 1	1	1.9	1.9	1.9
	School 2	11	20.8	20.8	22.6
	School 3	6	11.3	11.3	34.0
	School 4	27	50.9	50.9	84.9
	School 5	5	9.4	9.4	94.3
	School 6	3	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

YEAR

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	11	20.8	25.0	25.0
	2	8	15.1	18.2	43.2
	3	4	7.5	9.1	52.3
	4	8	15.1	18.2	70.5
	5	5	9.4	11.4	81.8
	6	8	15.1	18.2	100.0
	Total	44	83.0	100.0	
Missing	System	9	17.0		
Total		53	100.0		

EXPE

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	4	7.5	8.0	8.0
	2	4	7.5	8.0	16.0
	3	1	1.9	2.0	18.0
	4	2	3.8	4.0	22.0
	5	6	11.3	12.0	34.0
	6	2	3.8	4.0	38.0
	7	2	3.8	4.0	42.0
	8	2	3.8	4.0	46.0
	10	1	1.9	2.0	48.0
	12	3	5.7	6.0	54.0
	13	3	5.7	6.0	60.0
	14	2	3.8	4.0	64.0
	15	1	1.9	2.0	66.0
	17	2	3.8	4.0	70.0
	18	2	3.8	4.0	74.0
	20	2	3.8	4.0	78.0
	21	1	1.9	2.0	80.0
	22	1	1.9	2.0	82.0
	23	1	1.9	2.0	84.0
	24	1	1.9	2.0	86.0
	25	1	1.9	2.0	88.0
	28	2	3.8	4.0	92.0
	29	2	3.8	4.0	96.0
	30	1	1.9	2.0	98.0
	31	1	1.9	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	94.3	100.0	
Missing	System	3	5.7		
Total		53	100.0		

GROUP

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	38	71.7	71.7	71.7
	2.00	15	28.3	28.3	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Crosstabs

GROUP * INSPEC2

Crosstab

			INSPEC2			
			1	2	3	4
GROUP	1.00	Count		3	16	12
		% within GROUP		9.4%	50%	37.5%
	2.00	Count	1	3	1	7
		% within GROUP	6.7%	20.0%	6.7%	46.7%
TOTAL		Count	1	6	17	19
		% within GROUP	2.1%	12.8%	36.2%	40.4%

Crosstab

			INSPEC2	Total
			5	
GROUP	1.00	Count	1	32
		% within GROUP	3.1%	100.0%
	2.00	Count	3	15
		% within GROUP	20.0%	100.0%
TOTAL		Count	4	47
		% within GROUP	8.5%	100.0%

CHI-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.968 ^a	4	.018
Likelihood Ratio	13.434	4	.009
Linear-by-Linear Association	.452	1	.501
N of Valid Cases	47		

^a 6 cells (60%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .32.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.505	.018
	Cramer's V	.505	.018
N of Valid Cases		47	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

GROUP * INSPEC4

Crosstab

			INSPEC4			
			1	2	3	4
GROUP	1.00	Count		7	17	10
		% within GROUP		19.4%	47.2%	27.8%
	2.00	Count	1	1	1	10
		% within GROUP	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%	71.4%
TOTAL		Count	1	8	18	20
		% within GROUP	2.0%	16.0%	36.0%	40.0%

Crosstab

			INSPEC4	
			5	Total
GROUP	1.00	Count	2	36
		% within GROUP	5.6%	100.0%
	2.00	Count	1	14
		% within GROUP	7.1%	100.0%
TOTAL		Count	3	50
		% within GROUP	6.0%	100.0%

CHI-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.867 ^a	4	.012
Likelihood Ratio	13.998	4	.007
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.554	1	.110
N of Valid Cases	50		

^a 5 cells (50%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .28.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal N of Valid Cases	Phi	.507	.012
	Cramer's V	.507	.012
		50	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

GROUP * CLASSR12

Crosstab

			CLASSR12			
			1	2	3	4
GROUP	1.00	Count	1	10	6	4
		% within GROUP	4.3%	43.5%	26.1%	17.4%
	2.00	Count	1		3	8
		% within GROUP	8.3%		25.0%	66.7%
TOTAL		Count	2	10	9	12
		% within GROUP	5.7%	28.6%	25.7%	34.3%

Crosstab

			CLASSR1	Total
			5	
GROUP	1.00	Count	2	23
		% within GROUP	8.7%	100.0%
	2.00	Count		12
		% within GROUP		100.0%
TOTAL		Count	2	35
		% within GROUP	5.7%	100.0%

CHI-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.068 ^a	4	.017
Likelihood Ratio	15.498	4	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.214	1	.073
N of Valid Cases	35		

^a 7 cells (70%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .69.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.587	.017
	Cramer's V	.587	.017
N of Valid Cases		35	

- a. not assuming the null hypothesis
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

GROUP * SCHISS05

Crosstab

			SCHISS05			
			1	2	3	4
GROUP	1.00	Count		1	8	21
		% within GROUP		3.2%	25.8%	67.7%
	2.00	Count	1	4	2	6
		% within GROUP	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%	42.9%
TOTAL		Count	2	5	10	27
		% within GROUP	4.4%	11.1%	22.2%	60.0%

Crosstab

			SCHISS0	
			5	Total
GROUP	1.00	Count	1	31
		% within GROUP	3.2%	100.0%
	2.00	Count		14
		% within GROUP		100.0%
TOTAL		Count	1	45
		% within GROUP	2.2%	100.0%

CHI-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.028 ^a	4	.017
Likelihood Ratio	12.183	4	.016
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.784	1	.003
N of Valid Cases	45		

^a 7 cells (70%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .31.

Symmetric Measures

			Value	Asymp. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi		.517	.017
	Cramer's V		.517	.017
	N of Valid Cases		45	

- a. not assuming the null hypothesis
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

GROUP * SCHISS06

Crosstab

			SCHISS06				Total
			1	2	3	4	
GROUP	1.00	Count	3	9	10	3	25
		% within GROUP	12.0%	36.0%	40.0%	12.0%	100.0%
	2.00	Count	5	8		1	14
		% within GROUP	35.7%	57.1%		7.1%	100.0%
TOTAL		Count	8	17	10	4	39
		% within GROUP	20.5%	43.6%	25.6%	10.3%	100.0%

CHI-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.187 ^a	3	.027
Likelihood Ratio	12.329	3	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.849	1	.016
N of Valid Cases	39		

^a 4 cells (50%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.44

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.485	.027
N of Valid Cases	Cramer's V	.485	.027
		39	

- a. not assuming the null hypothesis
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

GROUP * NATCON02

Crosstab

			NATCON02				Total
			1	2	3	4	
GROUP	1.00	Count	3	8	15	9	35
		% within GROUP	8.6%	22.9%	42.9%	25.7%	100.0%
	2.00	Count	1	9	4		14
		% within GROUP	7.1%	64.3%	28.6%		100.0%
TOTAL		Count	4	17	19	9	49
		% within GROUP	8.2%	34.7%	38.8%	18.4%	100.0%

CHI-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.098 ^a	3	.028
Likelihood Ratio	11.067	3	.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.394	1	.020
N of Valid Cases	39		

^a 4 cells (50%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.14

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.431	.028
N of Valid Cases	Cramer's V	.431	.028
		49	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

GROUP * NATCON07

Crosstab

			NATCON07				Total
			1	2	3	4	
GROUP	1.00	Count	1	6	13	18	38
		% within GROUP	2.6%	15.8%	34.2%	47.4%	100.0%
	2.00	Count		7	1	6	14
		% within GROUP		50.0%	7.1%	42.9%	100.0%
TOTAL		Count	1	13	14	24	52
		% within GROUP	1.9%	25.0%	26.9%	46.2%	100.0%

CHI-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.987 ^a	3	.046
Likelihood Ratio	8.437	3	.038
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.481	1	.224
N of Valid Cases	52		

^a 4 cells (50%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .27

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.392	.046
N of Valid Cases	Cramer's V	.392	.046
		52	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

GROUP * NATCON08

Crosstab

			NATCON08				Total
			1	2	3	4	
GROUP	1.00	Count	2	4	19	12	37
		% within GROUP	5.4%	10.8%	51.4%	32.4%	100.0%
	2.00	Count		1	3	10	14
		% within GROUP		7.1%	21.4%	71.4%	100.0%
TOTAL		Count	2	5	22	22	51
		% within GROUP	3.9%	9.8%	43.1%	43.1%	100.0%

CHI-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.585 ^a	3	.086
Likelihood Ratio	7.099	3	.069
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.583	1	.032
N of Valid Cases	51		

^a 4 cells (50%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .55

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.359	.086
	Cramer's V	.359	.086
N of Valid Cases		51	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

GROUP * NATCON09

Crosstab

			NATCON09				Total
			1	2	3	4	
GROUP	1.00	Count	72	14	13	3	37
		% within GROUP	18.9%	37.8%	35.1%	8.1%	100.0%
	2.00	Count		4	3	6	13
		% within GROUP		30.8%	23.1%	46.2%	100.0%
TOTAL		Count	7	18	16	9	50
		% within GROUP	14.0%	36.0%	32.0%	18.0%	100.0%

CHI-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.766 ^a	3	.013
Likelihood Ratio	11.337	3	.010
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.302	1	.007
N of Valid Cases	50		

^a 4 cells (50%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.82

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	.464	.013
Nominal	Cramer's V	.464	.013
N of Valid Cases		50	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

GROUP * NATCON10

Crosstab

			NATCON10				Total
			1	2	3	4	
GROUP	1.00	Count	4	8	19	5	36
		% within GROUP	11.1%	22.2%	52.8%	13.9%	100.0%
	2.00	Count		3	5	6	14
		% within GROUP		21.4%	35.7%	42.9%	100.0%
TOTAL		Count	4	11	24	11	50
		% within GROUP	8.0%	22.0%	48.0%	22.0%	100.0%

CHI-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.015 ^a	3	.111
Likelihood Ratio	6.683	3	.083
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.635	1	.057
N of Valid Cases	50		

^a 4 cells (50%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.12

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.347	.111
N of Valid Cases	Cramer's V	.347	.111
		509	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

GROUP * NATCON11

Crosstab

			NATCON11				Total
			1	2	3	4	
GROUP	1.00	Count	2	7	15	10	34
		% within GROUP	5.9%	20.6%	44.1%	29.4%	100.0%
	2.00	Count		3	3	7	13
		% within GROUP		23.1%	23.1%	53.8%	100.0%
TOTAL		Count	2	10	18	17	47
		% within GROUP	4.3%	21.3%	38.3%	36.2%	100.0%

CHI-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.431 ^a	3	.330
Likelihood Ratio	3.960	3	.266
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.412	1	.235
N of Valid Cases	47		

^a5 cells (62.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .55

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.270	.330
N of Valid Cases	Cramer's V	.270	.330
		47	

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis

APPENDIX 8: Example of School Development Plan – School 4

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN - 1999/2000

PRIORITY	OBJECTIVES
Continuation of curriculum Monitoring • Art • Creative Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To re-establish/build on previous standards To monitor and review classroom practice To enhance and facilitate continuity and progression To consider purchase of resources to enhance provision
ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Scheme of Work monitored by ICT Co-ordinator Purchase of digital camera Pursue bigger monitor for exemplification Purchase of cache
NNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 days in-service Co-ordinators to receive 4/5 days training led by LEA Preparation time for in-service planning
Infants Playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of playground Provision of appropriate/stimulating marking
KS1 ECO hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra 25 hours ECO from January 2000
Review Policy Statements Updating Schemes of Work with Curriculum 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review all policy statements with staff and governors to ensure appropriateness To bring all policy statements up to date To ensure all new staff aware of school policies and to provide opportunities to contribute to them To bring Schemes of Work in line with National Curriculum Review (Curriculum 2000) once details released to schools
New Policy Formulation • Reasonable Force • School Visits • Critical Incident Management • Updating of Governors' Standing orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prepare several new policies To update/upgrade Governors' Standing Orders

ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS	OUTCOMES/TARGETS	FINANCIAL COSTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SD Co-ordinator to organise 1+1 floating supply for RO and BM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils to gain experience in public performance All pupils to experience improved Creative Arts curriculum and to experience Creative Arts as a regular part of a balanced curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of supply largely to be met by Development Funding budget = approx. £250 x 2 = £500
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of ICT suite by whole school 3 days per week ICT co-ordinator to deliver on 0.6 FTE basis (Mon/Tues/Wed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve standards of ICT at both Key Stages Regular access to equipment for all children through school Children at both key stages to work with range of software To follow a continuous and progressive Scheme of Work in ICT To prepare children appropriately for transfer to KS3 by improving their ICT experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further funding as result of Belper School's ICT in community bid. These funds to be devolved to us and used for ICT purposes. (Expectation approx. £500)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction/implementation of NNS through school Purchase of mental arithmetic resources Consideration of NNS Framework in relation of existing policy and Scheme of Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful introduction of NNS through school Maintain KS2 SATs results around 70+% in view of less able cohort (82% in 1998/99) General improvement through school in mental arithmetic capability. Particular improvement necessary in Y6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resourcing NNS mental arithmetic £500
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of all/majority of KS1 pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New area - stimulating for KS1 Enlarge space therefore reduce behaviour problems Maintain high standard of behaviour through school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £500 for marking etc .. £3,900 from Patents' Association = cost to school of basic play area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertisement Interviews/selection of suitable candidate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selection of suitable candidate To facilitate improvements in provision/support for pupils at KS1 To note continued improvement of KS1 SATs results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring Term = £2,477 including on-costs Summer Term = £4,129 including on-costs Cost to spread over 2 financial years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of staff meeting time regularly to discuss and make necessary alterations to policies and schemes To use governing body curriculum committee to input/discuss school policies/schemes To make whole governing body aware of policies/schemes and to provide opportunities for input/discussion Policies updated are likely to be in place by Spring 2000. Schemes of Work likely to take academic year from date of 'Curriculum 2000' to be in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All policy statements updated and upgraded by end of Spring term 2000 All Schemes of Work updated and upgraded by end of academic year 2000/2001 All policies to be in possession of staff and governors' curriculum committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant financial costs expected
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of staff meeting time to discuss prepared outlines PB to work on outline policies for discussion by staff/governors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New policies agreed and in possession of all staff and governors' curriculum committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant costs beyond photocopying. Approximately £50

RE/Collective Worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide improved resources for RE/Collective Worship to reflect nature of Church School To foster improved sense of spirituality at gatherings for Collective Worship
Maximise/improve use of space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore providing covered area for KS1 Explore covering quadrangle Refurbish middle junior wet area
Target Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To complete Target Setting cycle for all pupils from Y2 - Y6 To adhere to statutory responsibility re: Y5 pupils i.e. targets set 5 terms in advance of Y6 SATs
Job Descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To update/upgrade staff job descriptions To provide new members of staff with job descriptions To discuss career opportunities and personal development

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AM to be released re: purchasing of appropriate resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements in sense of spirituality in assemblies Use of purchased resources to enhance atmosphere of assemblies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ½ day supply cover from Development funding budget as appropriate £250 for purchase of resources from school budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure appropriate quotations from sources including County Technical Services To seek to ensure appropriate staff/pupil health and safety whilst work in progress DO to visit South Normanton Nursery to view covered area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide covered area for KS1 water/sand/play activities To upgrade middle junior wet area in line with similar area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown until quotations are secured Funds as necessary/available set aside by governors as a 'planned saving' from 1999/2000 budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consult with relevant teaching staff in preparation and with particular respect to CS and JT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets set for Y2 - Y6 by Christmas 1999 Targets to assist in steady overall SATs improvements as teachers monitor progress more rigorously KS2 SATs for summer 2001 to exceed results of summer 2000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PB to meet all staff at mutually agreed times/dates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole staff to have job descriptions Job description round to be completed by Christmas 2000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant costs beyond photocopying. Approximately £20

