



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

**THE ANNUAL
REPORT OF
HER MAJESTY'S
CHIEF INSPECTOR
OF SCHOOLS**

Part 2

**Quality and
Service in Inspection**

1993/94



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Quality and
Service in Inspection

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*Laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State for Education pursuant
to Section 4a of the Education (Schools) Act 1992.*

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To The Secretary of State for Education

I have the honour of submitting the second part of my Annual Report for 1993/4. This deals with OFSTED's role in regulating and managing the national school inspection system.

CHRIS WOODHEAD

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England

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PREFACE

This is the second part of my Annual Report. Part One of the Report, which commented on standards and quality of education in 1993/94, was laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State for Education and published on 31 January.

This present Report focuses on OFSTED's role in regulating and managing the new inspection system and planning for its future development. It concentrates on the:

- training and registration of inspectors;
- management of the system of inspection contracts;
- monitoring of inspection quality;
- dissemination of findings from inspection.

It should be read in conjunction with:

- i. our contribution to the Departmental Report which covers the Department for Education (DFE) and OFSTED; and
- ii. our annual Corporate Plan, which sets out our plans for the coming financial year and reviews our success in hitting the targets we set ourselves the previous year.

The report falls into two sections:

- a review of the academic year 1993/94 and, where appropriate, the Autumn term of 1994;
- an exploration of key issues and a discussion of possible developments for the future.



CHRIS WOODHEAD

SECTION I – REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Introduction

1. The principal focus of this review is the academic year 1993/94. We have, however, taken the opportunity to comment on activities in Autumn 1994, the first term of inspection of primary and special schools.
2. 1993/94 was the first year of inspections under the new arrangements created by the 1992 Education (Schools) Act. Teams of independent inspectors, led by Registered Inspectors (RgIs) under contract to OFSTED, inspected approximately a quarter of the maintained secondary schools in England. Preparations were, meanwhile, in hand for launching in September 1994 the four-year cycle of inspections in primary, nursery and special schools.
3. This meant that a great deal of time was devoted to monitoring the progress of the secondary school inspections and to the training, registering and awarding of contracts to RgIs for secondary, primary, nursery and special school inspections.
4. The other central strand of our work, that of advising the Secretary of State for Education and others on all aspects of education in the country, was not, however, neglected. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) reported on a number of particular issues not systematically covered in the new inspections. Part 1 of our Annual Report drew on these reports.
5. The distinction between the regulatory and the advisory aspects of our work is, however, artificial: our capacity to offer soundly-based advice to the Secretary of State or others relies heavily on information gained from RgI-led inspections, while our ability to regulate and assure the quality of independent inspections draws on the educational and specialist expertise of our own staff. This inter-dependence is, increasingly, recognised within our organisational structure, where the complementary skills of staff with backgrounds in inspection and administration are brought together within the teams which carry out our operations.

Training and Registration

The Training of Inspectors

6. During the academic year 1993/94 the training and assessment of applicants to become team, lay and registered inspectors continued through a range of courses and through attachment to inspections. Those who wish to become team inspectors do so at present by successfully completing the five-day course (Stage 1), concentrating on familiarisation with our Framework for the Inspection of Schools. Primary and secondary courses have, in addition to common elements, case study materials related to the specific phase. Those wishing to inspect in special schools as team inspectors initially attend a primary or secondary course and may then undertake an 'enhancement' course in special educational needs (SEN). Applicants with secondary experience can attend a course to convert to inspection of the primary phase.

Table 1 - Training Courses for Team Inspectors: September 1993 to August 1994

Type	Number	Participants	Pass	Fail
Primary Stage 1	27	1356	837	519
Secondary Stage 1	19	842	696	146
SEN Enhancement	3	132	113	19
Phase Conversion	10	465	381	84
Lay Inspector	8	365	338	27

7. The above table shows the professional and lay Stage 1 training courses for team inspectors. A number of these were non-residential, in order to allow trainees to have greater choice and flexibility. There were 46 Stage 1 training courses (primary or secondary) and 2198 trainees took part, of whom 1533 completed the training satisfactorily and are therefore now eligible to be professional members of an inspection team.
8. All the secondary training courses were carried out, under contract, by trainers who had received accreditation by OFSTED. HMI monitored these courses, to ensure that our requirements were met fully. The primary training courses were led by HMI but, increasingly, were also staffed by accredited trainers, in preparation for the contracting out of such courses from autumn 1994. Currently there are 71 primary, 88 secondary and 16 SEN accredited trainers, all of whom are RgIs. We offer invitations to those who wish to become accredited trainers to join a training course where HMI assess their performance.
9. In addition, we offered ten courses to enable inspectors to convert from the secondary to the primary phase and three two-day SEN enhancement courses.
10. In the Autumn term of 1994 there were six primary and eight secondary five-day training courses, two SEN enhancement courses and two secondary to primary phase conversion courses. Further courses will take place during the spring term, although the five-day courses will finish as soon as the new stage 1 training begins in late spring 1995. All the primary courses are now contracted out and courses continue to be monitored by HMI. The evaluation of courses by trainees suggests that they are highly regarded, not only as preparation for inspection but also as professional development.

Table 2 - Registered Inspector Training and Assessment: September 1993 to August 1994

Phase	Trained	Passed	Failed
Primary	385	317	68
Secondary	42	39	3
SEN	60	42	18

11. Table 2 gives the numbers who have completed the second stage of training and assessment, which leads to RgI status. To achieve this, trainee RgIs participate in a school inspection, during which HMI assess their performance.

12. One of our conditions of registration is attendance at in-service training. We held a series of eight one-day regional conferences in the summer term to consider current issues relating to inspection.

The Registration of Inspectors

13. By January 1995 we had registered 589 inspectors for the secondary phase, 737 for the primary phase and 88 for SEN. We had accredited 3387 professional members of inspection teams (including RgIs) in the secondary and 2634 in the primary phase. Of these 322 had a further endorsement to inspect SEN.
14. A total of 1500 people have been accredited as lay members of inspection teams. We judge this number is adequate to meet the current needs of the system and have no immediate plans for further lay training courses. The position will, of course, be kept under review.

Awarding Contracts for Inspection

Letting Inspection Contracts: Secondary

15. Competitive tendering for secondary school inspections for the Autumn Term 1993 began in February and March 1993, when we consulted with schools on details of the specification for their inspection. Completed returns formed part of the 'Invitation to Tender' which we issued to those RgIs who expressed an interest. After evaluating tenders, we awarded the first contracts during the Summer Term of 1993. In that we were creating a market from nothing, it was not surprising that the tendering process began slowly.
16. All selected schools were, however, eventually placed, albeit after several rounds of tendering. We kept the same tendering process for the Spring and Summer terms of 1994 and were encouraged to find that the market grew throughout the year. It was particularly pleasing that we were able to place contracts to inspect 24% of all secondary schools in Year 1, which put us firmly on target to complete the inspection of all such schools within a four-year cycle.
17. An important feature of the tendering process is the feedback given to unsuccessful tenderers. From the outset, we set in place a system to explain why bids had been rejected. We also offered a one-to-one debriefing, where requested, giving a more detailed breakdown of the reasons for rejection. This feedback has been received favourably. As part of our commitment to openness, we engage a lay adviser, who vets awards and checks impartiality.
18. Regular regional conferences are held with contractors to discuss issues and explain developments. In 1993/94 we held eight conferences of this kind.
19. The secondary cycle entered its second year in Autumn 1994 and built on what had been established in 1993/94. Competition for contracts increased. Contracts for virtually all secondary schools selected for 1994/95 were awarded by the end of 1994.

Letting Inspection Contracts: Primary, Nursery and Special

20. The start of the year 1994/95 saw the first of the primary, nursery and special school programme of inspections. Because a third of the RgIs in the primary phase did not choose to put themselves

forward to lead any inspections planned for the Autumn term, significant numbers of primary and nursery schools were left without an inspection team. Such schools were therefore given a number of options for rescheduling the inspection. We accepted the choices of governors in every case. Similar problems arose over the letting of contracts for special school inspections.

21. To support the market, we have embarked on a policy of using HMI to lead inspections, in order to help to honour our commitment to inspect all schools called for inspection in Summer 1995 and those deferred from Spring 1995 which had requested a date in Summer 1995.

Assuring Quality

22. We undertake a range of activities in order to assure the quality of inspection. These include: monitoring the work of RgIs; taking measures to maintain and develop the quality of the processes and instruments of inspection; supporting the development of schools, especially those where inspection or other evidence suggests serious weaknesses; and ensuring that inspection supports the principles of the Citizen's Charter.

The Monitoring Role

23. The legal basis for our monitoring of RgIs' work is Section 3 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992, where provision is made for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) to arrange for an inspection to be monitored by one or more HMI. We need to keep under review the standards of inspections and subsequent reports on schools, give guidance to RgIs and others, and ensure that RgIs remain 'fit and proper' and 'competent' within the terms of the Act. Monitoring is thus designed to contribute to the maintenance and improvement of high standards in inspection.
24. OFSTED regulates the inspection system, but, under the terms of 1992 Act, the legal responsibility for the conduct of inspections and the publication of inspection reports rests with RgIs. HMI who carry out the monitoring can neither take over unsatisfactory inspections nor suppress the publication of inspection reports. They can, and do, monitor the extent to which the procedures operated by a RgI and the issues covered on an inspection meet the requirements of the Framework for the Inspection of Schools. However, the Act makes no provision for HMI to check on the judgements made by RgIs or members of RgIs' inspection teams.
25. During monitoring visits to inspections, which on average take about two days, HMI observe and form judgements about an RgI's performance in a range of important inspection activities and assess the extent to which RgIs have met the requirements laid down in the Framework. They focus especially on the planning and management of the inspection, professional knowledge and judgement, and the quality of relationships and communication.
26. We base our judgements about an RgI's competence in report-writing on factors such as: the clarity with which inspection findings and recommendations are expressed in the report; the extent to which Framework requirements for reports are met; and the internal consistency of the report and summary.
27. After the monitoring of their conduct of inspections and their published reports, RgIs receive a

written evaluation of their work, commenting on the extent to which they have or have not met our requirements. Where HMI have identified weaknesses, RgIs have to produce an action plan which aims to improve their performance. If RgIs consistently fail to meet the requirements of the Framework, HMCI may remove their names from the register of those eligible to lead inspections. Information on their performance is taken into account when OFSTED awards future inspection contracts.

Monitoring Secondary Inspections: 1993/94

28. In 1993/94 HMI monitored 470 of the 889 secondary school inspections. Almost all secondary phase RgIs who won contracts were monitored at least once and nearly a third twice or more. In addition, 373 secondary reports were checked, and primary and special reports are now being checked. Evidence from monitoring shows that the system made an encouraging start. Over half (56%) of the inspections fully met our requirements and a further 39% were broadly satisfactory. Some 5% were unsatisfactory. Thus the majority of inspections were adequately managed and, for the most part, complied with the Framework for Inspection. Where there were weaknesses, these tended to be on particular aspects of inspection, such as: the quality of planning; day-to-day management during the inspection; the analysis of evidence by inspectors; and, in some cases, the oral report of inspection findings to staff and governors in schools.
29. Clear evidence emerged during 1993/94 that the quality of inspections improved. Of the RgIs monitored more than once by HMI, the substantial majority either continued to maintain the high standards of their first inspection or they successfully remedied any weaknesses which HMI had identified. However, a minority showed no improvement and are therefore subject to further advice and monitoring.
30. Of the inspection reports checked by HMI, 23% were of excellent quality and a further 64% largely or fully met OFSTED's requirements; 13% were judged to be unsatisfactory. Where there were weaknesses, these included: poor style; use of jargon; lack of clarity, particularly when conveying judgements; too much description at the expense of evaluation; a failure to comment on issues required by the Framework; a lack of consistency between different sections in the report; and, on occasions, some misrepresentation or misinterpretation of the evidence, particularly in the report's conclusions (main findings) and recommendations (key issues).
31. The summaries of reports (the shortened versions of the reports which go to all parents and other interested parties) were of variable quality. Many were written clearly so that it was easy for readers to understand the main points. Some, however, did not match the report closely, and hence offered a rather different overall impression of the school. On occasion, too, the writing was hard to follow. Weaknesses in report writing, along with the other key inspection skills, are looked at closely when we consider whether RgIs should have their registration confirmed or should be de-registered.

Monitoring Primary and Special Inspections: Autumn 1994

32. In the autumn term of 1994, HMI continued to monitor secondary inspections. They also monitored 219 primary inspections and a small number of nursery and special school inspections. Some of these autumn term inspections were conducted by RgIs who had previously conducted secondary inspections but, for many RgIs, this was their first experience of an OFSTED inspection.

33. The evidence from monitoring shows that RgIs of primary school inspections have made a promising start and the standard of inspection has sometimes been impressively high. Overall, 63% of inspections monitored during the autumn term fully met the requirements of OFSTED and a further 34% were broadly satisfactory, despite some weaknesses. Only a small proportion (3%) gave cause for concern. In the main, primary RgIs handled inspections well and demonstrated sensitivity to the effects of inspection on schools which had a small number of teachers, often with many different responsibilities.
34. Many of the weaknesses in primary and special school inspections were similar to those already noted for secondary inspections. In addition, we noted some particular difficulties. Not all RgIs managed, for example, to cover the full range of inspection issues with teams which were much smaller than on secondary inspections. Thus some RgIs overloaded themselves which adversely affected their performance. OFSTED is providing further guidance to help RgIs overcome this problem.
35. The number of inspections of nursery and special schools monitored in the first term was small, but our findings matched those on primary inspections.

Evidence of Improvement

36. Our monitoring of inspection in all types of school shows a basically positive picture. We now have an inspection system in which all inspectors work to the same principles and procedures. In view of the newness of the system, it would be surprising if there were no teething troubles; we have acknowledged that these have existed, and that trying to solve them has been no easy matter. However, the great majority of inspections have been carried out competently, in a way which has largely met our requirements. Moreover, where there have been weaknesses, most RgIs are clearly trying to remedy them as quickly as possible.
37. We can see some clear signs of improvement in the quality of inspections. For instance, many RgIs have shown considerable improvement between their first and subsequent inspections. They have become more familiar with the requirements of the Framework and more skilled at collecting and analysing evidence. This experience has been of great benefit to primary and special inspections, since many RgI themselves have secondary inspection experience on which to build or else they have learned from colleagues or contractors who were secondary specialists. This capacity to make productive use of experience has been applied to the hard work and commitment shown by RgIs and team inspectors both in getting the system going and in implementing the necessary improvements.
38. Improvement has also come from the good use RgIs have made of the detailed comment provided by HMI in their letters to RgIs after monitoring, as part of their own in-service training, particularly where there are two or more RgIs within an inspection company or LEA.

Quality Assurance and Development

39. Our concern with the quality of both processes and outcomes is part of our commitment to our principal stakeholders¹. We have sought to establish a climate of consultation and openness and

¹ The term refers to all of those who have an interest in the work of OFSTED and the system of inspection, whether government, schools, other educational bodies, industry or parents.

believe this has been a hallmark of OFSTED's approach. We sought comments from stakeholders when we first published the Framework and Handbook for the Inspection of Schools. HMI visited schools shortly after they had been inspected and used a detailed proforma to elicit the views of governors, heads and staff of schools in the first round of inspections on whether they felt satisfied with the overall management and conduct of the inspections. We invited RgIs to tell us what they thought about the manageability of the inspection model. We were concerned, from the outset, to know how we might need to revise and refine the inspection system in the light of early reactions and we received many useful pointers to what our priorities needed to be.

40. Coopers and Lybrand acted as consultants to oversee our work and review the findings contained in our report *A Focus on Quality*. The involvement of a disinterested outsider of this kind was of great assistance, not least in ensuring that the findings of our survey were analysed and presented in as objective a way as possible. This stemmed from evaluation of the early inspections, through visits to over 100 secondary schools in Autumn 1993, and took note of the views of a wide range of stakeholders' wishes and of our own monitoring of the conduct of inspections. From the concerns which were raised we became strongly aware of a number of areas which we needed to address. We have since acted upon these, with the aim of improving our processes, although we recognise that there is more still to be done. In addition, the report raised points for action from RgIs and their teams, and for headteachers and governors of schools.
41. In May 1994, we published a new edition of the Framework and a supplement to the Handbook. We reduced the demands on schools generally and on smaller schools and primary schools in particular. We simplified the Headteacher's Form and rationalised the list of documents which inspectors need to consult before inspections. We improved our guidance for inspectors, particularly in relation to the inspection of standards of achievement, the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils, the value for money provided by the school and the procedures to be followed when a school is judged to require special measures. Work on the Framework has continued subsequently, and we are currently consulting on a major planned revision of the document for 1996.
42. In January 1995, we held conferences which focused on the inspection of English, mathematics and science. A range of subject profiles will provide further support and guidance to inspectors. HMI support and encourage local and national initiatives of subject associations. We have also prepared the paper, 'Good Practice in Inspection', to provide further guidance for inspectors.
43. During the autumn of 1994 we visited a further 100 primary, special and nursery schools which had been inspected, to seek the views of headteachers, governors, staff, parents and pupils. We shall publish our findings in a companion volume to *A Focus on Quality*. We established a National Inspection Advisory Group in October 1994 and consulted a large number of organisations and interested groups on the further improvement of the inspection system.
44. We increased the range of information and data for registered inspectors to be able to set schools in context. Pre-Inspection Context and School Indicator (PICS) reports, issued to inspectors before

each inspection, have become more substantial and informative. We also made available new data to provide guidance on national value-added indicators.

45. We have monitored a sample of the action plans which governors are required to produce after inspection and visited more than 80 schools to evaluate the steps being taken to implement the inspection findings. We are also following up a sample of inspections over a longer period to seek evidence of the lasting impact of inspection.

Supporting the Work of Schools

46. The 1992 Education (Schools) Act and the 1993 Education Act require both HMI and RgIs to determine, after an inspection, whether or not a school is giving its pupils an acceptable standard of education. The first two schools that were judged to be failing were identified as the result of HMI inspection. During 1993/94 nine secondary schools inspected by RgIs and their teams were also judged to be failing.
47. Under the terms of the two Education Acts, a school can become subject to special measures only because of weaknesses in the education it provides and only when this judgement is confirmed by OFSTED. We were obliged, therefore, to establish procedures for HMI to inspect the school once a RgI has judged that the school is failing. The inspectors must form a judgement on whether or not the school requires special measures. The HMI who inspect the school must have a range of expertise and an understanding of the legal framework of which corroboration is a part.
48. We also have a statutory duty to offer advice to the Secretary of State on the quality and likely effectiveness of the action plan which schools subject to special measures, like all schools which have Section 9 inspections, must produce after an inspection. The Secretary of State then decides whether the school should be given further time to improve, using the help and resources available to it, or whether the school should be transferred to the control of an Education Association. After this decision, OFSTED's comments on the school's action plan are made available to those responsible for improving the school.
49. The Acts make provision for HMI to assess the progress being made by such schools and to report to them as well as to the Secretary of State. Our procedures for this area of work are related closely to the responsibilities held by the Department For Education (DFE).
50. During 1993/94 the progress of four schools was checked. We have a clear expectation that a school will show signs of improvement within six months of the initial inspection, and we hope that subsequent inspection will show continued improvement. These four schools had made varying degrees of progress since being subject to special measures and in the best case decisive action had been taken, with the result that the school was clearly improving. A school remains subject to special measures until such time as we publish a report saying that special measures are not required any longer. The DFE has as its target that such schools should reach an acceptable standard within two years and early inspections suggest that at least some of the schools will meet this target.
51. Some inspection reports of other schools indicated serious weaknesses at the schools concerned, although the RgI judged that they were not in need of special measures. Such schools are visited

again by HMI to assess the progress they are making. If there is little or no significant progress, the school may then be judged to require special measures including a full HMI inspection; reports were published on two such schools in the summer of 1994.

The Citizen's Charter

52. Throughout the year we extended our commitment to the Citizen's Charter both with regard to the principles specifically required of inspectorates and in fulfilment of more general criteria.
53. We are fully committed to the Code of Practice on Open Government which came into effect on 4 April 1994 for all government departments, and have already, to a great extent, fulfilled its requirements.
54. We attach particular importance to our responsibilities under the Parent's Charter. The regular cycle of inspection is itself a Charter requirement and is intended to provide a service to parents of pupils, especially since all reports compiled by independent inspectors are published and every parent is sent a summary of the report, with copies of the report available at the school. In addition, statutory regulations require that schools hold a meeting before the inspection, inviting parents of pupils to attend and give their views about matters relevant to the inspection. The presence on all inspection teams of a lay member who has not had personal experience of managing or providing education in schools is a further example of the involvement of citizens in the inspection process. We have ample evidence that lay inspectors have had a positive and significant effect on the work of the inspection and have been involved in a wide range of activities. To ensure adequate use of lay inspectors, OFSTED is requiring for 1995/96 that the inspection time provided by lay inspectors should normally be from 10% to 20% of the total.
55. During 1993/94 we introduced a number of new helplines, designed to help people with telephone enquiries and manned throughout office hours. These included a signposting service to direct callers to the correct helpline, a helpline dedicated to queries about the Framework and Handbook for Inspection and separate helplines for different stages of the registration and training process. We believe this system is increasingly helping our external communications.

We also developed -

- procedures for external complaints against OFSTED's staff;
- procedures for complaints about OFSTED's administrative actions;
- procedures for complaints against Registered Inspectors;
- procedures for complaints about inspection reports.

Sharing our Findings

Publicising OFSTED's Work

56. In 1993/94 OFSTED maintained a steady output of publications which have given the education community access to the findings of inspection. Among those which attracted most media attention were three which resulted from proposals for action in the 1992/93 Annual Report: the take-up of mathematics and science at advanced level and beyond; a report on the inspection of General

National Vocational Qualifications in schools; and a consultation paper on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Another publication which created widespread interest and demonstrated the market for both good news and good practice was *Improving Schools*, a study of three schools which had achieved notable transformations of standards and morale.

57. Sales of priced publications and requests for unpriced ones give some indication of the interest in and value of our publications, but we have also embarked on a survey of our publications, using market research to try to gauge more accurately the use of the various documents and their influence on educational practice.
58. We took the opportunity to display the range of our publications and to explain the purpose of the new inspection system at educational exhibitions. Our stand at the Education Show in the National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Birmingham, in March 1994, played host to several thousand visitors, mainly teachers who had experienced or were about to experience inspection and wanted to talk about it - sometimes in very forceful language. The stand provided a valuable two-way flow of information. The exercise will be repeated this year, since it gives our staff valuable insight into those aspects of inspection which matter most to teachers, deputies and heads.
59. We have communicated with the independent inspectors regularly through our newsletter, *Update*. This gives them the latest guidance and information available. Its distribution encompasses not only registered, team and lay inspectors, but also local education authorities, contractors and the media. In 1993/94, six issues were produced. We conducted a survey of users which indicated general satisfaction with the format and content of *Update*, with some useful suggestions for improvement which have been adopted.

Media Interest in Inspection

60. Media interest in the launch of the new independent inspection system in secondary schools divided sharply between national coverage, which focused on failing schools and the initial dominance of local authority teams in the inspection market, and local reporting which was concerned with whether neighbourhood schools had won "top marks" or "a caning" from the inspectors.
61. National publicity was concentrated strongly on the first so-called "failing schools" (a primary and a special school). The shockwaves from this may well have contributed to the degree of anxiety felt in primary and special schools about the new inspection system.
62. One of our key presentational tasks was to emphasise our central corporate purpose of raising standards of achievement and quality. This proved an uphill task. While general media interest continued to concentrate on schools requiring special measures, one newspaper challenged both the value and value-for-money of the inspection process and criticised the blandness of reports. However, the specialist education press has devoted much effort to a constructive examination of the process of inspection and its impact on schools and has looked at how schools have responded to the challenge. The much more matter-of-fact reporting of inspection reports in regional and local press has shown how a constructive approach by heads and governors to both praise and criticism can make inspection a positive force for improvement of standards.

Research and Analysis

63. Much of our work on dissemination has been directed at finding ways to make the information yielded by the new inspection system widely available. Section 9 inspections provide a far larger volume of information on standards and quality in education than has previously been available. In Part 1 of this Annual Report we have drawn strongly on the newly-created database, which now provides a powerful means of retrieving text and analysing numerical data.
64. This information is of interest to a great variety of groups and individuals concerned with educational matters. Consequently, as a matter of urgency, we have had to develop policies on providing access to the data from inspection and on establishing sound procedures for loading information onto the database, in order to ensure that we have data of sufficiently high quality for analysis.
65. Discussion has taken place with DFE and other central government education bodies about a Code of Practice governing the exchange of data. We have now signed an agreement which should facilitate such exchanges, while respecting the confidential nature of information on specific schools.
66. We have provided statistical advice and analysis on a number of topics, including the relationship between standards of achievement and the length of the taught week in schools. We have also looked at the relationship between the standards of achievement of boys and of girls, for a joint study we have undertaken with the Equal Opportunities Commission.
67. In 1993/94 we developed further our research policy. This includes the provision of reviews of research for OFSTED and for the DFE, and the development of OFSTED's own, distinctive research programme, with support for current research within OFSTED.
68. Our strategy for monitoring and commissioning external research has concentrated upon areas linked to the inspection process and the impact of inspection on schools. We commissioned a small number of research projects and reviews during the year 1993/94. The aim of the research reviews is to provide brief but authoritative summaries of educational and related research on particular topics designed primarily for an audience of teachers rather than researchers. The first of these was a review of recent research on mathematics education, which is in the final stages of preparation. The research projects included an OFSTED contribution to the three year Third International Mathematics and Science Study project in conjunction with the DFE, and a study of school effectiveness which was published jointly by OFSTED and the Institute of Education, University of London, in September 1994. This study created considerable interest when it was launched at the British Educational Research Association's annual conference in 1994.
69. A conference was also held in February 1994 with possible research contractors, to assess the best way to draw on their contribution to OFSTED's work, and also find out more about research on inspection. This meeting raised the question of the possible use of the EIS database by researchers, which we are currently exploring with individuals who have an interest in the findings from inspection.

Information Systems

70. We have completed the conversion and integration of the Contracts and Registration systems into the EIS database, and achieved the implementation of the database. By the end of 1993/94 we had data, mainly on secondary schools, from over 900 inspections. Preparations were also well under way at the end of the period to take on the larger volume of data which would be generated by primary school inspections. The database is designed to contain inspection data from all school inspections during the four-year cycle. This will constitute a rich source of material for use in evaluating standards and quality in education. For example, we have already undertaken statistical analysis of lesson observation grades and the judgements on aspects of schools' work which RgIs record.

Relations with External Bodies

71. In 1993/94 we sought to increase our responsiveness to stakeholders' views on inspection, and to contribute to the debate on educational standards and quality.
72. We arranged many seminars, conferences and meetings including: 46 regional conferences, which permitted discussions with all the headteachers and chairs of governors from schools being inspected; 104 talks to primary headteachers, briefing them more fully about the inspections; several talks to special schools; and 16 regional conferences to consult contractors about our procedures. We discussed and consulted widely at meetings, seminars and conferences with business and industry, religious bodies, other government departments and non-government bodies. Many of these events have been concerned with the new inspection system, but we have also been fully engaged in discussions on a wide range of educational issues, including the National Curriculum. Throughout the year, OFSTED staff undertook 650 speaking engagements, and 330 overseas visitors have come to meet us to discuss inspection and school effectiveness.
73. Two major surveys of our stakeholders' views were commissioned. In the period from September 1994 to March 1995, a major survey was undertaken of parents from schools that have been inspected. This will yield a substantial evidence base of over 7000 questionnaires and 500 telephone interviews. Together with this we are surveying 14 stakeholders' groups about our effectiveness as an organisation. In response to a need for teachers, parents and governors to have more information about the inspection process, we commissioned a video film. This was completed in September 1994 and made available freely to all RgIs for use in planning their inspections, and to schools through a public broadcast in December 1994.

SECTION II – KEY ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

74. Our overall aim for the inspection system is to improve flexibility and encourage autonomy, while guaranteeing consistency of approach, where necessary, and assurance of quality. The following are some of the strategies and approaches which our various teams intend to adopt or are currently considering.

Training and Registration

75. *Training and Assessment*

- We are introducing a *new style of Stage 1 training* which is designed to meet the needs of new trainees. We are looking to replenish the supply of inspectors largely from those currently working in schools. This is in part because many of those with advisory and inspection experience have already been trained; more positively, however, it is because we believe that the inspection process will be strengthened by the greater participation of those with day-to-day experience of teaching and managing schools. We shall maintain our standards and requirements of assessment for this new training, but we are aiming for greater flexibility and more training in the skills of inspection.
- We are also developing a *new model of Stage 2 training*. This will include assessment through a combination of a portfolio of inspection experience as a team inspector, satisfactory completion of a series of assessed tasks and attendance at a training day which will concentrate on the skills needed by a RgI.
- We are also seeking ways by which *RgI accreditation* can be extended to *lay inspectors*.
- We are considering the way in which we shall handle applications for *re-registration* by RgIs, at the end of the initial three-year period. We have consulted widely on this and hope shortly to issue guidance.
- We are monitoring closely all *complaints* which we receive from schools about specific inspections. Our aim is to ensure that we deal with these in a way which gives consistency and reassurance, and which is fair to all parties.

Award of Contracts

76. *Contracts*

- We have announced a range of measures designed to help ensure that we *meet the targets for the inspection cycle* in primary, special and secondary schools. Those primary and nursery schools which have not had a contract placed for Spring term 1995 have been given *options for rescheduling the inspection*. For Summer term 1995, we shall be *using IIMI to lead inspections*, in order to ensure that all schools originally called for Summer 1995 will be inspected by a team led either by a RgI or HMI.
- We have also launched an initiative, to start from Autumn 1995, to *appoint additional inspectors* (AIs) to be attached to OFSTED, under our statutory powers, to seek to ensure that, if the market fails to secure sufficient contracts for inspection, we shall nevertheless be able to maintain the necessary number of inspections.

- We have introduced a system of *yearly inspection contracts* especially in order to meet requests to enable RgIs and teams to plan their work further ahead with greater certainty.
- We shall seek to *ensure that target dates* in our contracting processes are always met. When evaluating tenders, we shall make further use of the evidence of RgIs' experience and inspection (their 'track record'), and ensure greater consistency in the assessment of all tenders.
- We shall be *encouraging all LEAs* to give high priority to bidding for OFSTED work.

Assuring Quality

Monitoring

77. One weak inspection or one poorly-written report is one too many, and we intend to do all we can to eliminate such weaknesses. The discussion paper "Independent Inspections of Secondary Schools 1993/94: A Progress Report by HMI" was produced to highlight and disseminate good practice.

- We are committed to giving RgIs *speedier feedback* on their performance so that it will have an immediate impact on their next inspection.
- We shall continue to reassess the work of *RgIs whose performance has shown weaknesses*, paying particular attention to whether the evidence collected supports the judgements in the ensuing inspection report.
- Our contribution to *RgIs' continuing training*, through publications and presentations at in-service sessions, will continue. We are, in particular, seeking to help RgIs develop their own quality assurance procedures.
- *Reports and summaries* are, for many of those connected with a school, the sole contact they have with the inspection, and any weaknesses in them must, therefore, be addressed urgently. We have therefore held a number of meetings to brief RgIs on deficiencies in published reports and we shall continue to hold such meetings as the need arises. HMI continue, in addition, to monitor the performance of all RgIs whose early reports and summaries gave cause for concern. To help improve quality we have decided to provide fuller guidance on report-writing.

78. One of our major priorities has been to contain and where possible to reduce the burden on schools and inspectors, while maintaining an inspection system which is fair and rigorous. A *major revision of the Framework for Inspection and Handbook* is planned for 1996. This is designed to render the inspection process more manageable and to ensure that inspections focus on standards of pupils' achievement and quality of teaching.

- We intend to undertake further work to look at the *impact of inspections on school development and improvement*, looking especially at ways in which schools' action plans, written after inspection, can lead to raised standards and quality of education.

79. As part of the work of school support and development, we are continuing to undertake corroboration visits, inspections of schools to assess their progress under special measures, inspection of schools with serious weaknesses and inspection of other schools where there are specific concerns.

- We are refining further our *corroboration procedures* to make sure that there is as much consistency as possible among all the HMI who conduct the inspections.
- We are developing the procedures we shall use when we judge that a *school should be taken out of special measures*.
- We hope to issue a paper on the *strategies that have proved effective in helping failing schools to improve*, in order to assist other schools in dealing with weaknesses.

Sharing our Findings

80. Access to Information

- We are continuing to look for ways of *improving public access* to the reports resulting from inspections. Although we have no formal remit as a publisher of these reports, we are hoping to put them all on the "Internet" information superhighway, so that they can be accessible to many of the regular users.
- We wish to encourage the fullest possible use of the *information available from the EIS database* for analytical and research purposes, notably where these are directed at raising educational standards and quality.
- We are beginning to undertake some major enquiries, using information from the database:
 - to help to throw light on the *impact of class size* on the progress made by pupils; and
 - to investigate sector *differences between categories of schools*, such as those with sixth forms and those without.
- We are hoping to continue with the *series of research studies* established in the last year, since we believe that these can contribute to improvement either of the inspection process or to educational improvement more generally.

External Relations

81. We shall continue to develop and widen our involvement with clients and users.
- In the Spring term 1995 we are holding a *series of consultation meetings* to consider the proposed revisions to the Framework for Inspection.
 - We shall be discussing the implications of our "*Primary Matters*" publication with 70 groups of headteachers.
 - We shall be running eight regional conferences on the issue of *effective teaching*, raised by HMCI in the OFSTED Annual Lecture. Similar conferences are being organised in partnership with the teacher associations.
 - We shall be producing a broadsheet with the DFE and with business and education liaison officers, aimed at *helping governors* to define their strategic role more clearly.
 - We shall be developing our joint working with *other government departments and their inspectorates*.
 - We shall continue to seek to establish OFSTED as an organisation which is valued internationally in developing *effective systems of school evaluation* through its work with a variety of organisations, including other inspectorates, and through comparative studies.

SECTION III – CONCLUSIONS

82. In many ways, OFSTED has moved into a second phase. Our initial job was clearly to establish the new organisation and institute the new inspection system.
83. We are now concentrating above all on issues of quality and service, as well, of course, as making sure that we hit our inspection targets. We are seeking to ensure that inspection raises the standards and improves the quality of education; this means that all inspections must be conducted to the highest standards.
84. We have already set up a number of initiatives designed to effect improvement. We shall continue to ensure that:
- we are able to give educational advice of the highest quality about the national picture, to inform policy development, evaluate the effects of policy, and contribute to the educational debate;
 - we look closely at how particular schools can be supported in their work by the process of inspection;
 - we concentrate above all on the inspection of the individual class or lesson, the critical locus for effecting significant change.
85. These imperatives have been clearly in our minds as we have set the requirements for the new inspection system: we have emphasised the importance of national consistency, of supporting schools' action and development planning, and of judging standards and quality above all at the level of the "teaching and learning". We are clear, moreover, that in our concern to ensure that inspection processes are consistent, reliable and intelligible, we have not unwittingly filtered out the less measurable or more creative aspects of education. If inspection is perceived as imposing uniformity, discouraging initiative or stifling imagination, its capacity to bring about improvement will be undermined.
86. This Report has underlined, therefore, our drive to improve quality. Yet a focus on quality has to go hand-in-hand with a fundamental determination to take all possible steps to ensure that we train and register enough inspectors, let enough contracts, and inspect enough schools. If we put too much emphasis on quality control we might simply fail to hit our numerical targets. Yet if we sacrifice quality in order to make the numbers add up at all costs, those costs will be too high: an inspection system depends above all on the credibility and professional competence of those who carry out the work.
87. Trying to strike the right balance is not easy, and we need therefore to listen both to our stakeholders and to our own staff. The central messages which we hear, and which are at the forefront of our current planning, are as follows:
- we must make sure that the process of inspection is as constructive and beneficial as possible for schools and as manageable and as satisfactory as possible for inspectors;

- we must use to the full the powers we have to ensure the inspection of all primary, nursery and special schools within the cycle defined;
 - we must focus our efforts on encouraging those parts of the inspection market which are at present under-developed, by our strategy for training and recruitment;
 - we must be crystal clear about the ways in which inspection is contributing to improvement, whether at the level of individual schools or that of national educational standards;
 - we must continue our efforts to make sure that the messages from inspection – about how well each school is meeting the needs and entitlement of its pupils – are received and understood by the parents of those pupils and the governors of the schools;
 - we need to demonstrate that we have a system which yields data of high quality, is publicly accountable, gives the best possible value for money, and handles complaints or criticisms scrupulously and fairly.
88. Dealing with some of these concerns will be particularly challenging. Next year, our Report will seek to show clearly the extent to which we have succeeded.

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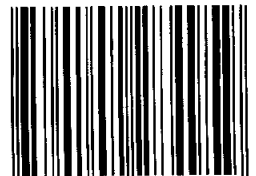
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