

The Annual Report of Her Majesty's
Chief Inspector of Education,
Children's Services and Skills
2009/10



The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2009/10

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 121 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

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November 2010

Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Dear Secretary of State

The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector 2009/10

I have pleasure in presenting my Annual Report to Parliament, as required by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

As usual, my report opens with my commentary on the outcomes from the full range of Ofsted's regulatory and inspection activity during 2009/10. The report which follows sets out the findings from our inspections of early years and childcare, schools, colleges, adult learning and skills, children's social care and a range of services for children and their families.

The first part of the report draws upon evidence from just under 32,000 inspections and regulatory visits carried out in 2009/10. This offers a robust and significant evidence base on which to make our conclusions. The second section explores three themes drawing on findings from Ofsted's thematic inspections and reports, as well as from other inspection evidence across our remit.

I hope that the report will be read with interest and that the findings presented will contribute to the current national debate on raising standards and improving lives.

Yours sincerely,

Christine Gilbert

Preface

Christine Gilbert

Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector



This Annual Report presents evidence from inspection and regulatory visits undertaken between September 2009 and August 2010 by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). Evidence is taken from inspection activity across the full range of Ofsted's remit, including early years and childcare, children's social care, local authority services for children and provision for education and skills in schools, colleges and adult learning. The report draws upon the findings both of routine inspection visits and of the focused survey inspections through which we collect more detailed evidence about subjects and aspects of provision in social care, education and skills.

The first part of the report summarises the findings from our inspections and regulatory activity in 2009/10 in all the areas of our remit. For each sector, we set out an overview of the quality of provision and of the progress and experience of the learners and children concerned. Where it is appropriate and valid to do so, comparisons with inspection findings from previous years are included and trends over the lifetime of an inspection cycle are identified.

The second part of the report uses Ofsted's inspection findings and reports to consider three matters of national importance and interest. The first focuses on the journey from failure to success for schools which are judged to be inadequate, and identifies the critical elements that must be in place if schools are to improve and sustain better performance. The second examines what can be learnt from the experience of outstanding providers in delivering good quality vocational education, not least during a period of economic and labour market uncertainty. The third considers the challenges faced by local areas in the context of rising demand for social care services, and analyses the factors which enable some local authorities to manage this pressure more effectively than others.

Finally, as in previous years, Ofsted recognises and celebrates the success of those providers whose work with children, young people and adult learners has been found by inspection to be of exceptionally high quality. This year's list of outstanding providers is published on Ofsted's website at the same time as this report.

Christine Gilbert, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Commentary

The format of this year's Annual Report will be familiar. It draws on evidence from inspection and regulation covering, broadly, the year from September 2009 to August 2010. It reports in some detail on what inspectors found across four sectors: early years and childcare, education, social care, and learning and skills. That summary – our 'state of the nation' report across the four sectors – is followed by sections that analyse and provide insight into three issues: how inspection helps to move schools from failure to success; the changing landscape of vocational education and training for young people; and the pressure on the social care system.

This year, the context in which providers are working has changed markedly. This is important in terms of the findings of this Report. The global economic downturn is being felt across all sectors but, perhaps, most keenly by young people who are leaving schools, colleges and universities and entering the job market for the first time. The public sector is facing sharp spending cuts. These concentrate minds on identifying priorities and efficiencies and on the challenge of maintaining support for front-line services.

Ofsted is determined that inspection should provide not just scrutiny but also challenge and 2009/10 has been a year in which inspection frameworks have become more demanding. In particular, they have required inspectors to re-focus their attention on the front line, for example the classroom in schools, or social work in local authorities. The focus of inspection has also shifted: the spotlight is now directed more powerfully to illuminate the providers and organisations that fail to meet the needs of those using them, and the services provided for the most vulnerable children and young people.

Increasingly, where inspectors find practice that is not up to scratch they return, not just to review and challenge, but as agents of improvement. Few people are better placed to identify what brings about improvement in a range of contexts and organisations than experienced inspectors. The greatest challenge is to raise the performance of those services judged to be no better than satisfactory to good or outstanding; doing that would make a huge difference to the lives of millions of children, young people and their families.

Increasingly, those who pay for public services expect high-quality and timely information about those services to enable them to make choices. Ofsted's website is one of the most visited of any public sector information service. Rightly, parents and other users of services expect the information Ofsted publishes to be up-to-date, accurate and relevant. It offers those using services, providers and policy-makers an opportunity to make evidence-based decisions in their own fields. This commentary reflects more broadly on what the information collected during 2009/10 tells us.

Some key messages from the evidence

In 2009/10, Ofsted's inspectors carried out over 31,500 inspections, including inspections of:

- ✘ nearly 20,000 childcare and early education providers
- ✘ over 6,000 maintained schools and 300 independent schools
- ✘ nearly 2,000 children's homes, and 138 adoption agencies and fostering services
- ✘ 119 local authority child protection contact, referral and assessment services

Commentary

- ✘ over 80 prisons, other secure estate settings and probation services.

The report has much to encourage or celebrate. The evidence is clear: most children in England get a good start in life. They are likely to go to a good or outstanding school and they are generally well supported by local services when they need to call on them. A few headlines illustrate the extent of the good and often improving provision:

- ✘ The strong performance of the early years and childcare sector has been maintained this year, with over two thirds of provision judged to be good or outstanding.
- ✘ Just over two thirds of schools at their most recent inspection were providing a good or better education for their pupils. Nine per cent of schools serving the most deprived communities were outstanding this year. Pupils' behaviour was good or outstanding in 86% of schools.
- ✘ Over 90% of schools previously judged to be inadequate showed improvement when next inspected.
- ✘ Of the 43 academies inspected this year, 11 were outstanding and nine were good.
- ✘ There is strong provision in much of the learning and skills sector, where 57% of general further education colleges, 48% of work-based learning and 70% of adult and community learning were judged to be good or outstanding.
- ✘ Nearly three quarters of children's homes were judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspections in 2009/10. This proportion has risen steadily since autumn 2008.

But underperformance must be identified and eradicated. Ofsted continues to report candidly and clearly on the failings of providers, institutions and initiatives. Our findings can make uncomfortable reading for providers such as childminders or schools and for those in local and national government. But it is better to identify weaknesses so they can be tackled than to leave them to worsen. This Annual Report identifies some particular concerns, for example:

- ✘ The quality of early years and childcare provision is less effective in areas of high deprivation; and the more deprived the area, the worse the provision.
- ✘ The slow progress of many satisfactory schools remains a concern; a lack of consistency, particularly in the quality of the teaching, is a key factor impeding overall progress. In schools where behaviour was poor, this was frequently linked to dull and uninspired teaching.
- ✘ Too much teaching in schools is still not good enough and does not deliver what we now expect of it: in 50% of secondary schools and 43% of primary schools teaching is no better than satisfactory; and at 6% the proportion of inadequate teaching in pupil referral units is a concern. Teaching, training and assessment are not good enough across the learning and skills sector, with only 49% of providers judged to be good or outstanding for their effectiveness in these key aspects.
- ✘ Nearly 30% of those who start an apprenticeship still do not complete it.
- ✘ Inspections of local authorities this year show too many areas where agencies and professionals are still not working together well enough to identify, safeguard and promote the welfare of potentially vulnerable children.¹
- ✘ The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) remains a poorly performing service.

¹ This is not a representative sample, as a number of inspections were prioritised on the basis of risk.

Skills for employment: responding to changing and challenging economic circumstances

The economic climate in which providers of further education and adult learning work has changed dramatically. The impact of the economic downturn has been particularly hard on young people: currently, more than 700,000 18–24-year-olds are unemployed. As the economy seeks to recover, the importance of developing the skills of the workforce is all the greater. A more highly skilled and adaptable workforce has the capacity to improve productivity and efficiency, thereby making a key contribution to economic recovery.

A number of local authority areas have been successful in improving markedly the proportion of 16–18-year-olds in education, employment or training over the last three years. Several key features emerge. First, effective and close cooperation existed between local authorities and a wide range of partners, including the voluntary and community sectors, in developing a shared vision for reducing the disengagement of young people. Second, support was focused consistently on where it was most needed – on specific schools, wards or groups of young people likely to be at risk – and on key risk factors such as poor school attendance or a family history of unemployment. Third, and above all, young people were closely involved in developing, reviewing and revising programmes in order that the provision was carefully matched not only to the needs of local employers but also to the needs of the young people themselves.

It is equally encouraging to read how outstanding providers of work-based learning succeed.² There is no standard description of their journeys to excellence, but common features emerge, including: the establishment of shared purpose and ambitious goals; knowing the market and aligning provision to the needs of employers; matching learners to the right programmes; providing a coherent programme of learning rooted in current working practice; focusing early on key skills in literacy and numeracy; and ensuring that barriers to learners' progress are minimised. The best providers offer strong role models to their learners. Indeed, on several inspections of apprenticeship programmes, the managers had been apprentices themselves. The same qualities are also found in many of the successful employment-based routes into teaching.

Adult and community learning providers also play a key role in supporting a broad range of older learners, including adults from deprived and socially excluded groups, to prepare for life and work. Again, important and consistent strengths have been identified this year. The teaching is often lively and varied, contributing to good progress and achievement for many learners, who acquire critical basic and employability skills, grow in confidence and build valuable social skills. The best providers listen to the concerns of their students, provide links with employers, support opportunities for work experience and succeed in establishing progression into jobs.

Listening to users of services and providers

Listening to the views of users of services and providers is a hallmark of effective inspection. I hope that those who have recent experience of inspection and regulation visits have recognised the increasing emphasis that inspectors give to seeking the views of users and providers, both before and during the inspection: listening to pupils in a school or young people in a children's home; engaging with senior staff in a further education college or teachers in a school; and listening to social workers. I also hope that those who have contributed to our recent consultation

² *Twelve outstanding providers of work-based learning* (100112), Ofsted, 2010.

Commentary

exercises can recognise how their views and concerns have helped to shape revisions to inspection frameworks.

Successful providers across all sectors listen to the views of those who use their services. A feature, for example, of the best childcare is invariably the excellence of the liaison with parents and carers. Childminders and other providers make parents and carers feel welcome and involve them as partners in their child's learning and development. Outstanding providers of work-based learning listen to their learners. They ensure that, by collecting and using feedback on learners' experiences, their interest and motivation are maintained.

When concerns are aired, questions of fairness often emerge. This is particularly the case for children in care or away from home, whose views are collected annually by the Office of the Children's Rights Director, based in Ofsted. Children felt more angry and upset about being treated unfairly than about almost anything else that they were asked about. They were particularly concerned about being wrongly blamed for something. At the level of the local authority, it is telling that the extent to which authorities listen to and act on the views of the children, young people and parents affected by services is a significant factor in distinguishing the best from the worst authorities.

A culture of fairness is also a feature of outstanding schools and colleges; learners respond positively to staff who have a genuine interest in their views. They also need to know they are accountable to at least one adult who knows them well and gives them personal support and challenge. One of the successes reported this year is the effectiveness of many residential special schools, often outstanding at helping children achieve and enjoy what they do. Strong relationships between students and staff mean students feel confident that they can bring their concerns to staff, that they will be understood, and that 'something will be done'. Similarly, a consistent feature of outstanding children's homes is that these homes see the children and young people in their care holistically and come to understand them by listening to their views, however these are communicated. To quote from the report on one such thriving children's home: 'young people feel listened to, safe and cared for and develop a sense of trust in their carers'.

Safeguarding: still on the agenda

The inspection report referred to above underlines the continuing importance of safeguarding. It is an issue addressed not only with increasing sureness by those responsible for keeping children and learners safe, but one felt keenly by those most vulnerable to harm and neglect. Without doubt, inspection and regulation have helped to focus minds on the need to ensure all appropriate steps have been taken to guarantee and promote children's safety. Improvements have been rapid and widespread, and inspections during 2009/10 show that almost all maintained schools now take a careful and measured approach to their safeguarding arrangements. Colleges, too, have responded well to government requirements for safeguarding, as have work-based learning providers whose overall performance has improved this year.

But there are still pockets of practice that are simply not good enough. Concerns about safeguarding emerged in a small number of the boarding schools inspected this year, and in two further education colleges. The most striking statistic – and one that comes with a health warning – is that of the 29 local authorities inspected this year, around one in three was not keeping children and young people safe. The sample of those inspected was not, however, representative: risk assessments had suggested that early inspection was required in many of these authorities. Nevertheless, these inadequate authorities give real cause for concern. Most local authorities face similar challenges and pressures, but there are vast and unacceptable differences in the way such challenges and pressures are managed.

Inspection provides an insight into what makes the difference between authorities that manage and respond to the challenges in ways that enable staff to provide high-quality and effective practice and those that are, quite simply, being overwhelmed. Government safeguarding requirements have been in place for some years. Since it is now reasonable to expect the safeguarding of children and young people to be secure, Ofsted will not hesitate to hold services to account where weaknesses like this are found.

Social care: a system under stress

For children and young people whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable to failure or even harm, the quality of universal services is the best guarantee they have of a good start in life. This year we have been able to identify a number of local authorities where we have seen outstanding practice. What distinguishes these authorities is consistency of practice: the children and families who use their services receive consistently high-quality support and purposeful intervention. What is also clear is that there is no 'one size fits all' solution: where outstanding practice was found in local authorities, inspectors have reported a combination of high ambition and challenging aspiration alongside innovative approaches to local circumstances.

Significant challenges face social care services in many local authorities. These come from several sources. Public and media scrutiny of safeguarding issues has never been greater. Pressure to bring about improvement – for example, in the academic performance of children in care – is understandably intense. Staff shortages are a problem in many areas, and the problem of heavy workloads emerges again and again. Children can wait too long for the response they need as a result of high caseloads. It is a concern that, when young people leave secure provision and return to their own communities, sufficient support for them is too often not available at a time when they need it most.

Pressure is also mounting on social care services as a result of rising demand; for example, by March 2010 there were 64,400 looked after children compared with 60,900 the year before. The best authorities manage these pressures well and remain focused on providing high quality and improving their services. But without wise and determined management, inadequate practice is all too often a consequence.

Working together

A key theme of this Annual Report is that of working together. Increasingly, groups of providers are coming together to meet a wide range of the needs of children and young people. Childcare providers who are members of a quality assurance scheme, typically run by provider organisations or local authorities, continue to provide higher-quality childcare on average than those who do not participate in such schemes. Schools and colleges collaborate to provide a broader, enriched curriculum that engages young people and is seen as relevant and valuable by them, especially in the 14–19 phase; going it alone is no longer an option. Local authorities that have been successful in increasing the numbers of young people in education, employment and training have done so as a result of strong partnerships between schools, colleges, training providers, the Connexions service, health services, youth support services and the voluntary sector. Working together to improve the quality of services for individuals pays off.

High-quality partnerships, consortia and federations can have an impact on the quality of provision and the standards achieved. It is encouraging to see the support that effective schools can give to struggling schools and academies, but there are benefits from such collaboration for both sides of a partnership. It is telling that the outstanding secondary schools highlighted in Ofsted's 2009 report saw the benefits, in a range of ways, of sharing excellence and contributing to 'system leadership'.³

Re-focusing inspection on the front line

I am determined that inspection should return to where it began: the close observation of the engagement between front-line professionals and the children, young people and learners with whom they work. Any recent school inspection report, for example, will tell you much more about teaching and learning than has been the case in the last few years. This is what really matters in schools.

³ *Twelve outstanding secondary schools (080240)*, Ofsted, 2009.

Commentary

Most parents can be reassured about the quality of their children's teaching. This was good or outstanding in over two thirds of primary schools at their most recent inspection. Inadequate teaching is the exception rather than the rule, a far cry from the concerns reported by inspectors in pre-Ofsted days in around one third of the lessons seen. Even so, there is much room for improvement; too much teaching is still not as good as it should be, both in schools and colleges, and, as a result, too many children are not equipped well enough to make the best of their lives. A more intense focus on literacy in particular, but also on numeracy and information and communication technology, is essential to establish strong foundations for lifelong learning.

Much has been written about the qualities of good teaching and the problems of poor teaching. Many of us will have experienced exceptional teachers who could inspire pupils, irrespective of the quality of the surroundings or the resources they had. But what really makes a difference over a child's time at school is the cumulative effect of consistently good teaching, where a succession of teachers demand and achieve the highest possible standards. Subject knowledge and pedagogic skills remain central to good teaching; high quality professional development focused on the craft of teaching underpins both.

Quality of this nature requires leaders and managers who can exert a decisive influence. Front-line practice, whether in social work or in a classroom, does not happen in a vacuum. In 96% of the primary schools and 95% of the secondary schools inspected this year, where the teaching was good or outstanding, the leadership and management of teaching and learning were also judged to be good or outstanding. Monitoring systems are robust, supported by high-quality training. The resulting practice is supported by consistent systems. The best schools share their good practice and their concerns, and they work out solutions to their problems together.

I never claim that being inspected should be a comfortable experience; nor do I think we have always done enough to explain how we work, what we do and why we make changes from time to time in our inspection arrangements. Nevertheless, it is clear that inspection can be a strong catalyst for learning for both staff and inspectors. So it has been heartening to hear so many powerful endorsements of the new inspection arrangements from those who have experienced them.

Inspection is not a 'data-driven, tick-box bureaucracy'. Inspectors use data as a signpost, not a destination. But that does not mean that data – including raw test and examination results – are not used as key evidence by inspectors. We should judge schools, for example, on what pupils can do, not just how much progress they have made, important though that is. Inspection is not a desk activity based on second-hand evidence. And schools and colleges tell us how much they value engagement in productive, professional dialogue during inspections. An effective system of inspection should be supportive of the work of teachers, headteachers and all staff in schools and colleges, but that of itself is not enough. There is also a long tradition of HMI reporting fearlessly, without fear or favour, yet doing good as they go.

Ofsted has achieved a great deal in its 18 years. Independent, dispassionate inspection and regulation of services for children and young people are now taken for granted. Inspection and regulation have not stood still, however, over that time. It has been one of Ofsted's strengths that inspection frameworks have changed to reflect the new and higher expectations that society has of its publicly funded services. But the core purpose of inspection has not changed: Ofsted seeks to report candidly on the quality of services so that informed choices about them can be made, both by those who use them and those who fund them. Inspection should also enable the services to improve, thereby enhancing the life chances of children, young people and adult learners.

The debate should now be about how inspection can most effectively support improvement. I see Ofsted setting expectations of good practice in clear frameworks; undertaking independent, evidence-based inspection with well-crafted recommendations for better practice; and identifying good practice and disseminating what can be learned or transferred. Using inspection to look at what is happening will be even more important as we enter a period of sharp spending cuts. We must continue to re-focus energies, resources and expertise to support several ambitions: to provide information clearly and accessibly to those who need to make choices about the service they use; to support and promote improvement; to focus unrelentingly on weaknesses and on provision that fails to meet the needs of children, young people and learners; and to celebrate success and learn from it. As resources tighten across the public sector, we will look at the impact this has.

In my commentary on my first Annual Report, I wrote about the sense of moral purpose that I felt should be behind everything we do. I feel this just as strongly, if not more so, as I write this, my fifth, commentary. Speaking up on behalf of children, young people or adult learners, particularly the most potentially vulnerable or disadvantaged, is a responsibility Ofsted takes very seriously in striving to raise standards and improve lives.

Quality and standards in early years and childcare, schools, learning and skills, children's social care and children's services



Quality and standards

Early years and childcare



Key findings

- ✘ The early years and childcare sector continues to perform well. In 2009/10, the second year of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the proportion of early years registered providers judged good or outstanding for overall effectiveness increased to slightly over two thirds.
- ✘ The number of providers in the early years and childcare sector has continued to fall this year. Inspection evidence shows that since the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage a high proportion of ineffective providers have left the system.
- ✘ The quality of provision is lower in areas of high deprivation; the more deprived the area, the lower the proportion of good and outstanding providers. Just over half (52%) of childminders in the most deprived areas are good or outstanding, compared with 71% in the least deprived areas.
- ✘ Childcare on non-domestic premises, for example nurseries and playgroups, is slightly better on average than provision by childminders. In deprived areas, this difference is much more marked.
- ✘ Of those providers judged inadequate in 2008/09 and who have since been reinspected, 95% are now satisfactory or better.
- ✘ Providers who are part of a quality assurance scheme are more likely to be judged good or outstanding. This is particularly the case for childminders. There is a strong correlation between participation in a quality assurance scheme and the extent to which providers embed ambition and drive improvement.

- ✘ The quality of self-evaluation and engagement with parents and carers are the only two aspects in which over a third of providers inspected are no better than satisfactory.
- ✘ The first inspections of children's centres show that outcomes for children and families were judged good or outstanding in 24 of the 39 children's centres inspected.

Introduction

1. Ofsted is responsible for the regulation and inspection of early years and childcare provision and maintains two registers: the Early Years Register and the Childcare Register. Where registered providers are inspected and found to be not meeting the requirements of the registers, Ofsted sets actions to secure improvement.⁴
2. The Early Years Register records providers who look after children from birth to school age (that is, 31 August after the child's fifth birthday). Providers on this register must meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, introduced in September 2008. Ofsted inspects all providers on this register at least once in a 47-month period to judge each provider's overall effectiveness.

⁴ An action is something that Ofsted asks the provider to do in order to meet requirements. Providers are given clear information about what they are required to do and by when, and Ofsted checks to ensure that providers have completed the action set.

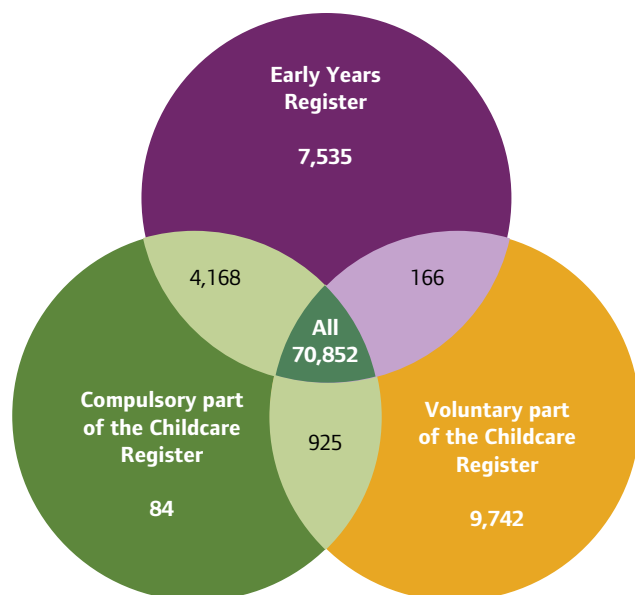
Early years and childcare

3. The Childcare Register has two parts: a compulsory part, on which providers must register if they intend to look after children aged from five to seven; and a voluntary part, on which providers may register if they care for children aged eight and over. A range of providers, such as nannies, are exempt from compulsory registration. They may choose to register on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register. Each year Ofsted inspects a random sample of around 10% of providers who are only on the Childcare Register to make sure they continue to meet the requirements for registration.

4. This year Ofsted’s new legal duty to inspect Sure Start children’s centres commenced. The outcomes of the first of these inspections are reported in this section.

Size and composition of the childcare sector

Figure 1 Number of registered providers as at 31 August 2010



Total providers 93,472.

5. Figure 1 shows the number of providers on the Early Years Register, and on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A large majority of providers are on both registers. For example, providers who wish to care for children up to the time they leave primary school will be on both registers so that they can offer both full-time care for the youngest children and wraparound care for those children who attend school. They must be on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register to care for children up to the age of eight and may choose to be on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register for children aged eight and above. In most cases, providers who meet the requirements of the Early Years Register will be able to meet the requirements of the Childcare Register, which are less stringent.

6. The early years and childcare sector comprises four main categories of provider: childminders, childcare providers on non-domestic premises, childcare providers on domestic premises and home childcarers.

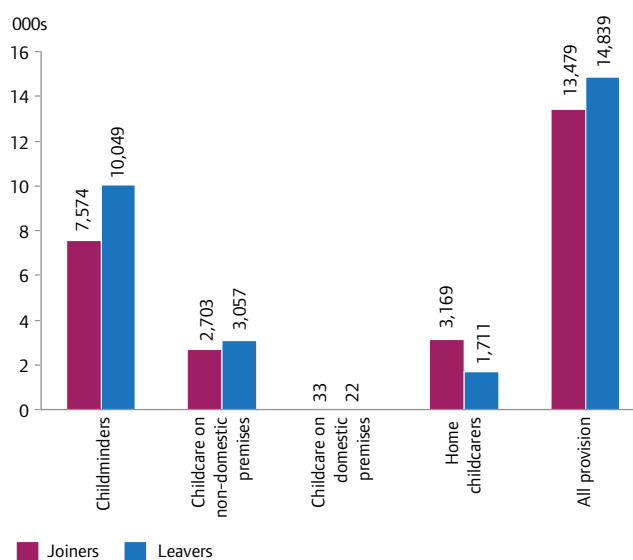
* Childminders work with no more than two other people, such as other childminders or childminder assistants. They care for children on domestic premises, most often in their own home. There are 56,065 childminders on the Early Years Register and a further 831 on the Childcare Register only. Childminders account for around 60% of early years and childcare providers overall and offer around 275,000 childcare places.

* Childcare providers on non-domestic premises include nurseries, playgroups, pre-school provision, crèches and holiday play schemes. There are 26,560 providers in this group on the Early Years Register and a further 2,175 on the Childcare Register only. Childcare providers on non-domestic premises account for around 30% of early years and childcare providers and offer around 1,030,000 childcare places.

- * Childcare on domestic premises is provided where four or more people work together on domestic premises to care for children. Most often these providers are groups of childminders and assistants who choose to work together in the home of one of them. There are 96 such providers on the Early Years Register and a further four providers only on the Childcare Register, making up a very small proportion of the sector (around 1,500 childcare places).
- * Home childcarers are mainly nannies who care for children in the children's own home. They are not required to register but may choose to do so. There are 7,741 home childcarers on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register.

7. The registered childcare sector is distinctive because of the high level of turnover in providers. The combination of registration, inspection and the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage has helped to ensure good standards. In 2009/10, 1,463 potential providers withdrew their applications for registration. During the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010, 13,479 new providers joined the registers while 14,839 left.⁵ This represents a net loss of 1,360 providers. It continues the trend seen in recent years of a falling number of childcare providers. Figure 2 shows how childcare providers leaving the sector and new providers joining it were distributed across the four categories of provision. As was the case last year, it is clear that childminding is experiencing the most change.

Figure 2 Number of providers by category joining and leaving the sector between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010



8. This year the number of places covered by Ofsted registration has continued to fall, albeit to a much lesser extent than last year. In 2009/10 the number of places covered by Ofsted registration fell by just under 30,000 to 1,310,000 places. Last year the corresponding figure was a reduction in over 200,000 places. The large reduction in 2008/09 is explained in part by the removal of around 1,500 childcare providers who were no longer required to register and therefore were no longer counted in the figures.⁶ These accounted for around 48,500 places.

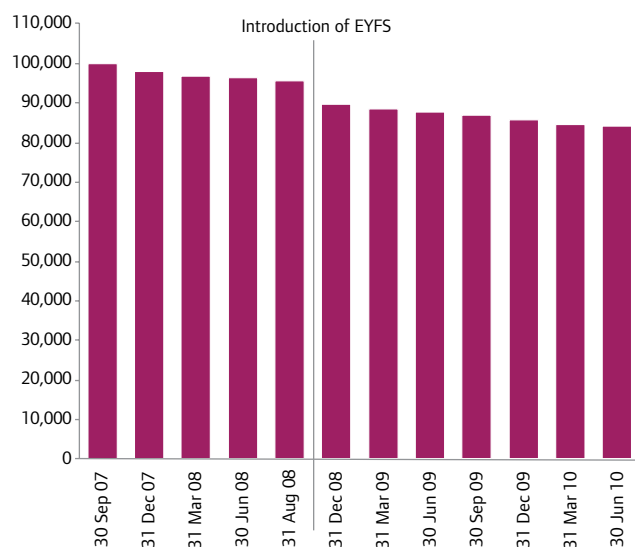
5 Joiners and leavers include not only those who are new to the sector or who have left completely, but also those providers who have changed provision type or are on a different register.

6 Around 1,500 childcare providers came under the control of school governing bodies on 1 September 2008 and were not required to register their provision on the Early Years or Childcare Register. In addition, around 600 childminders were not transferred to the Early Years or Childcare Registers because they had not cared for children for three years.

Quality and standards

Early years and childcare

Figure 3 Quarterly trend in the number of early years and childcare registered providers over the last three years



Data do not include providers on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register.

Figures are taken from a snapshot of the Ofsted database at the end of each month.

Data for 31 August 2008 are used to show the position in the number of providers registered just prior to the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

9. Figure 3 shows how the total number of registered early years and childcare providers has changed over the last three years. The biggest quarterly fall in provision occurred between August and December 2008.⁷ This coincides with the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Figure 4 Overall effectiveness of early years registered providers who left the sector between 1 September 2008 and 31 August 2010 compared with the overall effectiveness of those who remained active (percentage of providers)

Left in 2008/10 and EYFS inspected (3,145)



Active at 31 August 2010 and EYFS inspected (41,093)



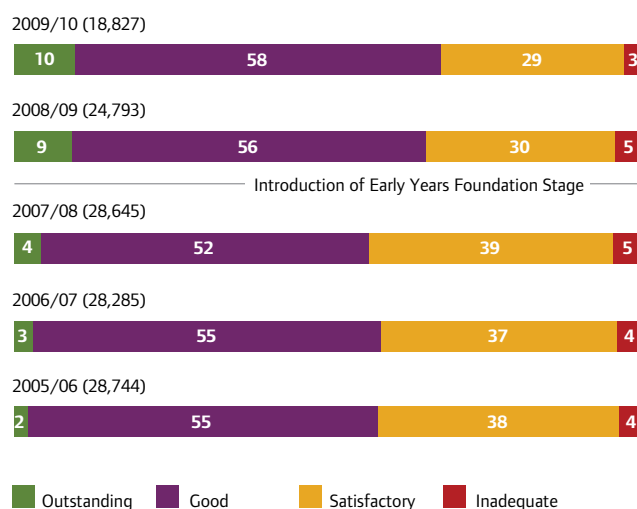
Outstanding Good Satisfactory Inadequate

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

10. Figure 4 shows that 16% of providers who left the sector following an inspection under the Early Years Foundation Stage framework had been judged inadequate. In comparison, just 2% of providers who had an Early Years Foundation Stage judgement and remained active were judged inadequate. This suggests that the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage has contributed to an overall improvement in quality. This analysis, however, does not include around 18,000 providers who left the sector before being inspected under the Early Years Foundation Stage who had already been inspected under the previous framework.

Overall performance of early years and childcare providers

Figure 5 Overall effectiveness of early years registered providers inspected in every year from 2005/06 to 2009/10 (percentage of providers)



Annual figures relate to inspections carried out between 1 September and 31 August each year for providers active at the end of each year.

Inspection data from 2005/06 to 2007/08 are based on the Inspecting Outcomes for Children framework 'quality of care' judgement.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

⁷ See footnote 6 for an explanation of why some providers were not required to register or were removed from the register.

11. After the Early Years Foundation Stage was introduced in September 2008, there was an increase from 56% to 65% in the proportion of providers judged good or outstanding. In this second year of the new inspection framework (2009/10), this position has been consolidated with a slight increase in the percentage of good or outstanding provision to 68% and a slight decrease in inadequate provision to 3%. The quality of provision of those inspected overall, therefore, remains strong and shows that providers continue to respond well to the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

12. Providers who have responded most successfully to the new requirements and provide outstanding early years education and childcare have a number of strengths in common. They have a high level of understanding of how children learn and develop, reflect fully on their practice to identify areas for improvement, and have strong partnerships with both parents and agencies.

13. Nearly two thirds of the providers found to be inadequate in 2008/09 have since been reinspected and 95% of these are now satisfactory or better. This demonstrates a strong trajectory of improvement. In contrast to the more successful providers, those judged inadequate are insecure in their knowledge of how children learn and develop, pay insufficient attention to planning and providing activities that meet children's needs, and do not have proper regard for some of the key welfare requirements, such as ensuring that all staff understand and implement an effective safeguarding policy.

14. Ofsted has set one or more actions to meet requirements for 28% of the providers on the Early Years Register inspected this year. This is a reduction since last year, when actions were set for 34% of those inspected. The three most common areas for action were the same as those identified last year: safeguarding and welfare; premises, environment and equipment; and maintaining records and documentation required for the safe and efficient management of the setting. These might include, for example, recording details of the names and attendance of children at the setting. Common actions in these areas include ensuring that proper risk assessments are carried out for outings and for premises, and ensuring that policies and procedures are in place and shared with parents, such as what to do if a child goes missing or a parent fails to collect their child.

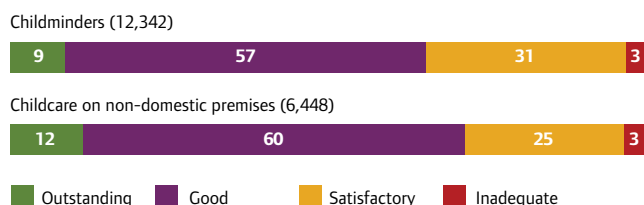
15. Ofsted also inspects a sample of providers who are only on the Childcare Register to ensure that they are meeting requirements. This year 13% of those providers active only on the compulsory or voluntary parts of the Childcare Register were inspected, the majority of which were home childcarers. Of those inspected, 69% met all the requirements. In the remaining 31%, actions were issued by Ofsted.

The quality of provision of those inspected overall remains strong and shows that providers continue to respond well to the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Quality and standards

Early years and childcare

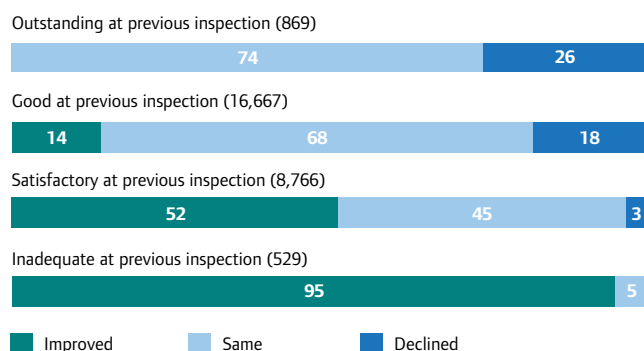
Figure 6 Overall effectiveness of childminders and childcare on non-domestic premises on the Early Years Register inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

16. Childminders and childcare providers on non-domestic premises are the two main categories of provider on the Early Years Register. In 2009/10 childcare on non-domestic premises was better than provision by childminders; 72% of childcare providers on non-domestic premises were judged to be good or outstanding compared with 66% of childminders. This difference in the quality of provision is more pronounced than it was in 2008/09. It may be the case that childcare providers on non-domestic premises benefit from working routinely with other practitioners and are therefore able to exchange ideas, share their practice and identify common areas for improvement, whereas childminders, who often work alone, may not have such opportunities.

Figure 7 Change in overall effectiveness of early years registered providers inspected under the Early Years Foundation Stage framework against their inspection outcome under the previous inspection framework (percentage of providers)



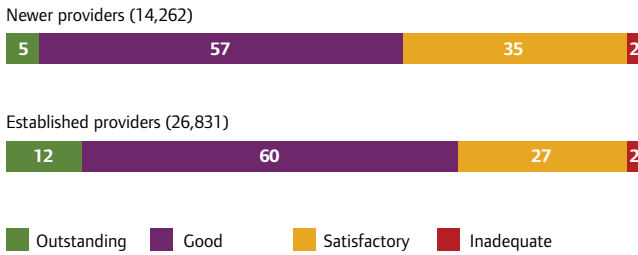
This includes all active providers which were inspected under the Early Years Foundation Stage framework introduced in September 2008.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

17. Nearly three quarters of providers judged to be outstanding under the previous framework have maintained their excellent performance at their most recent inspection. Similarly, 95% of providers found to be inadequate under the previous framework have improved at their most recent inspection. This compares favourably with last year, when the latter figure was 87%. Of those providers who were judged to be satisfactory at their previous inspection, just over half have now improved. However, 45% of them continue to be satisfactory; this picture is less positive for childminders than for childcare provided on non-domestic premises. The limited progress made by satisfactory providers is very similar to last year and remains an area for improvement.

18. Of the providers inspected this year, 406 had improved by two or more inspection grades since their previous inspection – that is, improving from being inadequate to good or from being satisfactory to outstanding. An important aspect of this rapid improvement is the way these providers have focused on planning, observation of children and assessment. Those who have improved in this way have methodical arrangements for assessing individual children's progress and for planning activities which will help them to move on to the next stage of their development. They work closely with parents to discuss their children's progress and identify the next steps in the child's learning. These providers have also embraced self-evaluation, with strong systems to identify their strengths and areas for improvement, and to improve their practice. Policies, record-keeping and procedures for risk assessment have also improved.

Figure 8 Overall effectiveness of newer providers compared with more established providers inspected between 1 September 2008 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)



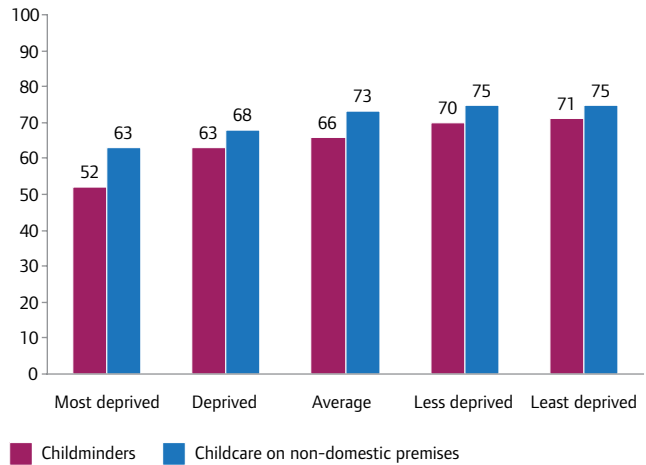
Overall effectiveness grades for newer providers relate to those that have only received an inspection under the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. 'Established providers' relates to those previously inspected under the Inspecting Outcomes for Children framework between 1 April 2005 and 31 August 2008 that have also been inspected under the Early Years Foundation Stage framework.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

19. Figure 8 shows that childcare providers that are relatively new to the sector are less likely than more established providers to be judged as outstanding. Of the providers that were inspected at least once under the previous inspection framework and have been reinspected under the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, 12% have been judged outstanding compared with 5% of providers who have been inspected only under the Early Years Foundation Stage. This suggests that it often takes providers some time to develop excellent practice and that the process of learning from experience and, providers tell us, from inspection contributes to improving quality.

Childcare providers that are relatively new to the sector are less likely than more established providers to be judged as outstanding.

Figure 9 Percentage of childminders and childcare providers on non-domestic premises judged good or outstanding in their overall effectiveness, by Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index



Inspection outcomes relate to the most recent inspection of early years registered providers conducted between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010.

This chart is based on deprivation as measured by the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) 2007. See Glossary for a detailed explanation of this. The chart groups providers by quintiles of deprivation. 'Most deprived' indicates the most deprived 20%.

20. As highlighted in last year's Annual Report, the quality of childcare provision is less good in the most deprived areas. When comparing different degrees of deprivation, using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index, it is evident that the more deprived the area, the lower the average quality of the provision (see Figure 9). The relationship between deprivation and lower quality is particularly marked for childminding. In the most deprived areas, 63% of childcare providers on non-domestic premises were judged to be good or outstanding compared with just 52% of childminders. In comparison, in the least deprived areas, the difference in quality between the two types of provision is much less.

Early years and childcare

21. The gap between provision in the most and least advantaged areas has worsened since last year. For childminders the difference has risen from 17 to 19 percentage points while for childcare it has increased from 10 to 12 percentage points. The difference between childminding and childcare on non-domestic premises in the most deprived areas has also become more pronounced. In 2008/09, 53% of childminding in the most deprived areas was good or outstanding compared with 60% of childcare providers on non-domestic premises, a gap of seven percentage points compared with 11 percentage points this year.

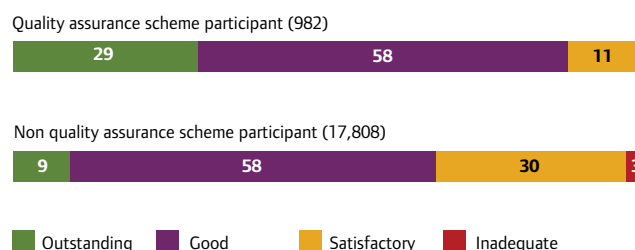
22. The crucial importance of early development in a child’s chances of later success is now well understood. The comparative weakness of childminders and childcare settings in the most deprived areas regarding building children’s skills for the future is therefore a concern. For this important outcome the gap between the proportion judged good or outstanding in the most deprived areas compared with the least deprived is the same as for overall effectiveness – 19 percentage points for childminders and 12 percentage points for childcare on non-domestic premises. There are similarly pronounced gaps for the quality of provision and the enjoying and achieving judgements. Childminders in the most deprived areas tend to be weaker in key areas of management, including the effectiveness of their self-evaluation, with only 44% of these being good or better. As a result, the quality of their work in embedding ambition and driving improvement is significantly below that in all other areas.

23. However, many providers, including childminders, provide good or outstanding childcare, even in areas of high deprivation. These providers are characterised by the extent to which they put children and their families first, have a deep understanding of the needs of the communities they serve and have an excellent understanding of child development and the Early Years Foundation Stage. These features are very important no matter where the provision is, but in areas with high levels of deprivation they take on even greater significance.

24. Childminders are usually part of the community in which the children live and they work closely with a small number of children and their families. They have, therefore, a unique opportunity to build close and enduring relationships. Such relationships can be of particular value when families face challenging circumstances. Outstanding childminders in deprived areas forge strong relationships with the families of children who attend their settings and these extend far beyond the time the children are actually present. In turn, their parents are often more able to respond to someone they trust as a friend rather than to someone in authority. These outstanding childminders provide good role models for families and show that every child can succeed.

25. Outstanding providers in deprived areas are not complacent and continually aspire to do better. They review what they do regularly and consider how it helps children. Managers of group provision provide clear direction and enable staff to share a vision of excellent service for the children and their families. A sense of common purpose and close teamwork permeate these settings.

Figure 10 Overall effectiveness of childminders and childcare providers on non-domestic premises who take part in quality assurance schemes, for inspections carried out between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

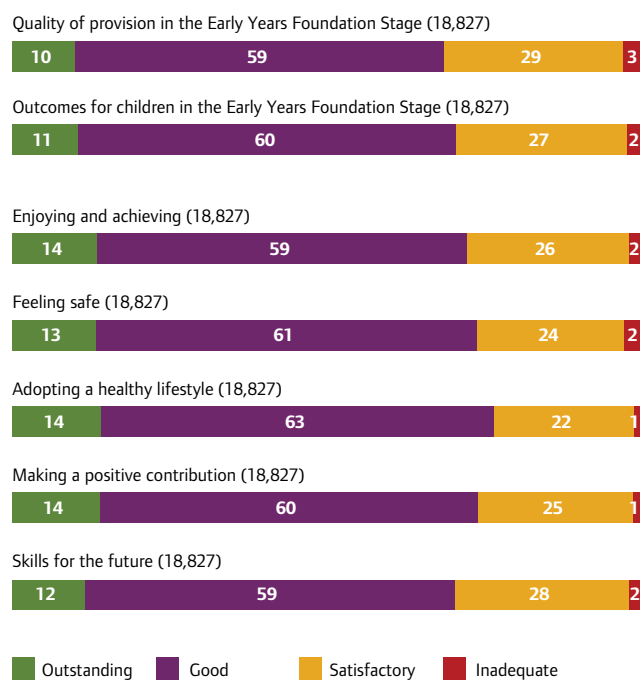
26. Around 5% of providers inspected this year are part of a quality assurance scheme. These providers continue to be more likely to be judged outstanding than those who do not participate in such a scheme (Figure 10). Quality assurance schemes are run by local authorities and provider organisations such as the National Childminding Association and the National Day Nurseries Association.⁸ Their focus is on helping providers to reflect on, review and improve the care they provide. Despite the strong correlation with positive inspection outcomes, only a small proportion of providers take part in a quality assurance scheme.

27. There is a particularly strong correlation between participation in a quality assurance scheme and the extent to which providers embed ambition and drive improvement. Of those who participated in such a scheme, 89% were judged to be good or outstanding in this respect compared with 65% who were not members of a scheme. These providers are clear about strengths and weaknesses and have high aspirations for the children in their care, which results in a climate of continuing improvement.

28. Childminders who are part of a quality assurance scheme perform particularly strongly, although they are currently under-represented in such schemes. Little more than a third of the providers who said they participated in a quality assurance scheme were childminders, but 92% of them were judged to be good or outstanding for their overall effectiveness compared with 65% of childminders who did not take part in such a scheme. This is a very similar picture to that found last year.

Strengths and areas for development

Figure 11 Inspection judgements for Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes in early years registered providers inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

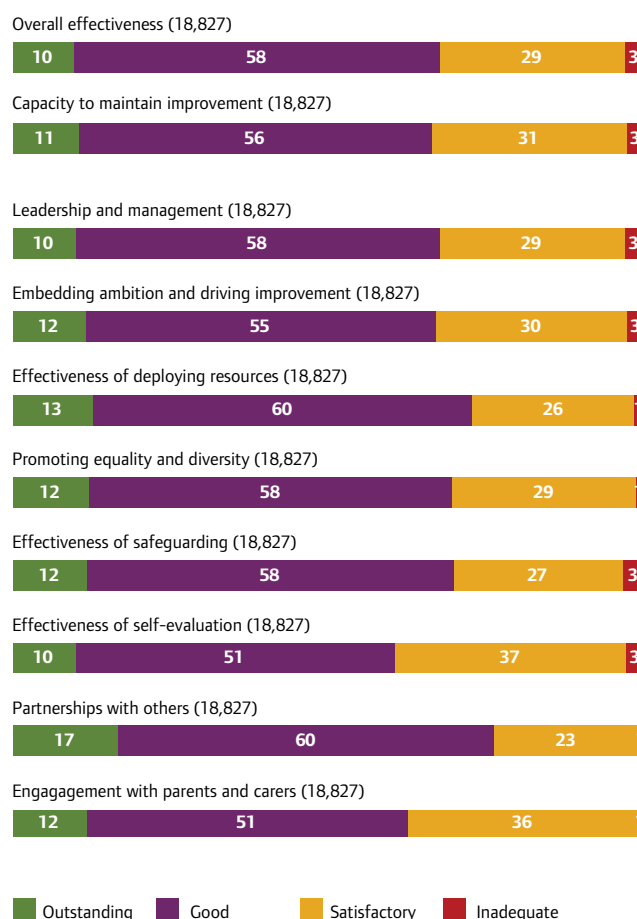
⁸ The National Day Nurseries Association is the national charity and membership association for nurseries across England. The National Childminding Association represents registered childminders and nannies.

Early years and childcare

29. Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage were judged to be good or outstanding in 71% of providers inspected this year. The proportions of providers judged good or outstanding for the Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes are very similar to the proportions last year, with the large majority of childcare providers judged to be good or outstanding in relation to each outcome. There has been an increase in the proportion of providers judged to be good or outstanding for helping children feel safe: 74% of the providers inspected this year were judged to be good or outstanding for this outcome compared with 69% of those inspected last year. Over two thirds of providers were also judged good or outstanding for the effectiveness of their safeguarding (Figure 12). In the 3% judged inadequate for safeguarding, common weaknesses included insufficient training to enable staff to identify signs of abuse, unsafe recruitment practices such as failing to ensure that all staff had received a Criminal Records Bureau check, and not having a high enough ratio of staff to children.

There has been an increase in the proportion of providers judged to be good or outstanding for helping children feel safe: 74% of the providers inspected this year were judged to be good or outstanding for this outcome compared with 69% of those inspected last year.

Figure 12 Inspection judgements for early years registered providers inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

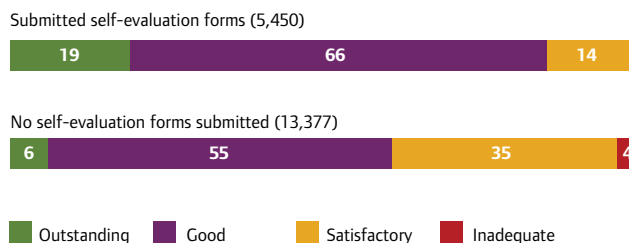
30. Looking across the full range of inspection judgements, providers were particularly strong in terms of the effectiveness of their arrangements for partnership; 77% of providers were judged to be good or outstanding in this respect compared with 68% judged to be good or outstanding for their overall effectiveness. Providers who are judged very positively on working in partnership have strong links with other agencies and other providers, such as local schools. In contrast, two areas in which childcare providers were judged less positively overall are their engagement with parents and carers and the effectiveness of self-evaluation.

31. Although it was rarely inadequate, engagement with parents was only satisfactory in 36% of provision. These providers focus more on children’s personal development and welfare than on learning. This is reflected in the information shared with parents, which is not sufficiently focused on children’s individual learning and development. Communication with parents or carers about their child’s day or general progress is often informal and oral, with no mention of the range of records or communication tools that outstanding providers use. As a result, the parents do not have easy access to information about their child’s assessment and, in some instances, are not aware that this exists. Parents are not consulted about their child’s progress at home or involved in identifying the child’s next steps in learning. There are no clear systems for parents to contribute to their child’s assessments. Furthermore, the views of parents and carers are not taken into account as part of the process of self-evaluation.

32. In contrast, where the quality of work with parents is outstanding, support for a child’s learning and development is genuinely shared. Parents provide detailed information about their child, which staff use alongside their own observations to identify and plan for children’s next steps in all areas of their learning and development. Parents are kept well informed about their child’s care and development through a range of communications, for example diaries, texts, emails, daily discussion and records of their child’s learning. In some settings, the provider and parents use tools such as a daily diary for two-way communication about what children have been doing and learning. Staff give parents ideas about activities and games they could play with their child and therefore children are very well placed to continue their learning at home.

33. A similarly mixed picture emerges for the quality of providers’ self-evaluation, which was good or outstanding in 61% of providers and satisfactory in 37%. Honest and searching self-evaluation is critical if providers are to identify areas for improvement accurately and understand precisely whether their actions to improve are effective.

Figure 13 Overall effectiveness of early years registered providers who have submitted a self-evaluation form inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)



This figure includes all providers who submitted a self-evaluation form, completed the section relating to the 12 statutory requirements and evaluated their provision for overall effectiveness.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

34. During the period 1 June 2008 to 31 August 2010, just over 17,100 early years registered providers submitted an optional self-evaluation form to Ofsted. This represents one fifth of currently active providers. Yet inspection evidence shows that those providers inspected this year who submitted a self-evaluation form were much more likely to offer good or outstanding childcare than those who did not (Figure 13). In over 2,000 providers who submitted their self-evaluation form before their inspection, around four fifths evaluated themselves the same as, or more harshly than, the inspector. This evidence, combined with the overall inspection outcomes, suggests that where the process of self-evaluation is embedded in practice, it can have a positive impact on outcomes and that a core of childcare providers do this well. However, self-evaluation is far from being securely embedded in the practice of all providers.

Supporting progress towards the early learning goals

35. The Early Years Foundation Stage sets out the learning and development requirements that all providers must meet. They include the early learning goals, which cover six areas. While none of the six areas of learning and development can be provided in isolation, the area of communication, language and literacy is a key part of young children’s development. In particular, young children develop well in this area when practitioners:

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✘ encourage the early development of speaking and listening skills in young children through play, and support older children to communicate in different situations and for a variety of purposes

✘ read to them, talk to them about what they are reading and encourage them to begin to read for themselves

✘ support and extend their ability in reading and early writing through a range of activities.

36. Providers judged to be outstanding in their overall effectiveness interact with children very effectively to develop and extend their speaking and listening skills. In these settings, practitioners ask open and meaningful questions about children's activities and experiences, offer them alternative words to extend their vocabulary, engage them in conversation and listen carefully to their responses. Through all these interactions, they allow children to learn to think for themselves, respond to new experiences and ask questions when they are unsure.

37. Outstanding childcare providers and childminders use a range of activities to develop communication, such as rhymes and songs, and link these to other areas of learning such as counting. They tell stories in a lively fashion and use props effectively to explain new words. They let children choose from an exciting range of books, and provide quiet, comfortable and inviting areas where children can read. They encourage the early development of language in babies through talking during play, using sounds and signing, responding to non-verbal expressions and encouraging them when they mimic what they hear. Children who are learning English as an additional language are helped when practitioners use some simple words in their first language when appropriate, for example words used in greetings, to help children feel secure.

38. Providers judged as inadequate in their overall effectiveness often show a lack of interaction with children. In these settings, practitioners watch children engage in activities rather than involving themselves with their play and do not extend children's communication skills or their thinking through questioning. They ask closed questions that do not require more than a few words in response, do not support or expand children's vocabulary and miss opportunities to develop emerging language skills through everyday activities. They do not encourage children to develop their language through books and stories, or to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions. They lack skill in communicating with children of different ages and stages of development. In these weaker settings, practitioners are not effective in helping children to make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals.

Compliance, investigation and enforcement

39. Ofsted takes steps to bring about improvement where childcare providers are failing to meet the government's requirements for continued registration. Ofsted aims to bring about improvement by setting actions that providers must take. However, where actions are not carried out, or where the concerns raise more serious issues about the provider's childcare provision, Ofsted can use a range of statutory enforcement measures. These range from issuing a Welfare Requirements Notice, where a provider has failed to meet one or more of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, to cancelling the provider's registration, where the concerns are more serious or are likely to put children at risk. Ofsted uses these powers proportionately, only taking more serious enforcement action where it is clear that other measures will not bring about the improvement required.

40. As part of its inspection remit, Ofsted investigates all complaints and concerns that suggest a provider is not meeting requirements. These come from a number of sources, including parents, other professionals who work with the children and agencies such as local authorities and the police. Where there are concerns about a provider who is only registered on the Childcare Register, Ofsted carries out an inspection of that provider and this forms part of the sample of providers on the Childcare Register who receive an inspection.

41. During 2009/10, Ofsted received approximately 7,900 complaints about registered childcare provision. Of these, approximately 6,900 were investigated and closed during the reporting period and around 1,000 continued under investigation.⁹ These complaints were made by parents and the general public. The total included approximately 2,800 complaints about childminding and approximately 5,000 about childcare on non-domestic premises, relating to 6% of registered providers. Just over 800 further complaints were received in relation to unregistered childcare.

42. Of the 7,900 complaints that were investigated in this period, 58% resulted in no further action because the investigation showed that the provider was fully meeting requirements. In 10% of complaints, the investigation or regulatory action is continuing. The remaining complaints resulted in Ofsted issuing letters requiring providers to take action to meet their registration requirements. Following the issue of such a letter, Ofsted checks to make sure that the provider has carried out the actions. This is done through following up the action directly with the provider and checking at the next inspection that the provider continues to implement the action. Where the provider has not met the action required, Ofsted will take further steps to bring about the necessary improvement, for example by issuing a Welfare Requirements Notice. Ofsted issued 59 formal warnings confirming that the provider had failed to comply with regulations and indicating that any further breach would be likely to result in prosecution.

43. In addition, 49 enforcement notices were issued during the period September 2009 to August 2010. These notified unregistered childminders that Ofsted had evidence that they may be childminding and, if they continued to do so without registration, they would be failing to comply with the law. The impact of issuing an enforcement notice is that it helps to prevent unregistered, and therefore potentially unsuitable, people from providing childminding to young children. Ofsted can prosecute unregistered childminders who continue to provide childminding while there is no enforcement notice in place.

Sure Start children's centres

44. As at 30 April 2010, there were 3,631 designated Sure Start children's centres.¹⁰ They provide a range of services for children under five and their families, support for parents and help for them to access:

- ✘ integrated childcare and early years education
- ✘ health services for children and themselves
- ✘ information and advice about children's services, parenting support and a range of family support services
- ✘ training and advice to gain skills and find work.

45. Ofsted's legal duty to inspect children's centres began in 2010. The inspections are to check whether each children's centre is making good arrangements for families with young children to find out about and use the services they need.

⁹ In the 2008/09 Annual Report, Ofsted reported on closed complaints only. This year Ofsted is reporting on both open (ongoing) and closed complaints.

¹⁰ *Numbers of Sure Start children's centres as at 30 April 2010* (OSR14/2010), Department for Education official statistics, June 2010.

Early years and childcare

46. In addition, inspections evaluate whether centres:

- ✘ know their communities and the sorts of services, activities and courses that are needed by families living locally
- ✘ offer those services or give families advice and support on how they can use them
- ✘ do all they can to help families use the services they need most, especially for the families that might find it hard to do so
- ✘ make sure that no group in the locality has been overlooked
- ✘ have partnerships with health services, Jobcentre Plus, childcare providers and any other key services that join up the support that families need.

47. Ofsted began inspecting children's centres from May 2010 and, under current legislation, must inspect all of them by 2015. By the end of this annual report year, Ofsted had inspected 39 children's centres (Figure 14).

Figure 14 Inspection judgements for children's centres inspected in 2009/10 (number of providers)

	Overall effectiveness	Capacity for sustained improvement	Outcomes for users	Quality of provision	Leadership and management
Outstanding	5	6	2	5	5
Good	17	17	22	19	18
Satisfactory	13	13	13	14	12
Inadequate	4	3	2	1	4
Total	39	39	39	39	39

48. As Ofsted's inspections of children's centres have begun only recently, and very few centres have been inspected, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the performance of the sector as a whole. However, from the centres inspected so far, key differences emerge between the most and least effective centres.

49. Strong children's centres are at the heart of the communities in which they work and champion the needs of those within them. They have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their local communities and work hard to provide targeted services that will meet their needs. They are exceptionally well led and managed, with a clear ambition and determination to succeed. They have effective and extensive partnership arrangements at both strategic and operational levels, which help them to deliver very good outcomes for children and families. Inspectors report that they prepare children very well for school. The centres are systematic in their use of data and information about their local communities and use these to evaluate the success of their services and plan for the future.

50. In contrast, the small number of weak children's centres inspected this year have a limited understanding of the locality in which they work or the needs of the children and families within it. They are unsuccessful at identifying and reaching all groups of potential users and do not gather information about the most vulnerable. They fail to monitor or assess the impact that their services are having on outcomes, because they do not make effective use of the data and information that are available. As a result, they are poor at planning and developing services to meet the needs of their local communities. They are often hampered by a lack of clear governance arrangements for the centre, and they have not forged effective partnerships, either strategically or locally. This has a significant negative impact on their ability to improve outcomes for children and families in their community, including preparing children for school.





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Quality and standards

Maintained schools



Key findings

- ✘ Of the schools inspected in 2009/10, 56% provide their pupils with a good or outstanding education. This is in the context of a more risk-based approach to inspection in which more satisfactory, inadequate and declining schools were selected for inspection.
- ✘ Ofsted now carries out interim assessments of all schools previously judged good or outstanding and due for inspection. Of these, 1,700 were assessed by Ofsted as having maintained their performance. Combining the previous inspection outcome of those schools receiving an interim assessment with the inspection outcomes of all schools inspected this year shows that 65% of schools are good or outstanding.
- ✘ Over three quarters of the schools inspected this year have either sustained their performance or improved since their previous inspection. However, 55% of the 220 schools previously judged outstanding and reinspected on the basis of risk were no longer outstanding in their inspection this year.
- ✘ The slow progress of many satisfactory schools is a concern: less than one third of those monitored had made good progress since their previous inspection. The quality of teaching often showed signs of improvement, but not enough to translate into better achievement for pupils. Overall 42% of the schools judged satisfactory at their previous inspection improved, 46% stayed the same and 12% declined.
- ✘ Of the schools inspected this year 8% were judged inadequate. This is a higher proportion than the 4% judged inadequate last year and due to a considerable degree to the more risk-based approach to inspection and the higher expectations of the new framework.
- ✘ The extent of variation in the proportion of good and outstanding schools found in different local authority areas is too high. Nationally, the proportion of good and outstanding schools (as measured at their latest inspection) is 68%. However, in any one local authority, this can vary from 40% of schools being good or outstanding to 90%.
- ✘ A strong relationship remains between deprivation and poorer provision: 71% of schools serving the least deprived pupils were good or outstanding compared with 46% serving the most deprived. However, the proportion of outstanding schools serving the most deprived pupils is similar to the proportion with average deprivation: these schools continue to excel in challenging circumstances.
- ✘ The quality of teaching is still too variable. Although it was good or outstanding in 59% of schools overall, it was only satisfactory in 45% of secondary schools and 39% of primary schools inspected this year. In particular, assessment continues to be an area in which schools need to improve. This was good or outstanding in just 53% of schools.

Maintained schools

- ✘ Behaviour was good or outstanding in 89% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools inspected in 2009/10. Behaviour was almost always good or outstanding in the schools where teaching was at least good. In the minority of the schools where behaviour was poor, teaching was frequently also weak.
- ✘ Leadership and management was good or outstanding in 65% of schools inspected this year – a higher proportion than for overall effectiveness. However, governance was one of the weaker aspects of leadership inspected, being good or outstanding in 56% of schools.
- ✘ The best leaders and managers exert a decisive influence on the quality of teaching and the use of assessment. In 96% of primary schools and 95% of secondary schools where the quality of teaching was good or outstanding the leadership and management of teaching and learning were also good or outstanding.
- ✘ In just over three quarters of schools safeguarding procedures were good or outstanding; they were inadequate in 2% and almost all of these had other significant weaknesses in provision. This suggests that almost all schools take a careful, responsible approach to their safeguarding arrangements.
- ✘ Of the 43 academies inspected this year, 11 were outstanding, 20 were satisfactory and three were inadequate. Outstanding academies have inspirational leadership. Their headteachers demonstrate a passion and drive for excellence.

Introduction

51. Ofsted introduced a new framework for inspecting maintained schools in September 2009, after wide-ranging consultation and an 18-month trial period involving over 400 schools in pilot inspections.¹¹ The new school inspections have been designed to have a greater impact on the quality of education by ensuring:

- ✘ a sharper focus on outcomes for all children and young people
- ✘ a stronger emphasis on teaching and learning
- ✘ a deeper analysis of the capacity of school leaders to bring about improvement.

52. Among the changes to school inspections this year, a greater priority has been given to engaging school staff, parents, carers and pupils in the process of inspection and many more lessons have been observed compared with 2008/09. Schools have welcomed the opportunity to be more engaged in inspection, especially in attending inspectors' meetings in which judgements are discussed.

The new school inspections have been designed to have a greater impact on the quality of education by ensuring a sharper focus on outcomes for all children and young people; a stronger emphasis on teaching and learning; and a deeper analysis of the capacity of school leaders to bring about improvement.

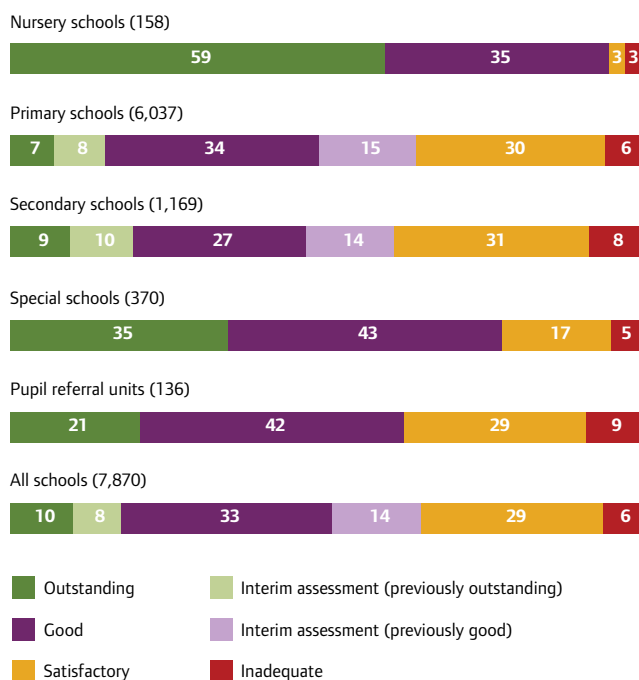
¹¹ *The framework for school inspection* (090019), Ofsted, 2010.

53. The impact of the new framework has been felt in two main ways. The first is that the framework enshrines a more proportionate approach to inspection, based on a risk assessment of schools, which Ofsted calls an interim assessment. This ensures that the time and expertise of inspectors is focused mainly on those schools which most need to improve. This year all schools judged good or outstanding in their inspection in the academic year 2006/07 (so eligible for inspection in 2009/10) were assessed on the basis of criteria which included current achievement, trends in achievement and attendance. As a result of this risk assessment, the inspections of 1,700 schools previously judged good or outstanding were deferred because there was no indication that their performance had declined. Parents received a letter from these schools setting out Ofsted's interim assessment. This has had a considerable impact on the sample of schools inspected: this year only 51% of schools inspected were previously judged good or outstanding, whereas last year this proportion was much higher at 60%.¹²

54. The second is that the new framework has deliberately raised expectations in relation to the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' achievement, progress and attainment, and the leadership and management of teaching and learning. Under the new framework more lesson observations have taken place to enable a deeper judgement on the quality of teaching and learning. There is a sharper focus on the progress that all groups of pupils are making over time, the attainment of pupils in relation to both national and contextualised averages, and whether schools are effectively narrowing the gap in achievement between potentially vulnerable pupils and their peers. These changes reflect the raised expectations nationally for what pupils should achieve and recognise that schools need to have a greater impact on narrowing gaps in outcomes for children and young people.

Overall effectiveness

Figure 15 The overall effectiveness of schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 combined with the previous inspection outcome for all schools receiving an interim assessment (percentage of schools)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

55. Figure 15 combines the outcomes of inspections carried out during 2009/10 with the previous inspection outcomes of the 1,700 schools that received an interim assessment in 2009/10.¹³ This analysis shows that, overall, 65% of schools are good or outstanding this year when both types of outcome are combined. On this analysis 18% of schools are outstanding and 6% inadequate. This profile of grades is similar to the inspection outcomes for 2008/09, before the policy of increased proportionality was implemented.

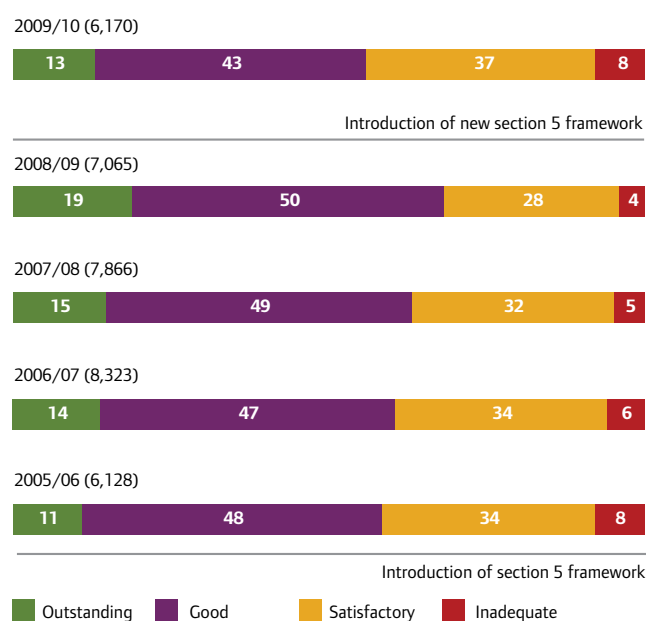
¹² This analysis is only based on those schools inspected in 2008/09 and 2009/10 for which a previous inspection judgement was available.

¹³ Interim assessments were sent to 1,700 primary and secondary schools in 2009/10. In addition, 46 previously outstanding special schools and pupil referral units received an interim assessment. However, none of these was due an inspection during 2009/10 and therefore they are excluded from this analysis.

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56. However, it is important to distinguish between where a judgement about overall effectiveness has been made following an inspection and where an interim assessment indicates that the previous performance of the school has been sustained. An interim assessment is not an inspection and does not make a fresh judgement of overall effectiveness in 2009/10.

Figure 16 The overall effectiveness of schools inspected between 1 September 2005 and 31 August 2010¹⁴ (percentage of schools)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

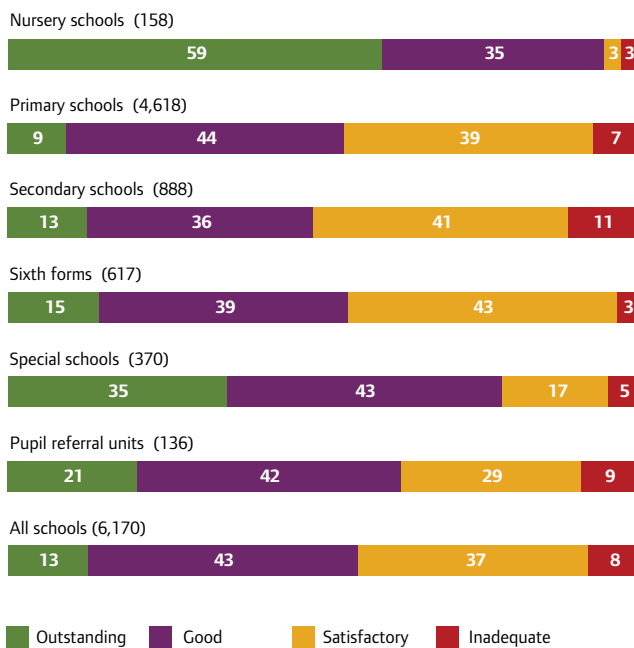
57. Figure 16 shows the overall effectiveness of all schools which received an inspection this year compared with outcomes in previous years.¹⁵ The overall effectiveness of schools inspected this year must be understood in the context of the new inspection framework. Over the period of the last inspection framework (2005/06 to 2008/09), the proportion of schools judged good or outstanding increased each year. With the introduction of the new framework the profile of inspection grades for schools inspected in 2009/10 is similar to the profile seen in 2005/06, which was the first year of the previous framework.



¹⁴ Section 5 of the Education Act 2005 places a duty on the Chief Inspector to inspect certain schools in England at prescribed intervals. *The framework for school inspection* outlines the statutory basis for the inspection of these schools and summarises the main features, principles and processes for the inspection.

¹⁵ The inspection reports of two primary schools are withheld from publication at the time of writing. Therefore the outcomes of these two inspections are not included in any analysis in this Annual Report.

Figure 17 The overall effectiveness of schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



Sixth form figures show the overall effectiveness of the sixth form judgements made on secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral unit inspections.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

58. Figure 17 shows the overall effectiveness of different types of schools inspected this year. As in previous years, the differences are striking. A detailed comparison of the judgements on their overall effectiveness shows the following:

- ✘ The strong performance of nursery schools and special schools continues to feature, as it has done in previous years.
- ✘ The proportion of pupil referral units judged to be outstanding has increased each year from 2007/08, when it was 7%, to this year when it is 21%. This is a very diverse sector; a fifth of the outstanding provision was for pregnant teenagers or young mothers; just under a third provided mainly for young people with medical needs, including home tuition services; the rest was for young people who had been, or were at risk of being, excluded from mainstream schools.

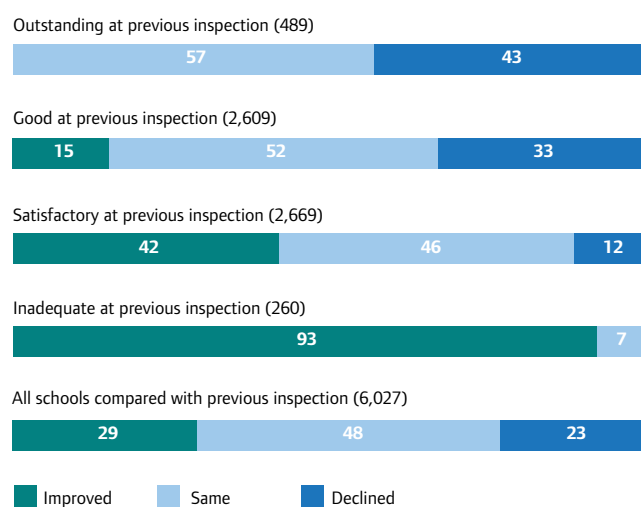
- ✘ The proportion of schools judged to be inadequate has increased from 4% last year to 8% this year. The percentage of pupil referral units and secondary schools judged to be inadequate is particularly high, at 9% and 11%, respectively.
- ✘ Fifty-four per cent of sixth forms are good or outstanding compared with 49% of secondary schools. However, sixth form inspections include sixth forms in special schools, secondary schools (including academies) and pupil referral units. Only 43% of sixth forms in secondary schools are good or outstanding, which is lower than the proportion of good and outstanding secondary schools overall.
- ✘ In 2009/10, special schools have continued to perform considerably better than schools overall. However, there is marked variability within this positive picture. In particular, provision in special schools that cater specifically for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties is often less effective than in other types of special school. These special schools were less than half as likely to be outstanding and more than twice as likely to be inadequate as all other special schools combined. Ofsted's recent report on special educational needs has identified weaknesses at all levels of the system from identification of need through to the provision of support.¹⁶ This is addressed in greater detail on page 40.

¹⁶ *The special educational needs and disability review (090221)*, Ofsted, 2010.

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59. There is considerable variation in the proportion of good and outstanding schools found in different local authority areas, and, depending on where they live, this might affect children’s chances of attending a good or outstanding school. Nationally, the proportion of good and outstanding schools (as measured at their latest inspection) is 68%. However, in any one local authority, this can vary from 40% of schools being good or outstanding to 90%. Considering just outstanding schools, 11 local authority areas have 30% or more outstanding schools, but 11 areas have only 10% or less.¹⁷ The extent of variation between different local areas is a serious concern.

Figure 18 Comparison with previous inspection: change in overall effectiveness of schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



This figure includes the 6,027 schools with a previous section 5 inspection judgement.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

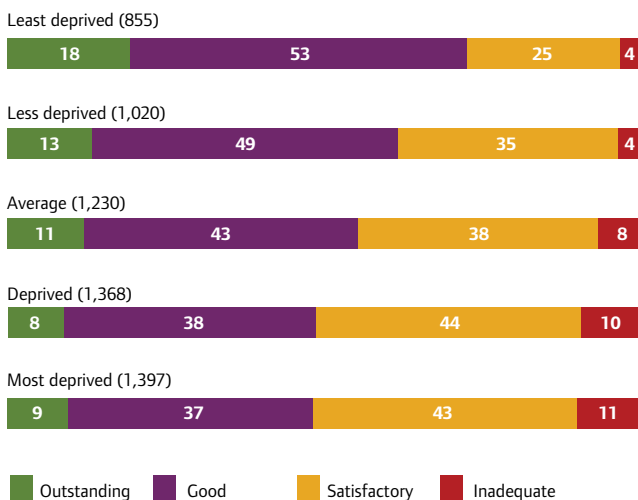
60. Figure 18 shows the overall effectiveness of schools inspected this year compared with their previous inspection judgement. It is encouraging that around three quarters of schools overall either sustained or improved on their previous performance, despite the fact that the new framework has raised expectations. It is also encouraging that 93% of inadequate schools have improved between inspections. However, the proportion of outstanding schools that have not maintained their performance has increased from 22% to 43%. This change is likely to be strongly associated with the risk assessment process, since previously outstanding schools in which performance was assessed as secure will have had their inspections deferred.

61. In her commentary to last year’s Annual Report, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector said that the greatest challenge is to raise satisfactory provision to be good or outstanding. This remains an issue this year. The proportion of schools that were satisfactory at their previous inspection and that have improved has reduced from 53% in 2008/09 to 42% this year. Furthermore, almost three quarters of schools judged satisfactory this year had only satisfactory capacity to improve. A culture of continuing improvement is needed in schools if they are to respond successfully to constantly rising expectations. Ofsted is now carrying out monitoring visits between inspections of up to 40% of satisfactory schools to assess the impact of this.

As in previous years, the schools serving the most deprived pupils tend to perform less well. However, among the schools serving the most deprived pupils, the proportion of outstanding performance is similar to that found in the schools with average deprivation.

¹⁷ Figures are for local authority areas and include some schools, such as academies, that are not within the local authority family of schools. The City of London and Isles of Scilly are excluded from this figure as they each have only one school.

Figure 19 The overall effectiveness of schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 by deprivation (percentage of schools)



This chart is based on the deprivation of the pupils on the school roll in January 2010 as measured by the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) 2007. See Glossary for a detailed explanation of this. The chart groups schools by quintiles of deprivation. 'Most deprived' indicates the 20% of schools with the most deprived pupils.

Nurseries, pupil referral units and hospital schools are excluded from this analysis because the IDACI measure is not available for these schools.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

62. Previous Annual Reports have commented on the strong association between deprivation and poorer outcomes for learners, and also the poorer quality of overall provision in deprived areas. The 2008/09 Annual Report found that schools with high proportions of pupils from deprived backgrounds, as measured by their eligibility for free school meals, were more likely to be inadequate than those serving less deprived communities.

63. Figure 19 groups schools into five bands from the most to the least deprived. As in previous years, the schools serving the least deprived pupils continue to perform very well with the highest proportion of outstanding and a low proportion of inadequate provision. The schools serving the most deprived pupils tend to perform less well. However, among the schools serving the most deprived pupils, the proportion of outstanding performance is similar to that found in the schools with average deprivation.

64. These figures indicate that a core of outstanding schools serve the most deprived communities. Their strategies to overcome disadvantage and secure outstanding progress for their pupils are described in Ofsted's publications on outstanding schools.¹⁸ However, the 54% of schools inspected during 2009/10 that are satisfactory or inadequate and are serving the most deprived communities remain a cause for concern. These schools must improve in order to help break the cycles of low achievement that often blight such communities.

65. One of the most high profile schemes to support improvement in schools serving disadvantaged communities has been the London Challenge. Established in 2003, its purpose is to improve outcomes in low-performing secondary schools in the capital. From 2008 primary schools were included. Ofsted reported on the initiative in 2006, finding that London schools had improved dramatically. A similar survey in 2010 found that these improvements have continued. Programmes of support for schools are planned with experienced and credible London Challenge advisors using a shared and accurate audit of need. Furthermore, excellent system leadership and networks allow effective partnerships to be established between schools to support improvement.¹⁹

Quality of education in the Early Years Foundation Stage

66. Schools which have children below the age of five receive a separate overall effectiveness judgement for their provision of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This year, over 4,500 schools inspected offered Early Years Foundation Stage provision; this was judged good or outstanding in just under three quarters of schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage in nursery schools (59% outstanding) and special schools (46% outstanding) is particularly strong.

¹⁸ *Twelve outstanding secondary schools: excelling against the odds* (080240), Ofsted, 2009; *Twenty outstanding primary schools: excelling against the odds* (090170), Ofsted, 2009; *Twelve outstanding special schools: excelling through inclusion* (090171), Ofsted, 2009.

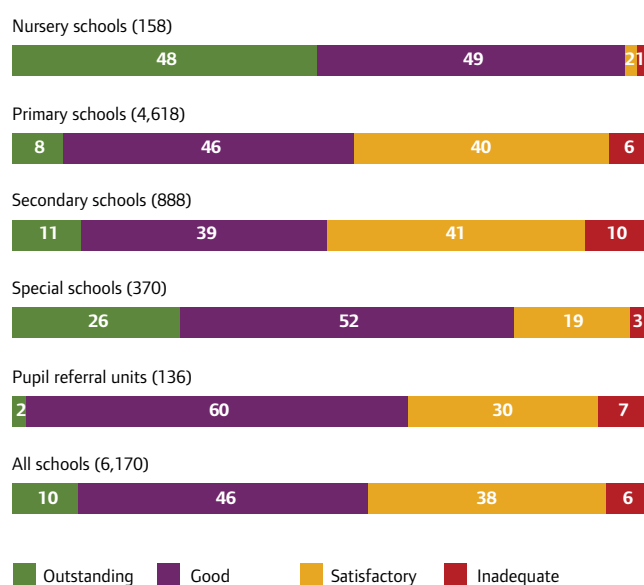
¹⁹ *London Challenge* (100192), Ofsted, 2010, forthcoming.

Maintained schools

67. In over half the satisfactory and over three quarters of the inadequate primary schools, the Early Years Foundation Stage is stronger than the school as a whole. In 29% of the inadequate primary schools the Early Years Foundation Stage is judged good or outstanding. In these schools, children enter the nursery or Reception and make at least good progress in developing all areas of learning because of good teaching and adults who work well together to meet children’s individual needs. Judgements for teaching and learning are more positive in the early years compared with later stages and this has an impact on the progress children make.

Pupils’ achievement

Figure 20 Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning in schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



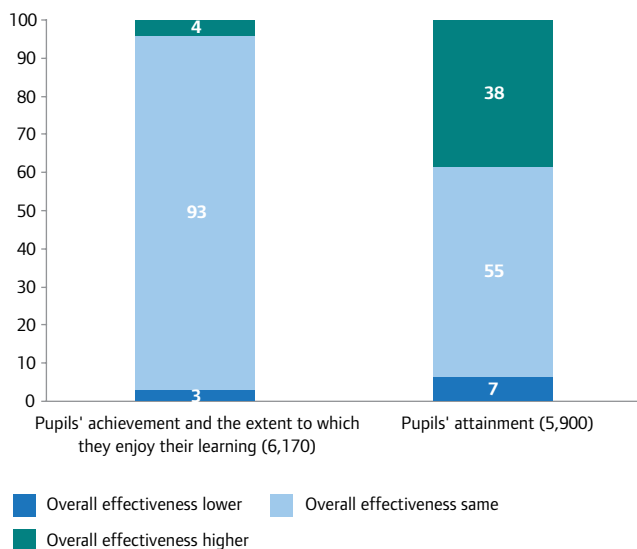
Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

68. Of the schools inspected this year, 56% were judged to be good or outstanding in terms of their pupils’ achievement and the extent to which pupils enjoyed their learning (Figure 20). Achievement is judged on the basis of the progress that pupils make relative to their starting points and their absolute attainment in tests and examinations. A much discussed feature of the new framework has been the increased focus on pupils’ attainment. However, it is the judgement on achievement that remains a much stronger determinant of a school’s overall effectiveness.

69. Figure 21 shows the very strong correlation between achievement and overall effectiveness. Of the schools inspected this year, 93% had the same judgements for their overall effectiveness and for pupils’ achievement. In comparison, just 55% of schools had the same judgement for their attainment and their overall effectiveness. In over a third of all schools inspected this year, the judgement on their overall effectiveness was higher than the judgement on their attainment. This shows that where achievement is strong, even when attainment is less so, this will be reflected in the positive judgement for a school’s overall effectiveness.

In over a third of all schools inspected this year, the judgement on their overall effectiveness was higher than the judgement on their attainment. This shows that where achievement is strong, even when attainment is less so, this will be reflected in the positive judgement for a school’s overall effectiveness.

Figure 21 A comparison of the overall effectiveness with achievement and attainment judgements in schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



A judgement was not made for attainment in 269 special schools where the cognitive abilities of the pupils are so severely restricted that it would be unreasonable to limit the judgement about achievement because of low attainment. They are excluded from this analysis, as is one secondary school.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

70. Low attainment alone does not prevent schools from being judged as good. Furthermore, in 15% of primary schools and 20% of secondary schools judged to be outstanding overall, attainment was broadly average (grade 3). These schools share a number of common features. Typically, their pupils make good or outstanding progress from their low attainment at entry. In helping their pupils to make such progress, the schools overcome a range of barriers to learning to secure a strong trajectory of improvement. These schools often have higher than average proportions of children from a deprived background or with special educational needs. The schools tend to be characterised by ambitious and self-critical leadership. Leaders understand their school's strengths and weaknesses precisely and know how to bring about improvement; they provide outstanding support and care for individual pupils which enable them to thrive, and they develop a curriculum which engages pupils in challenging, relevant and enjoyable learning.

71. The extent to which schools are able to support pupils to make progress, whatever their abilities and starting points, is a critical part of inspectors' judgements on achievement overall. In 65% of the schools inspected this year, the progress made by children and young people with special educational needs was good or outstanding. However, in more than one in three schools, the progress made by children with special educational needs was no better than satisfactory. Ofsted's recent review of special educational needs and disability noted that no one model of education – such as special schools, full inclusion in mainstream settings, or specialist units co-located with mainstream settings – worked better than any other.²⁰

72. The characteristics of schools in which potentially vulnerable pupils make excellent progress are well understood. High expectations in these schools mean that difficulties are not accepted as an excuse for poor outcomes. Staff are skilled and experienced, have a strong understanding of their subject and their professional development is matched well to the pupils' changing needs. They know their pupils well, identify their needs early and are determined in removing barriers to learning. Potentially vulnerable learners make good progress where there is a strong focus on attendance, accurate monitoring of progress across all areas of learning and close matching of interventions to individuals' needs.²¹

73. However, there is no room for complacency as this high-quality support for the most vulnerable learners is far from universally available. Pupils identified as having special educational needs are disproportionately from disadvantaged backgrounds, are much more likely to be absent or excluded from school, and achieve less well than their peers, both in terms of their attainment at any given age and in terms of their progress over time. Over the last five years, these outcomes have changed very little.

²⁰ *The special educational needs and disability review* (090221), Ofsted, 2010.

²¹ *Equalities in action* (080272), Ofsted, 2010.

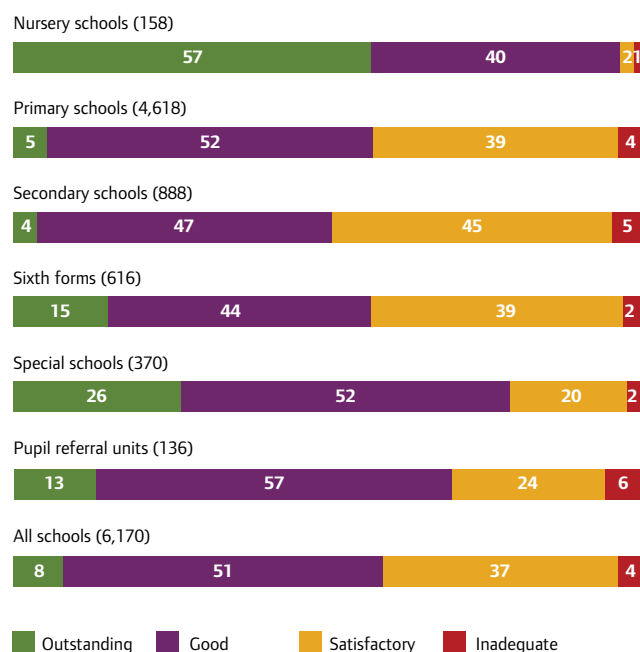
The extent to which schools are able to support pupils to make progress, whatever their abilities and starting points, is a critical part of inspectors' judgements on achievement overall.

74. The review of special educational needs and disability uncovered weaknesses at all levels in the system. The chief concerns identified in the review included widespread inconsistencies in the identification of special educational needs, not only between different local areas but also within them. Children and young people with similar needs were not being treated equitably. In some of the individual case studies conducted for the review, repeated and different assessments were a time-consuming obstacle to progress rather than a way to provide effective support. Once a child's needs had been identified, the provision of additional support was often not of good enough quality and did not lead to significantly better outcomes for the child or young person. For pupils identified for support at School Action level, the additional provision was often making up for the lack of good enough whole-class teaching or pastoral support.²² Indeed, the survey found that some pupils would not be identified as having special educational needs if schools focused on improving teaching and learning for all.

75. For more academically able pupils, inspection evidence shows that teaching and learning can be insufficiently challenging and poorly matched to their needs. This is a weakness even in some schools otherwise judged to be good. Where this is the case opportunities for independent learning can be too limited, teaching is too directive, and additional tasks for higher-attaining pupils often simply require pupils to complete more of the same work rather than introduce new challenge. As a result more able pupils can lose enthusiasm and fail to make the progress of which they are capable.

The quality of teaching

Figure 22 The quality of teaching in schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010



There is no individual judgement on the quality of teaching in sixth forms. This chart shows the judgements on 'The quality of provision in the sixth form' for which the evaluation of teaching is a key element.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

22 When pupils are regarded as requiring School Action, this usually means they have additional learning needs and that they should receive additional support from within the school, such as small group tuition.

76. The new inspection framework has placed a stronger emphasis on the observation of lessons, and includes a new judgement on the use of assessment to support learning. These changes mean that a sharper judgement can be made on the quality of teaching in the school. As measured against these new and higher expectations, the overall picture of the quality of teaching across all the schools inspected this year is mixed. Teaching is good or outstanding in 59% of schools, but only satisfactory in 37% and inadequate in 4% (Figure 22). Teaching is good or outstanding in only half the secondary schools inspected this year. Schools where the teaching is good or outstanding cater, on average, for pupils who are significantly less deprived than those catered for in schools where the quality of the teaching is satisfactory or inadequate. These findings indicate the extent of the challenges.

77. Schools with outstanding teaching overall are single-minded in their pursuit of high-quality learning for all. Senior and middle managers visit classrooms frequently to monitor teaching and learning. Staff are keen to learn from each other: school leaders encourage the sharing of strengths in teaching across departments, year groups and subjects and look for opportunities for the most effective teachers to demonstrate good practice. This is not achieved easily or quickly. Even effective schools find it challenging to secure consistently high-quality teaching across the full range of subjects and year groups.

78. Teaching is judged outstanding overall in only 5% of primary schools and 4% of secondary schools. However, evidence from lesson observations shows that outstanding teaching is taking place even in some schools where the overall teaching and learning judgement may be lower.

79. The key features of outstanding teaching differ very little between phases and types of school. Teaching is most effective when teachers have high expectations and excellent subject knowledge, and build positive relationships with pupils. Teachers use lively examples and introduce relevant contexts that bring the subject to life. There is a varied and effective mix of practical, oral, written and group work, and technology is used imaginatively to develop learning. Work is carefully matched to pupils' abilities and prior knowledge so that pupils build their skills and understanding. Teachers assess their progress carefully. Open and challenging questions extend pupils' reasoning and vocabulary and help them to become enthusiastic and self-motivated learners, eager to contribute and share their ideas. At its very best, such teaching generates an infectious enthusiasm for learning.

80. The very high proportion of outstanding teaching in nursery schools is striking. Key strengths in the nursery sector include well-informed and planned questioning, a wide range of imaginative activities which include both play and more formal learning, and good opportunities for children to develop their independence, learning skills, communication and understanding. The factors which tend to set outstanding nursery schools apart from good ones are:

- ✘ the exceptionally high ambition for children's learning, shared among all those involved with the school: staff, governors, parents and carers
- ✘ the meticulous observation and monitoring of children's progress, and the use of assessment information to plan their learning
- ✘ particular attention given to listening to the views of parents and carers, who are seen as partners in their children's learning and development
- ✘ the creation of rich learning environments, indoors and outdoors, which contribute to good or better outcomes for children
- ✘ the strong ethos for learning which leads to investment in training for staff, continual checking of the success of their work and seeking opportunities for improvement.

Maintained schools

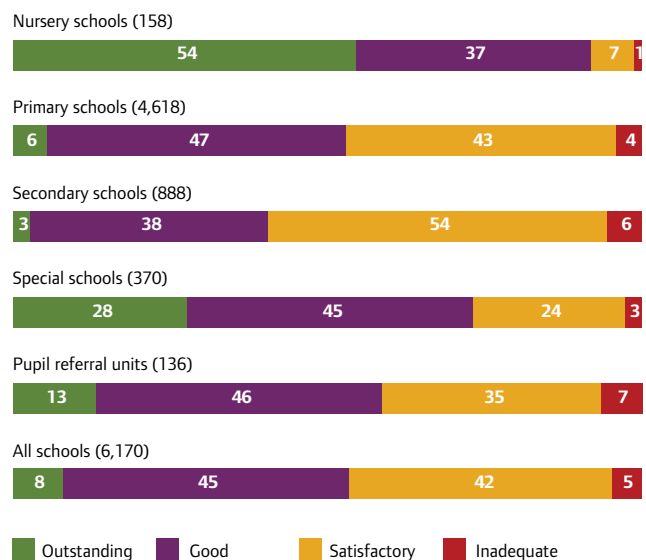
- 81.** The quality of teaching in pupil referral units is more polarised; there is more outstanding teaching than in mainstream schools overall but also more that is inadequate. The characteristic features of outstanding provision include the absolute commitment of all staff to ensure success, the development of an imaginative and personalised curriculum, highly effective assessment of learning needs, strong pastoral support, and detailed and active partnerships with a wide range of other organisations. Effective pupil referral units maintain close contact with pupils' mainstream schools and with parents. They understand that success, including gaining qualifications, motivates pupils and can radically improve their attitudes to learning. Close working between teachers and teaching assistants ensures that the level of challenge is right for all pupils and that this is maintained throughout the school day. Involving pupils in identifying and agreeing challenging targets is critical to engaging them in their learning.
- 82.** But, at 6%, the proportion of inadequate teaching in pupil referral units is a concern. In these schools too many pupils show a disregard for learning: the tasks do not engage them and are poorly matched to what they already know and their current needs. Teachers have not paid sufficient attention to assessments of pupils' learning, progress and personal development. The pupils lack sufficient self-confidence to attempt anything other than the most straightforward tasks and rely too much on adult support. Such teaching then adversely affects their behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning.
- 83.** The overall quality of teaching in special schools is good or outstanding in more than three quarters of schools inspected. Success in literacy and numeracy, including through nationally recognised accreditation, features prominently. Teachers involve pupils as far as possible in planning and evaluating their learning, and also work closely with parents and carers so that families, in partnership with the school, are able to support their children's learning beyond the school. When teaching in special schools is only satisfactory, teachers have a tendency to intervene too quickly, without giving pupils enough time to solve a problem or tackle a task for themselves.
- 84.** Too much teaching is only satisfactory: 37% across all schools. This is particularly marked for primary and secondary schools where 39% and 45% of schools, respectively, were judged to be satisfactory for their teaching. Weaker teaching is often associated with a limited range of teaching approaches and mundane tasks which fail to engage pupils. Where the teaching is no better than satisfactory, not enough is expected of the pupils. For example in less effective mathematics lessons pupils tend to be given initial examples followed by many similar questions that do not go beyond the basic revision of a skill or technique. Tailored support and challenge that might enable individual pupils to achieve their best are not precise enough in these lessons, and teaching is too often aimed mainly at the average.
- 85.** In sixth forms, 39% of provision is satisfactory. As with secondary schools in which the teaching is satisfactory overall, marked variations in the quality of teaching across courses and subjects are a common characteristic. When teaching is predominantly didactic, the students do not acquire the independent learning skills that they need, at this level, to make good progress. A common feature of less effective sixth forms is a poor match between the curriculum and students' abilities. This is sometimes exacerbated by weaknesses in information, advice and guidance, particularly when students are directed to courses which are inappropriate for their needs and capabilities and where assessment is not sufficiently rigorous to highlight the limited progress they are making.
- 86.** It is common to find satisfactory schools with pockets of good or even outstanding teaching but too often this quality is neither recognised by the school leadership nor disseminated. There are few systematic opportunities for teachers to learn from each other and so good practice becomes isolated. Inconsistent teaching hinders pupils' progress and undermines their opportunities to enjoy their learning fully and achieve as well as they should.

87. Teaching is inadequate in 4% of schools overall, but shows some variation between type of school: very little teaching in nursery schools, sixth forms or special schools is inadequate, but the figure is as high as 6% of pupil referral units and 5% of secondary schools. The features of inadequate teaching are very similar across schools of different types. Teaching time is not used well: there is insufficient drive for pupils to work quickly, time can be wasted moving between activities, and teachers do not check routinely whether pupils have understood and are able to complete the tasks. Too often this leaves pupils working below their capacity, with too many of them trying to learn from activities which are either too easy or too difficult. In some cases, teachers' poor subject knowledge, combined with their focus on what pupils should do rather than on what they should learn, leads to confusion about the purpose of the lesson. Typically, this results in pupils' frustration and disengagement, with disruptive behaviour at times getting in the way of progress, even for pupils who are keen to learn. Very often, inadequate lessons are dominated by the teacher doing the talking. Pupils have few opportunities to collaborate, to extend their understanding through enquiry, or to engage in productive dialogue.



Assessment

Figure 23 The use of assessment to support learning in schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

88. How well teachers assess their pupils' progress and then use the information they gather to improve their learning are critical in the overall quality of teaching. Previous Annual Reports have commented that assessment is a weakness in many schools. The use of assessment is good or outstanding in 53% of the schools inspected this year. This is a slightly less positive judgement than for the quality of teaching overall and therefore reinforces the evidence of previous years that this is an area in which schools need to improve. Lesson observations confirm this finding: assessment to support learning was often one of the weaker aspects of lessons that were inspected.

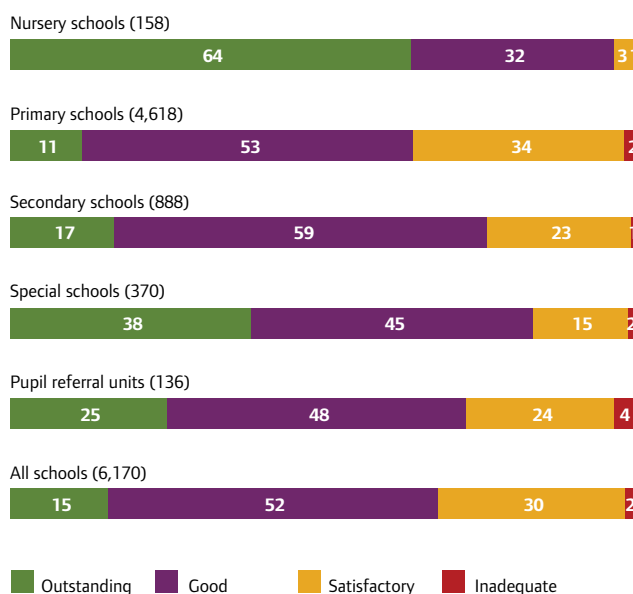
Maintained schools

89. The use of assessment is outstanding in 8% of schools. In the most effective primary schools, assessment practice is comprehensive but unobtrusive. Schools are most effective when they use assessment to plan teaching so that learning is accelerated. The best practice in secondary schools is rigorous, embedding assessment strategies across all subjects. Assessment is used as a powerful tool to monitor pupils' progress in classrooms and design learning activities which provide the right level of challenge for pupils of all abilities. Regular marking provides pupils with detailed feedback on their work and guidance on what they need to do to improve or to extend their understanding. Teachers make judicious use of opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers to deepen their awareness of strengths and weaknesses. At a whole-school level, assessment information is used to track pupils' progress so that any signs of underachievement are quickly identified and addressed.

90. Nevertheless, assessment remains an area that schools find challenging. It is a particular challenge in the secondary sector, where assessment is only satisfactory in 54% of schools. Many of the weaknesses in teaching identified above, such as the poor match of tasks and activities to pupils' abilities, stem from deficiencies in using assessment to inform learning. In these cases, teachers are not always clear about what exactly is happening in the classroom, which is why continual assessment is key to improving the processes of teaching and learning. A further issue is the consistency with which assessment procedures are applied at all levels across the school. Considerable variations in the quality of marking and the effective use of assessment information to plan lessons are common weaknesses. When pupils do not have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their own learning, they are unlikely to know what they need to do to improve, even when they know their personal targets.

Curriculum

Figure 24 The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships, in schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

91. In just over two thirds of schools inspected this year, the curriculum is good or outstanding at meeting the needs of pupils. It is a particular strength in secondary schools, in which it is a key factor in raising attainment, improving behaviour and attendance and promoting personal development. In one in six secondary schools inspected this year, the curriculum provision was judged outstanding. In these schools the curriculum is carefully designed, flexible and caters very well for the range of needs, abilities and interests of the students in the school. Inspections identified judicious decisions to make the curriculum more responsive to individual needs, leading to increased motivation and better qualifications. The best schools design well-tailored programmes for the most vulnerable students, giving them access to all aspects of a broad and balanced curriculum.

92. Secondary schools in which the curriculum is outstanding are characterised by a clear focus on ensuring that students acquire good basic skills in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology and learning skills. Strong partnerships with other schools, colleges and learning providers frequently underpin outstanding curricula in secondary schools. In particular, these often provide increased vocational or applied learning provision for young people aged 14 to 19 that, when carefully implemented, results in improved outcomes, especially for students whose achievement would otherwise have been low. The positive impact of specialism on the curriculum is also a key factor in a great many outstanding secondary schools, for example by promoting literacy through external partnerships linked to the specialism.

93. In many secondary schools where the curriculum is outstanding students are able to accelerate their pace of learning successfully by, for example, completing Key Stage 3 courses early, completing a BTEC course in Year 9, or gaining access to AS courses in Year 11. However, entering pupils for examinations early is not always good practice, particularly in schools where the curriculum is not as well designed. In mathematics subject inspections, for example, an increase has been observed in schools starting GCSE mathematics courses in Year 9. In a few schools this leads to pupils stopping mathematics in Year 10 or early in Year 11 when they have achieved a grade C. At this stage they may not have achieved their potential. Such practice raises concerns about the possible negative impact on uptake of and success in advanced level studies of mathematics.

94. The quality of the curriculum in primary schools was better overall in the core subjects (although less so in mathematics) than in foundation subjects. This reflects the continued attention primary schools give to the core subjects. Underpinning the success of the most effective primary schools in supporting literacy for disadvantaged pupils was systematic teaching of the basic skills of reading and writing, including spelling, grammar, phonics and the regular teaching of handwriting.²³ In mathematics, the move towards more flexibility in the primary curriculum has led to schools using more topics and themed approaches, providing opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematics across the curriculum. Although pupils find such activities interesting, this cross-curriculum approach to developing numeracy can lack coherence when poorly planned.

95. Ofsted's recent survey on the factors that contribute to Finnish pupils' success in mathematics found that the sharp focus on developing pupils' literacy skills meant that they were able to concentrate on the mathematics in written problems without being hampered by poor reading.²⁴ The survey also found that pupils learn from the outset to solve mathematical problems posed in realistic contexts and demonstrate fluency in functional mathematics. This is supported by the quality of mathematics textbooks used, which set out a fairly consistent pedagogical approach to teaching mathematics, and the mathematics education and subject-specific pedagogical training of primary teachers. These findings have implications for policy and practice in this country.

²³ *Literacy (090237)*, Ofsted, forthcoming.

²⁴ *Finnish pupils' success in mathematics (100105)*, Ofsted, 2010.

Maintained schools

96. More thematic or topic-based approaches to the primary curriculum, when well planned and based on a careful audit of skills and content in the foundation subjects involved, have led to a stimulating and imaginative curriculum. However, in other schools, such approaches have resulted in the marginalisation or, occasionally, the virtual disappearance of subjects such as geography. Where topics have not been well planned, pupils' experience has been fragmented and progression in subject-specific skills and knowledge has been compromised. The subjects most affected have been history, geography, religious education, art, and design and technology. Weaknesses in the curriculum in foundation subjects in primary schools have been commonly associated with a lack of subject expertise and of subject-specific staff development. A common characteristic of primary schools where the curriculum is outstanding is the significant strengths in provision for the arts, modern foreign languages, sport and music.

97. Increasingly, successful special schools provide opportunities for learning, such as enterprise work, that strengthen pupils' links with the community, enable them to apply their skills in a realistic context and widen their understanding of the world. A flexible curriculum enables programmes to be planned that are personalised for pupils, including opportunities for vocational learning such as work experience and part-time attendance at college. This motivates them and helps them to move on to further education or work-based training.

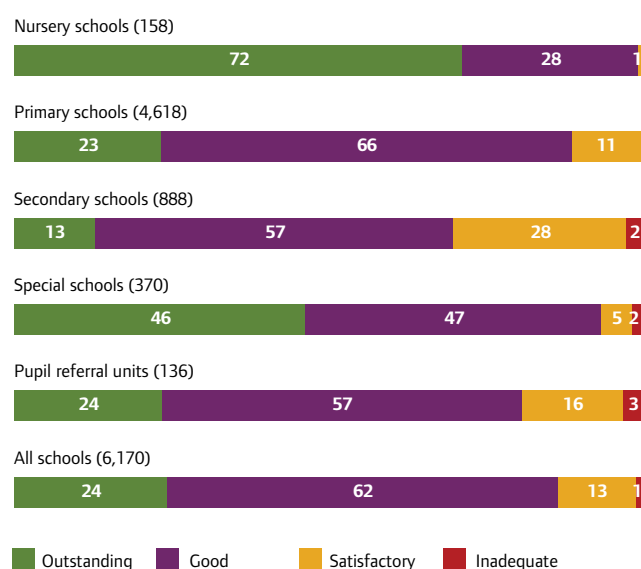
Inspection shows a strong association between good behaviour and stimulating and engaging teaching which meets the needs of the pupils.

98. The relevance and accessibility of the curriculum are critical to the success of pupil referral units. Effective pupil referral units provide a curriculum which is tailored for each pupil, focuses on literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology as essential preparation for life, and that leads to meaningful qualifications and accreditation. The best pupil referral units manage their curriculum in a way that provides continuity with the pupils' mainstream school and therefore supports their return to it. Pupils are given good guidance about careers and the opportunities available when they leave; this direction and purpose motivates them to do well. For many potentially vulnerable pupils, a successfully thought-out and individualised curriculum enables them to work towards a wide range of academic and vocational qualifications. These are essential if the pupils are to become engaged in further education and training.

Behaviour and attendance

Behaviour

Figure 25 Behaviour in schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

99. Pupils' behaviour is a strength in 86% of the schools inspected this year (Figure 25). Behaviour is particularly strong in primary schools, where it was good or outstanding in 89% of those inspected, compared with 70% of the secondary schools. Only 18 primary schools and 22 secondary schools were judged to have inadequate behaviour. The high standard of behaviour in schools is borne out by what inspectors observed in lessons.

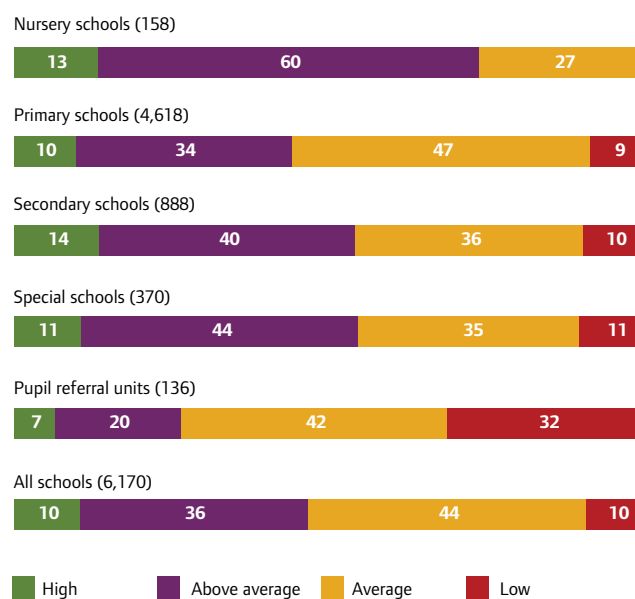
100. Inspection shows a strong association between good behaviour and stimulating and engaging teaching which meets the needs of the pupils. Behaviour was almost always good or outstanding in the schools where teaching was at least good. In the minority of the schools where behaviour was poor, teaching was frequently also weak. Good behaviour is reinforced through clear expectations and behaviour policies which are consistently applied, teaching which promotes social and moral development, and effective, targeted support for individual pupils whose behaviour is particularly challenging.

101. Pupil referral units are often required to manage some of the most challenging behaviour. The most effective pupil referral units have excellent support systems and provide a safe environment where pupils learn to manage their own behaviour and respond appropriately to difficult situations, both in school and outside. Adults have high expectations and set clear and consistent boundaries. Strategies to reward pupils' positive attitudes to learning are well considered. In the best pupil referral units, pupils regularly comment that these schools give them a chance to 'sort themselves out'. However, in 3% of pupil referral units behaviour is inadequate. Weaker pupil referral units exclude pupils too often. As a result, they restrict pupils' opportunities to learn because they fail to manage their behaviour effectively.

102. The proportion of schools inspected this year where pupils' behaviour is inadequate is very low. However, in secondary schools it has increased since last year from 1% to 2%. In 17 of the 22 secondary schools where behaviour was inadequate, teaching was also inadequate. Similarly, in 95% of the schools where behaviour was satisfactory, the quality of teaching was no better than satisfactory. In addition to the strong link between behaviour and the quality of teaching, there is a striking correlation between deprivation and behaviour. Behaviour in schools serving the least deprived communities is more than twice as likely to be outstanding than behaviour in schools in the most deprived areas. Nevertheless, pupils' behaviour was good or outstanding in more than 80% of schools in the most deprived areas.

Attendance

Figure 26 Attendance in schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Maintained schools

103. Under the new framework, the criteria for judging attendance are now more explicit, and greater consideration is given to persistent absence.²⁵ In special schools and pupil referral units, attendance is also judged this way, using the same national benchmarks as those used in mainstream schools. The judgement on attendance contributes to the judgement on pupils' economic well-being. Figure 26 shows how attendance was judged across different school types. As with behaviour, there is a very strong correlation between deprivation and attendance. In the least deprived schools, attendance was above average or high in 85% of those inspected this year. By contrast, in the most deprived schools, attendance was above average or high in just 17% of those inspected.

104. The curriculum in schools with high attendance engages pupils in a wide range of exciting opportunities beyond the classroom. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils are a key feature of these schools, at all phases. In these schools, individual pupils whose attendance is not good enough are supported to improve it. Of the schools where attendance is low, 28% of them are inadequate for their overall effectiveness. However, low attendance in other schools comes about because of the persistent absence of a minority of pupils on whom the school's strategies to promote good attendance are not having sufficient impact.

105. A survey by Ofsted identified some of the most effective strategies for tackling persistent absence. Important elements of these include early contact with parents on the first day of absence to reinforce the message that good attendance matters; working with education welfare services and the police to reduce casual truancy which often marks the start of a pattern of poor attendance; and taking time to understand from children and young people why they do not attend and actively tackling the reasons. In one secondary school visited for the survey, for example, attendance in Year 7 started reasonably well but steadily dropped. Discussions with the pupils concluded that they sometimes found it hard to adapt to the less active style of the lessons compared with what they were used to in their primary schools.

Primary-trained advanced skills teachers were deployed to reorganise the curriculum, broaden the range of teaching methods and improve transition from the primary schools. This reduced levels of absence.²⁶

106. Attendance remains a particular problem in pupil referral units, where it is low in just under a third of those inspected this year. Many pupils attending these units have a history of poor attendance and a lack of engagement with education that have a serious impact on their learning and progress. Where low attendance and persistent absence are a problem, common weaknesses include insufficiently robust systems for monitoring attendance, strategies to reduce absence which are not targeted sharply enough, poor evaluation of which strategies are successful and relationships with parents and carers which are not strong or embedded.

107. In contrast, the most effective pupil referral units have supported their pupils to improve their previously low attendance. These units help their pupils to settle quickly into their new environment. They carefully assess each pupil's prior attainment and then tailor lessons to meet their needs. This helps pupils to experience success and feel motivated to attend. They set challenging targets for attendance and monitor progress towards these assiduously. Consistent systems reward good attendance as well as good behaviour and learning, and policies for first-day contact when a pupil is absent are robust. Partnerships with parents and carers, supplemented by strong working relationships with education welfare officers, social work teams, and other agencies are effective in supporting the attendance of those who are the most vulnerable. An engaging curriculum which pupils can see is relevant to their needs and their future, coupled with good-quality teaching, means that pupils want to attend and feel pride in the improvements they make.

25 'Persistent absence' is defined by the Department for Education as any pupil missing at least one fifth of the available sessions for any reason (including truancy).

26 *Children missing from education* (100041), Ofsted, 2010.

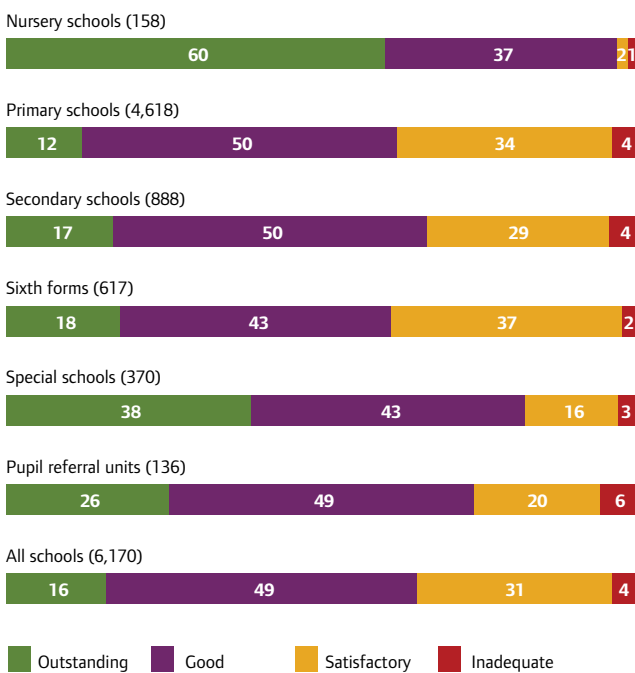
Leadership and management

108. Under the new inspection framework specific and separate judgements are made on:

- ✘ leadership to embed ambition and drive improvement
- ✘ leadership and management of teaching and learning.

Leadership to embed ambition and drive improvement

Figure 27 The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement in schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



Secondary school, special school and pupil referral unit figures include those which have sixth form/post-16 provision.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

109. Leadership to embed ambition and drive improvement was judged to be good or outstanding in 65% of schools, a higher proportion than for the judgement on overall effectiveness. The decisive impact of the best leadership and management on teaching and learning is also a clear message from inspections carried out this year.

110. The strength of leadership and management is pivotal to schools' improvement. Effective leaders know their school well and set ambitious targets based on perceptive self-evaluation. They draw on the outcomes of their rigorous monitoring of teaching and meticulous tracking of pupils' learning and progress to target areas where improvements are needed. This clear direction and high expectations contribute to building morale among staff. Responsibility for leadership is shared and staff work as a cohesive, efficient team. Where leadership fails to drive improvement, self-evaluation lacks insight or is over-generous so that priorities are not clear, the impact of actions on pupils' outcomes is not well understood, and responsibility is not shared effectively with middle managers, subject leaders and others in the school.

111. Governance is one of the weaker aspects of leadership inspected this year, being good or outstanding in 56% of schools. In just over a fifth of the schools inspected, governance was judged to be less effective than leadership, which suggests that there is potential in many schools for governors to make a greater contribution than they do at present to improving outcomes. Similarly, the effectiveness of the management committee was good or outstanding in half the pupil referral units inspected this year. However, in those judged outstanding overall, the contribution of the management committee was often not as strong as other aspects of provision, being less than outstanding in just under two thirds of the units. Management committees are the direct responsibility of local authorities.

112. Governors are most effective when they are fully involved in the school's self-evaluation and use the knowledge gained to challenge the school, understand its strengths and weaknesses and contribute to shaping its strategic direction. In contrast, weak governance is likely to fail to ensure statutory requirements are met, for example those related to safeguarding. In addition, where governance is weak the involvement of governors in monitoring the quality of provision is not well-enough defined or sufficiently rigorous and challenging.

Maintained schools

113. This year, 114 primary and secondary schools had improved by two or more inspection grades in terms of their overall effectiveness since their last inspection: 80 improved from satisfactory to outstanding, 33 from inadequate to good, and one from inadequate to outstanding. In these schools, leadership has been transformational. It is characterised by clarity of vision and high expectations, a sense of drive and common purpose which galvanises staff and pupils, and the exceptional rigour with which progress is monitored and improvement activities are evaluated. The effective management of teaching and learning, supported by strong lesson evaluation, professional development and assessment systems, is paramount. This approach to managing teaching and learning is having a rapid impact on improving outcomes for pupils. In secondary schools in particular, leadership is a team effort with strong middle leaders playing a critical role in driving improvements in teaching and learning.

114. The previous inspection reports of these rapidly improving schools show that in many cases the early signs of progress were evident three years ago but at the time had not been in place long enough to have a demonstrable impact on the quality of education. This suggests that, even in some of the fastest improving schools, the journey to excellence requires attention and perseverance over a significant period of time. In many of the primary schools, there is evidence that the schools have recovered from a period of staffing instability or turbulence.

Leadership of teaching and learning

115. The best leaders and managers exert a decisive influence on the quality of teaching and the use of assessment. In 96% of primary schools and 95% of secondary schools where the quality of teaching was good or outstanding, leadership and management of teaching and learning were also judged to be good or outstanding. In these schools, leaders pay detailed attention to the quality of teaching and learning. They ensure that monitoring systems are robust and that teachers are supported by high-quality training that is focused on identified improvement needs in order to secure further progress. There is a strong focus on sharing good practice across the school and between schools, with middle leaders playing an active role in improving teaching and the use of assessment.

116. Ofsted published a survey this year about the influence of school leaders in improving teaching and learning and the professional development of the workforce. This found that achieving consistency in teaching and learning was a crucial task of leaders and managers throughout the school. Through a clear, shared vision, supported by relevant staff development, leaders defined the quality of the teaching and learning they expected. This expectation often reflected a set of core principles that underpinned the school's work.²⁷

117. In the schools where there are significant weaknesses in teaching and assessment, most senior leaders recognise the changes that are needed and take action to bring about improvements. However, they are often less successful at driving through changes consistently so that they become established practice across subjects and year groups. Ofsted's monitoring inspections of satisfactory schools show that this is often a persistent weakness. Training takes place in these schools but it is not often matched to the areas for improvement that have been identified.

The quality of schools' safeguarding procedures

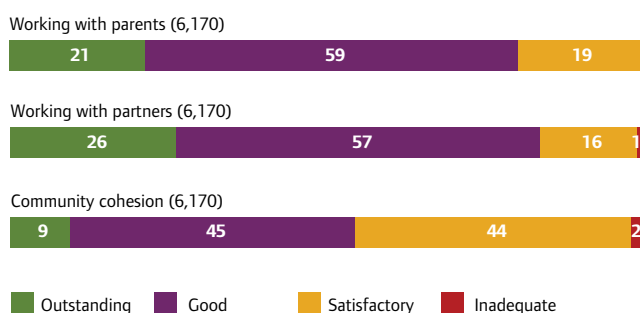
118. Under the new framework, the judgement made on a school's safeguarding procedures contributes to and may limit the judgement on the school's overall effectiveness. This is an aspect of the new inspections which caused some concern and anxiety at the start of the academic year. However, schools have performed very well in relation to the safeguarding requirements. In over three quarters of schools, safeguarding procedures are good or outstanding; they are inadequate in only 2%. This suggests that almost all schools now take a careful, responsible approach to their safeguarding arrangements.

²⁷ *Good professional development in schools* (080254), Ofsted, 2010.

119. In general, weaknesses in safeguarding are usually related to broader failings in leadership and management. More than 6,000 schools have been inspected this year, of which only 26 were judged to be inadequate for issues relating solely to safeguarding, care and governance.²⁸ In the 2% of schools where safeguarding was judged to be inadequate, common weaknesses included the failure to maintain a single central record of recruitment and vetting checks covering all adults who had regular contact with children; insufficient child protection training; key risk assessments not completed; and a failure by the governing body to monitor and review the policies to protect children.

Schools and their communities

Figure 28 Inspection judgements related to the work of schools with their communities for inspections carried out between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

120. Figure 28 shows how schools inspected this year have performed against three inspection judgements which measure different aspects of how schools work with and in their communities: the effectiveness of work with parents and partners, and the contribution schools make to promoting community cohesion.

Working with parents

121. In 80% of schools inspected this year, their work with parents was good or outstanding. This was one of the more positively judged aspects of provision and is a particular strength in nursery schools, pupil referral units and special schools.²⁹ However, there is a relationship between the quality of parental engagement and the level of deprivation in the school. Schools serving the least deprived pupils are more likely to be judged to be outstanding for the quality of their parental engagement than schools with the most deprived pupils. However, even in the most deprived schools, over three quarters were judged good or outstanding for their engagement with parents.

122. There is no apparent correlation between the strength of a school's engagement with their parents and the percentage of pupils from minority ethnic communities in the school.³⁰ This suggests both that schools are effective at reaching out to parents from different communities and cultures, and that parents from across different groups are ready to engage with schools.

123. Schools that are outstanding in their work with parents work hard at building relationships over a sustained period. They exploit many different forms of communication, including newsletters, text messaging, websites, events and information evenings. Staff give parents useful and frequent information about how their child is progressing and, importantly, they show parents how they can support learning in the home. Some schools, for example, run frequent workshops on aspects of the curriculum. Others have thriving family learning sessions, or pre-school activities in which parents and children complete challenges together. Many schools also offer parents opportunities to learn, for example by supporting basic skills. This strong engagement with families is supported by a wide range of external partnerships with other agencies and schools, which extend and deepen the range of care, guidance and support offered through the school, strengthen arrangements for transition into the next stage of education, and provide opportunities for sharing good practice more widely.

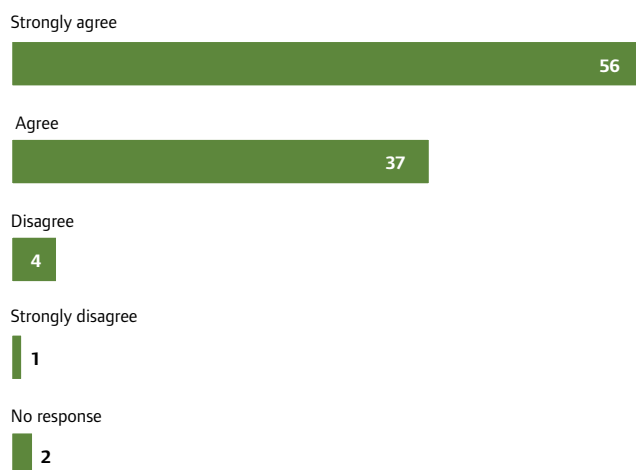
²⁸ Twenty-six schools were judged inadequate and given a notice to improve. In these schools safeguarding; care, guidance and support; and the effectiveness of the governing body were all inadequate. They were not judged inadequate for achievement and enjoyment; attainment; community cohesion; and leadership and management to drive ambition.

²⁹ The detailed inspection judgements for primary and secondary schools are set out in Annex 3.

³⁰ This analysis is based on primary schools, secondary schools, special schools and academies.

Maintained schools

Figure 29 Parents' responses to the statement 'I am happy with my child's experience at this school' (percentage of parents responding)



Based on proportion of parental questionnaire returns (2,906 schools).

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

124. Overall, parents are extremely positive about the quality of education their child receives. An analysis of over 230,000 parental questionnaires returned from nearly 3,000 of the 6,172 inspections of schools this year shows that 93% of parents who responded are pleased with their children's schooling. Parents tend to be more likely to 'strongly agree' with a positive statement about their child's school in outstanding or good schools compared with satisfactory or inadequate schools. Not all parents chose to return a questionnaire so this does not represent the views of all parents. However, the sample of schools from which these questionnaires have been received is broadly representative of all schools inspected this year, although there is a slight bias towards good and outstanding schools.

125. Parents expressed the most positive views about their children's enjoyment of school and their safety. More than nine out of 10 parents felt well informed about their child's progress and felt they were making enough progress at school. Nine per cent of parents felt that their children's school could deal more effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Parents were particularly positive in their judgements on nursery, primary and special schools.

Community cohesion

126. Inspection shows that, compared with other aspects of provision, schools find promoting community cohesion relatively challenging: it was judged good or outstanding in 54% of schools, which makes it one of the less positively judged aspects overall. These schools show their effectiveness through their outreach work in their local communities, nationally and internationally. Links with other schools in very different contexts provide opportunities for pupils to engage with people from a wide range of backgrounds, broadening their horizons and their understanding of communities that are different from their own. Governors can also play an important role in establishing strong links with their local communities. Pupils develop an understanding of other religious, socio-economic and ethnic characteristics through the curriculum and also through visits, visitors and links with schools in countries across the world. The most effective schools undertake a detailed analysis of their different communities and their own contexts. This informs their understanding of the needs of their communities and their school development planning and review.

Schools that are outstanding in their work with parents work hard at building relationships over a sustained period. Staff give parents useful and frequent information about how their child is progressing and, importantly, they show parents how they can support learning in the home.

Academies

Figure 30 Overall effectiveness of academies inspected between 1 September 2006 and 31 August 2010 (number of academies)

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Outstanding	1	3	5	11
Good	1	5	12	9
Satisfactory	6	2	8	20
Inadequate	0	0	5	3
Total	8	10	30	43

127. Most academies inspected this year had been designated because of the very low standards of their predecessor schools. These are generally very different, in terms of their context, history and previous standards, to the new fast track academies that achieved academy status in September 2010. Of the 43 academies inspected in 2009/10, 20 are at least good in their overall effectiveness and 11 are outstanding. However, over half of the academies inspected this year are no better than satisfactory. Three academies were judged to be inadequate this year and a further five remain in a category of concern, having been judged to be inadequate in 2008/09. In these academies, improvements in pupils' progress are insufficient to have a significant impact on their low attainment.

128. Of the 43 academies inspected this year, 31 are linked to other academies, most through a federated relationship or an overarching sponsor group providing shared governance or management. Of the 31 academies in a federation or sponsor group arrangement, 16 were judged good or outstanding. Shared management in several federations uses the model of individual school headteachers reporting to a shared senior leader.

129. Belonging to a federation or sponsor group is no guarantee of success or insurance against areas of weakness; however, the most successful academies are often ones that work closely together in areas such as professional development, or make judicious use of shared resources to manage aspects such as buildings and finance so that school leaders can concentrate on education. The most successful federation or sponsor group arrangements tend to operate in relatively small geographical areas or partnerships. All three of the academies judged to be inadequate this year are in federations or sponsor groups with much stronger schools, including one which shares an executive principal with an outstanding academy. Twelve of the 31 academies in federation or sponsor group arrangements inspected this year were satisfactory.

130. The best academies have inspirational leadership and inspection reports often comment on the passion and drive for excellence that such principals demonstrate. However, where academies are working successfully to overcome local challenges, the success of the academy is also marked by a distinctive and flexible curriculum including a wide range of academic and vocational choices, extensive after-school and Saturday activities and excellent use of the designated specialism to raise attainment across the academy. Of the 43 academies inspected, 14 had an outstanding curriculum. These academies make a powerful commitment to professional development for all staff, ensure that middle leaders monitor all aspects of performance rigorously and value each learner as an individual.

131. Highly committed and effective governance is a consistent feature of the most successful academies and is a relative strength in provision. It was judged good or outstanding in 32 of the 43 academies inspected this year. The most successful governors are exceptionally well informed about the academy's work and passionately committed to the community it serves. They support innovation, ensure that staff can concentrate on education but also insist that leaders are held to account. Even in the less successful academies, governance is often one of the strongest features contributing to the drive for improvement so that, of the 20 academies judged satisfactory, governance was good in 11 and outstanding in two.

Maintained schools

132. There are some common characteristics to outstanding teaching in academies. It is achieved by establishing very high and shared expectations across all classrooms. Learning is often highly structured, informed by teachers' excellent subject knowledge and reinforced by the exemplary use of assessment to inform planning. Stimulating and interesting lessons make excellent use of resources, including modern technologies, and are underpinned by frequent variations in learning style and task. Pupils respond well to very high expectations because relationships are very good and they appreciate the quality of what they are being offered.

133. Attainment on entry to academies is influenced by the fact that many serve areas of high disadvantage. Closing the attainment gap remains a substantive challenge. Many of the academies inspected in 2009/10 have not closed the attainment gap in their first two years and therefore attainment remains below the national figures. This is reflected in inspection outcomes: pupils' attainment was judged to be broadly average in 12 of the 43 academies inspected this year and low in 19. It was above average or high in 12 academies.

134. However, judgements on achievement and progress, which take into account how pupils have developed relative to their starting points, are more positive. This is crucial to successful development. Twenty-two academies were judged to be good or outstanding in terms of pupils' achievement and 25 for pupils' learning and progress, including 10 that were outstanding for this; only two were inadequate in each of these categories.

135. Even in academies that had been judged satisfactory or given a notice to improve, inspections show that progress had been made in setting up some systems to bring about improvement. But progress is often impeded by important weaknesses. In these schools senior leadership was often strong, but engaged in prolonged work to overcome weaknesses in middle leadership, addressing high turnover of teaching staff or managing a protracted move to new buildings.

136. Fewer academy sixth forms have been judged outstanding than academies overall. This is often because, initially, they recruited low numbers of post-16 students. Just five of 30 sixth forms inspected were outstanding. Where there is excellent post-16 provision, academies have effectively replicated the high expectations already established in their 11 to 16 provision or drawn on the strength and breadth of partner academies. These sixth forms have a broad, flexible curriculum and pupils make excellent progress because they are taught by experienced staff whose high expectations are realised through careful planning and support.

Monitoring of satisfactory schools

137. Up to 40% of schools judged satisfactory currently receive a monitoring visit between three-yearly full inspections. Schools were selected for a monitoring visit if their capacity to improve was only satisfactory, if an aspect of their provision was judged inadequate, or if pupils' progress or standards were significantly below average. In 2009/10, inspectors carried out 517 monitoring visits to satisfactory schools. In these schools, the overall pace of improvement was too slow. Only two schools were making outstanding progress and less than a third were making good progress. In 53% progress was only satisfactory. However, progress in building capacity to improve in the future was more positive. Forty per cent of those monitored showed that they had made good progress in building capacity; in seven schools, this was outstanding.

138. In schools receiving a monitoring visit, where progress was judged to be good, pupils' achievement had improved. This is as a result of better teaching, based on higher expectations, increasing use of assessment for learning, stronger monitoring and evaluation, and opportunities for teachers to share and learn from good practice.

139. In the schools where progress was only satisfactory, improvements in achievement were less secure. Schools had focused on the quality of teaching and, in most cases, this had led to some improvements in some lessons, often related to the increased engagement of pupils and the more effective use of assessment to plan lessons. The biggest challenge for senior leaders was to embed these improvements securely in teaching across the school to promote consistency in quality across lessons and subjects. In a few of the schools, this variability was exacerbated by staff turnover or a lack of stability in the school leadership.

140. Leadership and management were improving in most of the schools where progress was satisfactory. This was as a result of improving middle leadership and the importance of accurate systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Most of these schools had developed more rigorous self-evaluation and had a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses than at the time of their last inspection. While the schools usually had a clear sense of their priorities for improvement, their improvement plans sometimes lacked sharpness because they paid insufficient attention to evaluating the impact of the actions on outcomes for their pupils.

141. Most schools that were judged to be inadequate in making improvements had experienced difficulties in raising standards. In the secondary schools, the most persistent weakness was an inability to raise the quality of teaching. Common characteristics of the primary schools included a lack of rigour in monitoring

teaching and weaknesses in assessment, but also contextual factors including falling pupil numbers and difficulties caused by the absence of the headteacher or inability to recruit suitable key staff. In many cases local authorities responded energetically by arranging interim leaders, leading training and conducting joint lesson observations, but some of these schools had failed to improve because external support had been poorly targeted or staffing weaknesses had reduced its impact. The issue highlights the difficulty for smaller schools in managing extended periods of staff turbulence.

Schools causing concern

142. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be inadequate are either given a notice to improve or are deemed to require special measures.³¹ There were 477 schools placed in a category of concern this year, which represents 8% of all schools inspected. This is a higher proportion than last year (4%). To a considerable degree this increase is due to the more proportionate approach to inspection and the higher expectations of the new framework. Secondary schools and pupil referral units were more likely to be judged inadequate, at 11% and 9%, respectively, of those inspected this year. Figures 31 and 32 show the numbers of schools placed in and removed from a category of concern, and the proportion of all schools currently in a category of concern.

Figure 31 Numbers of schools placed in, and removed from, each of the categories of concern in inspections in 2009/10 and those that closed while in these categories at 31 August 2010

		Nursery		Primary		Secondary		Special		PRU		Total	
		08/09	09/10	08/09	09/10	08/09	09/10	08/09	09/10	08/09	09/10	08/09	09/10
Special measures	In	0	2	81	176	26	37	5	5	9	7	121	227
	Out	0	0	97	89	27	24	11	3	8	3	143	119
	Closed	0	0	9	1	5	0	1	0	1	0	16	1
Notice to improve	In	0	2	99	169	41	61	6	13	3	5	149	250
	Out	0	0	146	99	64	37	3	3	1	2	213	141
	Closed	0	0	5	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	9	0

31 The definition of categories of concern is set out in the Glossary.

Maintained schools

Figure 32 Numbers and proportions of schools in different categories of concern at 31 August 2010 based on all open schools in England

		Nursery		Primary		Secondary		Special		PRU		Total	
		08/09	09/10	08/09	09/10	08/09	09/10	08/09	09/10	08/09	09/10	08/09	09/10
Special measures	No.	0	2	131	217	44	57	7	9	11	15	193	300
	%	0.0	0.5	0.8	1.3	1.3	1.7	0.7	0.9	2.4	3.3	0.9	1.3
Notice to improve	No.	0	2	115	185	45	69	5	15	2	5	167	276
	%	0.0	0.5	0.7	1.1	1.3	2.1	0.5	1.4	0.4	1.1	0.7	1.2

Proportions are of all schools and are based on *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2010* (SFR09/2010), Department for Education, 2010.

143. As in previous years, schools serving deprived communities are more likely to be in a category of concern. Of the primary and secondary schools placed in a category this year, 55% are in areas of above average social and economic deprivation and 62% have higher than average proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.

144. In the majority of cases schools are judged inadequate having previously been judged satisfactory. Of those schools placed in special measures this year, 67% were satisfactory at their previous inspection as were 61% of those given a notice to improve. Most of these schools were also previously judged satisfactory for the quality of teaching, for pupils' achievement and for leadership and management.

145. However, some schools declined from good or even outstanding to become inadequate. Only five schools were judged outstanding at their previous inspection and inadequate this year, of which four were given a notice to improve. All of these were either nursery schools, primary schools or pupil referral units. Around a quarter of schools judged inadequate this year were previously good. Only 14 of these were secondary schools.

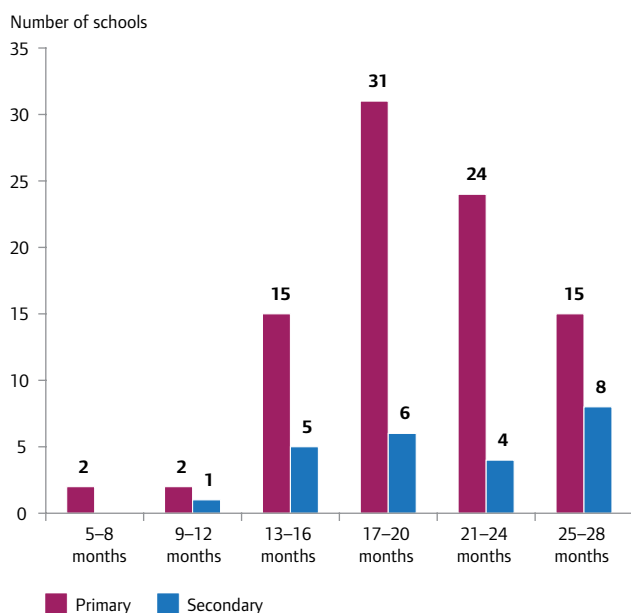
146. In a small number of schools improvement is not sustained. There are 58 schools judged inadequate this year which have been in a category of concern before under the section 5 inspection framework. The time between their previous removal from a category and their inspection this year ranged from one to three years. Often, the weaknesses in these schools remained the same: a high turnover of staff, poor teaching and pupils' inadequate achievement. In many of these schools there had been a recent

change of leadership or significant disruption to the leadership team. In some cases, the change in leadership, coupled with ineffective challenge from the governing body, had made a major contribution to the school's decline. In these schools, self-evaluation, improvement planning and systems to monitor progress were poor. In other cases, recently appointed leaders had made good progress in assessing the school's strengths and weaknesses and establishing effective strategies to improve, but these had not been in place for long enough to have made an impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

147. Ofsted requires inspectors to record the main reasons why a school has been judged inadequate. These records show that inspectors were most often concerned about continuing low attainment and weak pupil progress, closely linked to the quality of teaching and of leadership. Leadership and management, including governance, and the curriculum were more often considered to be key weaknesses in inadequate primary schools whilst behaviour was a more significant factor in secondary schools.

148. Ofsted's monitoring of schools judged inadequate provides a very clear insight into the weaknesses of these schools and therefore what they need to improve. Inconsistency in the quality of teaching is a major factor, with too much teaching failing to engage pupils because it is not tailored to their needs and lacks pace and challenge. Weaknesses in leadership and management are also paramount: progress is not monitored effectively and accountability is not clear. These weaknesses result in poor pupil achievement and progress.

Figure 33 Number of months in special measures for schools removed from this category between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010



149. A substantial number of schools are in special measures for two years or more before they are removed. This pace of improvement is too slow. Figure 33 includes all the schools which have been removed from special measures this year and shows how long they were in the category before they were removed. The precise time it takes for a school to come out of special measures is dependent on the timing of Ofsted’s monitoring visits, which occur on average once a term. Nonetheless the range is very wide. It extends from eight months (for just two primary schools) to around two and a quarter years. The majority of schools come out of special measures between 17 months and two years from the time of the inspection. Since 1 September 2005, 1,382 schools have been removed from a category of concern, but of these only 43 have been removed in under one year. The journey from failure to success for schools in categories of concern is addressed in detail as one of the key themes of this report.

150. Issuing warning notices gives local authorities additional powers to take direct action to improve schools which are likely to become inadequate. Local authorities must inform Ofsted when they have issued a warning notice. During this year, 50 warning notices were issued by 34 local authorities, an increase on the number in 2008/09. Of these schools, 15 have

been routinely inspected by Ofsted since their warning notice was issued. One was judged to be outstanding, five were judged to be satisfactory, four were given a notice to improve and five were placed in special measures.

151. However, the use of warning notices by local authorities remains variable. Since April 2007, 96 local authorities have issued no warning notices compared with two local authorities which have issued seven. Contrary to expectations there is not a strong correlation between the number of warning notices issued and the number of schools placed in categories of concern. Of the 96 local authorities which have not issued a warning notice, around one fifth have had 10 or more schools judged inadequate during the same period. Of those schools placed in a category of concern this year, only 14 had received a warning notice from their local authority. In some cases this may be because local authorities are not using the powers available to them to prevent school failure. However, in other cases, it may indicate that a warning notice was not required because the school was already responding to the local authority’s advice or interventions. The quality of support provided by the local authority to schools in special measures is also variable. It was judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding in 52% of monitoring visits carried out this year and inadequate in 3%.

Schools’ responses to the new inspection framework

152. The reaction from schools that have received an inspection under the new inspection framework has been positive. More than nine out of 10 schools that have responded to surveys following inspections say they were satisfied with the way the inspection was carried out. The very large majority believe the inspection judgements were fair and accurate, and almost all were satisfied with the clarity of the recommendations in their report. Headteachers are pleased that inspectors are spending more time observing lessons. They value the greater involvement of senior staff in the inspection process and this is helping schools to gain a sharper understanding of their most important areas for improvement.



Quality and standards

Initial teacher education



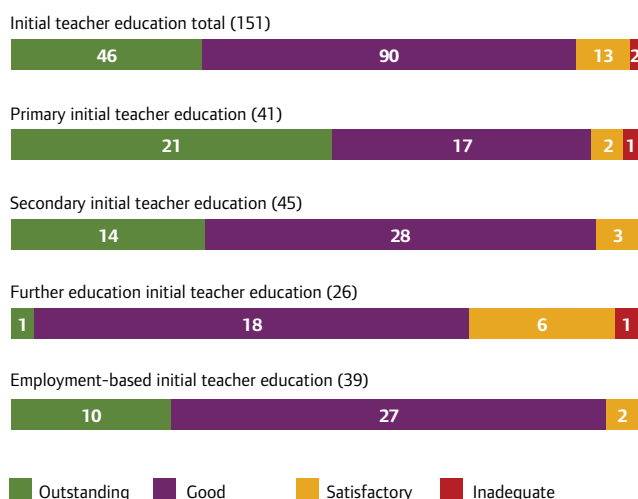
Key findings

- ✘ There was more outstanding initial teacher education delivered by higher education-led partnerships than by school-centred initial teacher training partnerships and employment-based routes.
- ✘ Trainee teachers preparing to teach in primary and secondary schools receive better training than those training to teach in the further education sector.
- ✘ Trainee teachers need higher quality practical experience of teaching phonics and early literacy skills during their training to increase their expertise.

153. Ofsted has a statutory duty to inspect initial education of teachers for schools and publicly funded training of further education teachers. Under the current inspection framework, providers are inspected within a three-year cycle. Inspections cover training for the early years, primary, secondary and further education. The inspection framework is common to all phases and training contexts.

154. 2009/10 marked the second year of the current cycle. In total, 151 initial teacher education programmes were inspected, including 41 primary, 45 secondary and 26 further education programmes. These programmes were delivered by 39 higher education institution-led partnerships which mostly offered training in more than one age phase and 22 inspections of school-centred initial teacher training partnerships all but one of which offered training in a single age phase. In addition, 39 employment-based routes were inspected, of which 23 were linked to a higher education institution and 16 were linked to a school-centred initial teacher training partnership.

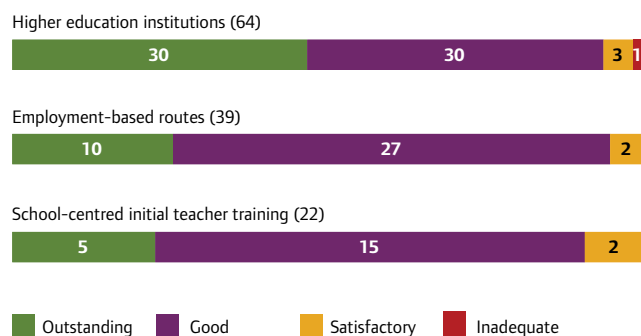
Figure 34 Overall effectiveness of initial teacher education programmes inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)



155. In line with previous inspection findings, trainees on primary and secondary training routes are better equipped with the skills to become good teachers than those training to teach in the further education sector. As illustrated in Figure 34, the proportion of outstanding training on primary, secondary and employment-based routes is considerably higher than training for teachers in the further education sector.

Initial teacher education

Figure 35 Overall effectiveness of primary and secondary initial teacher education provision by training provider type inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)



Data exclude further education initial teacher education provision as this is only delivered in higher education institutions.

156. Figure 35 shows the distribution of inspection judgements for primary and secondary initial teacher training by the type of provider. It shows that the overall effectiveness of the very large majority of training programmes based in a higher education institution is good or better, with just under a half outstanding (30 out of 64). However, very few higher education providers offering training in more than one phase have been judged to be outstanding in all phases. For school-centred provision, the proportion that is outstanding is much lower than that found in higher education institutions.

157. All but two employment-based routes were judged to be good or better, with one quarter judged to be outstanding. This presents a much improved picture compared with the outcomes of the inspection of independent employment-based providers last year where only one tenth were judged to be outstanding for overall effectiveness. Trainees benefit from the strong links with a higher education institution or school-centred consortium. They are more able to reflect critically on the impact of their teaching on learning and make progress through the integration and application of theory and practice.

158. There are many strong partnerships between universities, schools and colleges which are characterised by high expectations of trainees' achievement and good communication. In past annual reports, subject knowledge has been highlighted as an area for development. Now it is a relative strength for many providers. This turnaround is due to a strong focus on ensuring that trainees' subject knowledge for teaching is audited, developed and monitored closely throughout their training.

159. Mentoring has historically been a weakness in the further education sector and remains an issue for the weaker further education providers inspected this year. However, this is being tackled effectively by the strongest providers. For example, one of the partner colleges, attached to a university, is making excellent use of the latest technology to enable mentors to record conversations and to photograph and video aspects of their work. This enables the sharing of good practice as it happens.

160. Across all sectors, and especially in further education, there is too much variation in tracking and monitoring trainees' progress from their starting points to ensure that all trainees fulfil their potential. Providers need to consider how to extend their higher-attaining trainees more in order to ensure that they progress from being good to outstanding by the end of their training. The best providers encourage trainees to be innovative, to be confident in trying out new teaching and learning strategies and not to be afraid of taking a risk.

161. A recurring area for development for primary providers is increasing trainees' expertise in teaching phonics and early literacy skills. This is reinforced by the responses of former trainees in the annual newly qualified teacher survey conducted by the Training and Development Agency for Schools.³² Most providers give trainees a good theoretical grounding but not all ensure that trainees have sufficient high-quality opportunities to teach phonics in school before they qualify. The best providers have identified schools across their partnerships where practice in this area is excellent, so that trainees can learn from expert practitioners but this has yet to become a common feature of initial teacher education.

³² *Results of the newly qualified teacher survey 2009*, Training and Development Agency for Schools.

162. Overall, higher education led partnerships offering training to teach in maintained schools demonstrate better capacity to improve than school-centred partnerships. A very large majority of higher education led providers have good or better capacity to improve and about half are outstanding. For school-centred provision, just under one quarter of providers were judged to be outstanding for capacity to improve. Of the 15 employment-based routes with outstanding capacity to improve, 11 were linked to a higher education institution. Key characteristics of outstanding providers are their ability to sustain high quality training through establishing a culture of self-improvement and promoting innovative practice. Self-assessment has become well embedded in practice, although it is sometimes too descriptive at the expense of sharp evaluation and a focus on measuring the impact on outcomes.

163. Capacity to improve in higher education led partnerships offering training for teaching in the further education sector is not as strong: the poor quality of self-evaluation is a key weakness. In half of the providers inspected, their capacity to improve was no better than satisfactory because of weaknesses relating to the rigour and incisiveness of their self-evaluation process. Weaker providers were unable to draw on accurate and comprehensive data to inform improvement planning.

In line with previous inspection findings, trainees on primary and secondary training routes are better equipped with the skills to become good teachers than those training to teach in the further education sector.



Quality and standards

Independent schools, non-maintained schools and boarding schools

Key findings

- ✘ The quality of education was good or outstanding in about two thirds of the non-association independent schools inspected, and inadequate in 4%.
- ✘ Most of the non-association independent schools emphasise the acquisition of basic skills well and provide an orderly and purposeful environment.

Non-association independent schools

164. There are around 2,400 independent schools in England educating approximately 7% of all children. Just over half of these schools are members of independent schools associations and are inspected by independent inspectorates which are approved by the Department for Education for this purpose.

165. Ofsted monitors a sample of the work of the independent inspectorates (the Independent Schools Inspectorate, the Schools Inspection Service and the Bridge Schools Inspectorate) to check that their judgements are fair and consistent. The independent inspectorates provide good support and training for their inspectors. Monitoring indicates that their inspections are of good quality and reach reliable and consistent judgements. Inspection reports are generally clear and well written.

166. The remaining independent schools are referred to as the 'non-association independent schools', and they are diverse in size and character. They include preparatory and pre-preparatory schools, faith schools such as Jewish, Muslim or evangelical Christian schools, and those set up for a particular purpose, such as stage schools, tutorial colleges and foreign schools catering for expatriate communities in England. Independent schools inspected by Ofsted range in size from a school with over 3,700 pupils

on several sites to small children's homes providing education for just one young person. Around 40% of the schools cater wholly or mainly for potentially vulnerable pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or children who are looked after, and about a third of these make residential provision for their pupils. This year, Ofsted inspected 319 non-association independent schools.

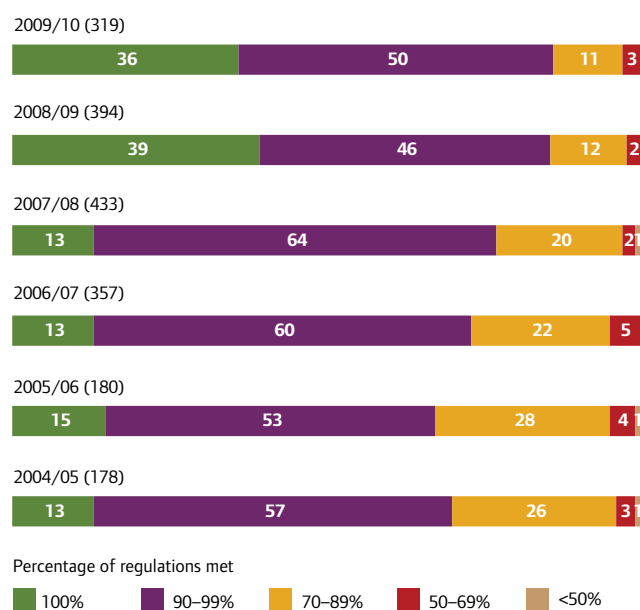
167. All non-association independent schools are inspected routinely by Ofsted in a three-year cycle. The inspection has two purposes. The first is to report on the school's compliance with the regulatory standards for independent schools: this information is needed by the registering authority, the Department for Education.³³ The second purpose is to provide an evaluative assessment for publication of the school's performance. The registering authority follows up schools which do not meet the regulatory requirements, asking for an action plan from them to rectify the weaknesses or assurance that they have already put them right. The Department for Education asks Ofsted to monitor the progress of schools where inspection has identified serious weaknesses.

³³ These are set out in the 2003 Statutory Instrument No. 1910: The Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

Independent schools, non-maintained schools and boarding schools

168. The schools which at their previous inspection met at least 90% of the regulations, including all those relating to the quality of education, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and safeguarding, receive one standard and one 'light touch' inspection over a period of six years. A light touch inspection is much shorter and lasts for one day only. This inspection does not revisit all the regulations that were met at the time of the last inspection, and focuses instead on the quality of teaching and learning; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; safeguarding; and the welfare, health and safety of pupils.

Figure 36 Overall performance on meeting regulations by non-association independent schools inspected between 1 September 2004 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)

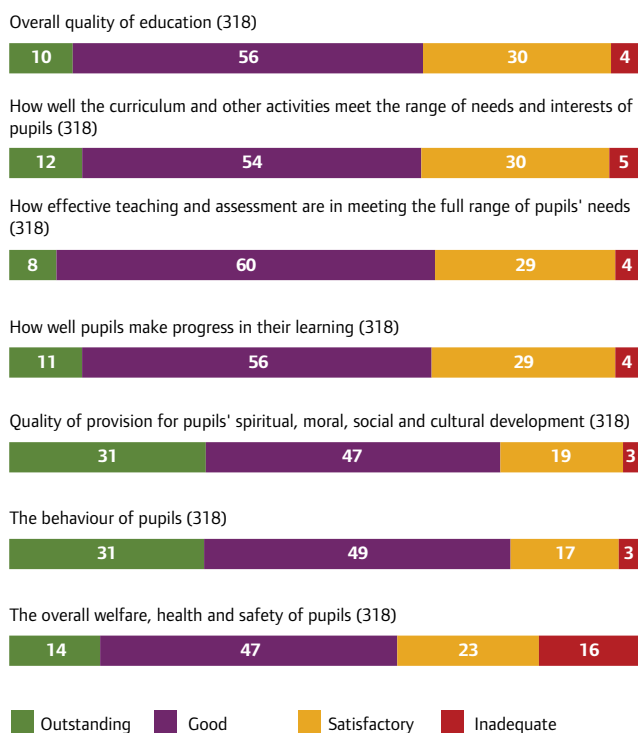


Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

169. All independent schools must meet regulatory standards which are laid down in statute. Over the last six years, non-association independent schools have got progressively better at meeting these standards, so that the very large majority of schools now meet at least 90% of them. There was a particularly marked increase in the percentage of non-association independent schools meeting all regulations between 2007/08 and 2008/09, which has been largely maintained this year. This increase coincides with the start of the second inspection cycle, and demonstrates the improvement established schools had made between their first and second inspections in meeting regulations. The start of the new cycle also marked the introduction of new safeguarding regulations and improvements to Ofsted's inspection methodology with a greater involvement for school managers through the self-evaluation process.

There was a particularly marked increase in the percentage of non-association independent schools meeting all regulations between 2007/08 and 2008/09, which has been largely maintained this year.

Figure 37 Inspection outcomes for non-association independent schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



There were 319 inspections completed in 2009/10 but one school could not be judged for the overall quality of education as there were no children present. It has therefore been excluded from this analysis.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

170. This year the quality of education was good or outstanding in two thirds of the non-association independent schools inspected, and inadequate in 4% of them. Compared with last year, the proportion of good and outstanding schools that were inspected has decreased, but so has the proportion of those that were judged to be inadequate. Most independent schools emphasise the acquisition of basic skills well and provide an orderly and purposeful environment in which teaching and learning can flourish. Relationships are good. Teachers know pupils well and plan tasks which enable pupils to learn and make progress. However, although teaching is good or better in just over two thirds of the schools, only a very small proportion of it is inspirational. Major strengths were found in pupils' behaviour and in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, where nearly a third of all schools were outstanding in this respect. Good levels of supervision and effective systems for managing behaviour, tackling bullying and providing individual support ensure that pupils behave very well, make a positive contribution to the school and wider community, and develop confidence and self-esteem.

171. Over four in 10 independent schools inspected by Ofsted cater wholly or mainly for children who have special educational needs, in particular emotional and behavioural difficulties. Around half of these schools were judged good or outstanding this year – a lower proportion than for non-association independent schools overall. Independent special schools which are outstanding share a number of common features. In all cases, the curriculum is outstanding. There is a strong focus on basic skills, including communication and language, and teachers develop these skills across the curriculum.

Independent schools, non-maintained schools and boarding schools

172. In these schools teachers are highly skilled and additional staff, including specialist staff such as speech and language therapists, are used effectively to support the needs of individual pupils. There is an explicit focus on developing the classroom environment so that it is conducive to learning and so that pupils feel safe and develop confidence, independence and self-esteem. Assessment procedures are strong and planning is often meticulous and linked closely to pupils' needs, including to their individual education plans. A variety of teaching methods, combined with high expectations and good questioning, also contributes to the outstanding progress pupils make.

173. This year inspectors identified weaknesses in the provision for welfare, health and safety in 16% of non-association independent schools, where too many schools still did not have all the safeguarding processes in place required by the regulations. In these cases their arrangements for safeguarding were judged inadequate. In some cases, child protection policies did not fully meet requirements; in others, the necessary pre-appointment checks on staff had not been undertaken with sufficient rigour. Seen in context, this position is an improvement: three years ago, when these schools were last inspected, over a third failed to meet all the regulations. Of the 51 schools judged inadequate for their safeguarding arrangements 17 offered boarding provision. These are of particular concern, given that they cater for often vulnerable young people living away from home.

Regulation and registration

174. When an inspection identifies regulatory failures, the Department for Education, as the registering authority, asks the school to draw up a plan of action. Where there are a substantial number of regulatory failures, Ofsted is given responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the progress the school makes. Since September 2009, Ofsted has published 143 such reports. The majority of the schools had made satisfactory or good progress. This provides reassurance that the weaknesses, particularly in safeguarding and safe recruitment procedures, have been rectified promptly. The Department for Education follows up all schools which have not made adequate progress against their action plans. Their action could lead to the school's deletion from the register, forcing it to close.

175. Ofsted also visits new schools which apply for registration. All new schools must meet the regulatory requirements before they can accept pupils and, once registered, they are inspected in the first year of operation. Since September, inspectors have visited 127 schools and recommended registration in just over two thirds of these cases. Those schools which were refused registration could not demonstrate an ability to meet regulations which would render them suitable to receive pupils. There has been a slight fall in the number of new schools applying for registration this year. The large majority of new independent schools seek to cater for children with a special educational need, particularly autism, or those who have behavioural or emotional difficulties.

Non-maintained special schools

176. Non-maintained special schools are schools which have charitable status and are independent of the local authority. They provide for children with particular needs such as behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, sensory impairment, learning difficulties or complex medical needs. All schools cater for wide age ranges covering at least two key stages, and half make residential provision. There are 75 non-maintained special schools of which 15 were inspected this year.

Figure 38 Overall effectiveness of non-maintained special schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of schools)

	Overall effectiveness
Outstanding	3
Good	9
Satisfactory	3
Inadequate	0
Total	15

177. The overall effectiveness was good or better in 12 of the 15 schools inspected, and the quality of care, guidance and support continues to be a strong feature of their work. No schools inspected this year were judged inadequate. Notably, safeguarding was judged to be outstanding in just under half of the non-maintained special schools. The quality of teaching was also good or outstanding in 11 of the 15 schools inspected.

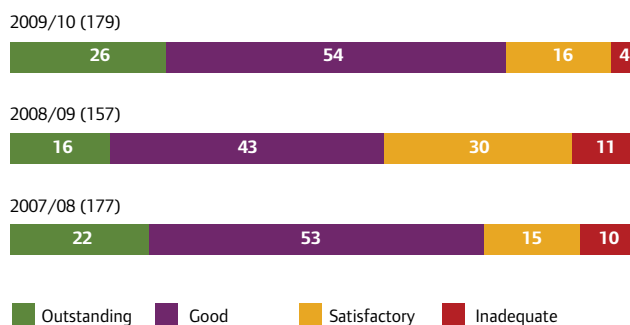
178. In most non-maintained special schools, pupils behave well. This reflects the success of the schools in meeting individual needs. In the majority of the schools, the curriculum is suitably structured and teachers are skilled in tailoring lessons to suit each child's needs. In nearly all the schools, provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.

179. Areas for improvement centred mainly on the need to make better use of data on pupils to improve teaching, learning and their progress. Although governors were supportive, governance was outstanding in only two non-maintained special schools. In the schools where governance was satisfactory, governors were insufficiently active in challenging schools to improve further.

Boarding schools

180. There are 529 boarding schools in England. The vast majority of these are independent and belong to associations which are members of the Independent Schools Council. As education in these schools is inspected by their own inspectorate, Ofsted inspects only the welfare of boarders in these schools on a three-year cycle. There are 34 maintained boarding schools in which Ofsted inspects both education and the welfare of boarders.

Figure 39 Quality of care in boarding schools inspected between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of schools)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

181. In 2009/10 Ofsted inspected boarders' welfare in 179 boarding schools. The quality of care overall was judged to be good or better in over three quarters of the boarding schools inspected, and outstanding in around a quarter. This represents a considerable increase on last year when 59% of the schools inspected were good or better. Similarly, the percentage of schools judged inadequate this year has also been more than halved, reducing from 11% last year to 4% now. Of the 22 boarding schools judged inadequate at their previous inspection, 21 had improved sufficiently to be at least satisfactory at their most recent inspection.

182. In just over a quarter of boarding schools inspected this year the quality of care was judged to be outstanding. These schools exhibit a number of common strengths. They go to great lengths to establish an atmosphere and ethos which is caring and homely. Pastoral support is well planned and comprehensive. This means that there is a wide range of adults available with whom young people can raise concerns, and that individual needs are identified early and addressed appropriately. In many cases young people themselves act as buddies or mentors to their peers which reinforces the caring ethos of the schools in question. This can be particularly important to help new boarders settle into an unfamiliar environment and get used to the challenges of being away from home and family. Clear policies to deal with bullying are in place, and potentially difficult relations between boarders are identified and dealt with quickly. As a result, boarders report that bullying in these schools is rare.

Independent schools, non-maintained schools and boarding schools

183. A very wide range of activities in these schools adds greatly to young people’s enjoyment of their education, and appropriate risk assessments have been put in place to ensure the safety of these activities. The health needs of young people are similarly well addressed. Many schools have 24 hour medical services on-site to treat one-off illnesses or manage longer-term health conditions. Furthermore, many of the outstanding schools have tightened up procedures for the storage and administration of medication since their last inspection. Age appropriate personal, social and health education delivered through the curriculum, combined with a varied and nutritious diet, support boarders to be conscious of their own health and lead healthy lives. These important characteristics are reinforced through very robust child protection policies, good partnership working with Local Safeguarding Children Boards when issues arise, and robust systems for carrying out Criminal Records Bureau checks and training staff in safeguarding procedures.

184. While inspection data reveal that the percentage of boarding schools in which the quality of care is good or better has increased considerably in the last year, there is no room for complacency. In the 4% of boarding schools judged inadequate, weaknesses were traced back to organisational failures, particularly with regard to ensuring that boarders were appropriately safeguarded and that safe recruitment policies were followed.

Maintained boarding schools

185. There are 34 maintained boarding schools in England that are members of the State Boarding Schools Association. Ofsted inspected eight of these this year under the section 5 arrangements for the inspection of schools. One was an all-through school for pupils aged three to 16, six were 11 to 18 secondary schools and one was a 14 to 18 high school. Boarding provision was inspected in six schools. In three of these, the residential provision was inspected on its own. The other three inspections were part of integrated inspections of education and boarding.

Figure 40 Inspection outcomes for maintained boarding schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of schools)

	Overall effectiveness of school	Overall effectiveness of boarding provision
Outstanding	2	1
Good	5	5
Satisfactory	0	0
Inadequate	1	0
Total	8	6

186. Seven maintained boarding schools inspected this year were judged good or outstanding for their overall effectiveness, and one was inadequate. Education outcomes were outstanding in five schools. In the good and outstanding schools, the good relationships between pupils and the care provided by staff are particular strengths. The curriculum in these schools is well planned and effectively supports pupils’ development. Teaching is predominantly effective, characterised by well-structured lessons that are enthusiastically delivered by teachers with excellent subject knowledge. However, the inconsistent use of assessment for learning to ensure teaching meets the needs of all pupils is an area for further development. Consequently, pupils’ understanding of how they can improve their own work is also an aspect which requires improvement. In the one school judged to be inadequate, both attainment and progress of pupils in the core subjects is low. Furthermore, neither governors nor leaders have shown the capacity to bring about sustained improvement in key areas because of weaknesses in planning, monitoring and evaluation, and accountability.

187. Key strengths in the boarding provision include the good relationships between staff and boarding pupils and between boarding pupils and day pupils. These contribute to a strong sense of community in the school. There are good lines of communication between boarding staff and senior leaders of the school. The schools pay attention to the health and social needs of the pupils, and provide support from an independent person or counsellors if required. Pupils are inducted into boarding provision in a planned and sensitive manner. A wide range of extra-curricular activities in the evenings and weekends is available. The pupils feel that they are listened to and that their views inform developments in the school. Appropriate training is given to staff to ensure pupils are kept safe.

188. Areas identified for improvement in order to meet national minimum standards fully include: better induction training for new staff; greater consistency in carrying out and recording 'safer recruitment' checks; ensuring the thorough completion of risk assessments for boarding activities that take place outside school times; and development of the role of the governing body in monitoring welfare.

Teaching in maintained boarding schools is predominantly effective, characterised by well-structured lessons that are enthusiastically delivered by teachers with excellent subject knowledge. However, the inconsistent use of assessment for learning to ensure teaching meets the needs of all pupils is an area for further development.



Quality and standards

Learning and skills



Key findings

- ✘ Of the 79 colleges inspected this year, 44 are good or better. However, too many colleges remain satisfactory with capacity to improve that is no better than satisfactory.
- ✘ The performance of colleges serving the most disadvantaged learners is strong. Of the 62 colleges catering for the most disadvantaged learners, 44 were good or outstanding at their most recent inspection and only one was inadequate. This is a similar profile of grades to colleges serving average and advantaged learners.
- ✘ Science and mathematics was one of the least positively judged sector subject areas in colleges inspected this year. This is a concern because of the particular importance of this sector subject area for economic competitiveness.
- ✘ Just under half of all work-based learning providers inspected this year are good or better compared with 42% in 2008/09. Over 82% of providers inspected this year had improved or maintained their performance since their previous inspection.
- ✘ Work-based learning providers that are more established are more likely to be judged good or outstanding than newer providers.
- ✘ The large majority of teaching offered by adult and community learning providers inspected this year is good. However, no providers have been judged outstanding overall.
- ✘ Provision contracted by the Department for Work and Pensions is the weakest area of post-16 provision, with the highest proportion of inadequate providers. This year, in a difficult jobs market, 28 out of 34 providers were judged to be inadequate in terms of outcomes for learners.
- ✘ All 10 providers of information, advice and guidance for adults (nextstep) were judged to be satisfactory, with only one judged good for its capacity to improve. In too many one-to-one sessions, advisers' completion of paperwork dominated the session.
- ✘ The quality of leadership and management is very variable across the sector. It is a relative strength in colleges, but a particular area for improvement in adult and community learning and work-based learning. In these providers, the use of self-assessment to drive improvement is a common weakness.
- ✘ Compared with last year, a higher number of prisons have been judged to be inadequate for learning and skills and no provision is outstanding. This lower profile of inspection grades is a concern.

Introduction

189. The learning and skills sector is very diverse. It equips people with a wide range of skills and knowledge: from arts to chemistry to engineering to basic skills. Over 1,600 different providers work in the sector and they vary significantly in scale. The smallest provide education and training to fewer than 10 learners, whereas the largest cater for more than 20,000. Learning and skills providers cater primarily for those aged over 16, but some also offer education and training for young people aged 14 to 16. In 2009/10 Ofsted inspected 410 learning and skills providers.³⁴ Work-based learning providers and colleges account for nearly three quarters of these.

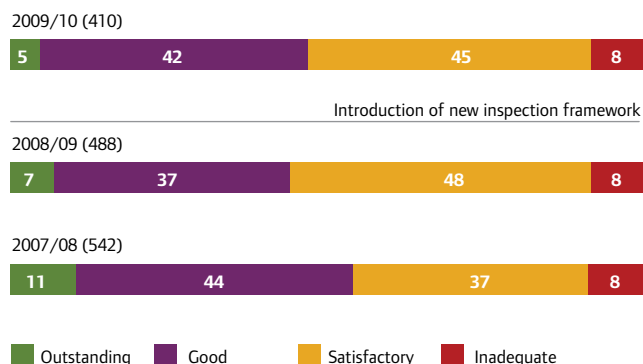
190. Individuals who benefit from learning and skills programmes and courses do so for different reasons. Many are seeking the skills they will need for work. Some are already employed and are gaining skills which will make them more effective in their current work. Others do it for the love of learning. Some individuals choose to learn; others are encouraged to do so as part of their employment, as a condition of receiving benefits or as part of equipping them for life after imprisonment.

191. This year Ofsted has introduced a new inspection framework for colleges, work-based learning providers, and adult and community learning, and has been rolling it out to other learning and skills providers during the course of the year. This framework has introduced greater challenge to and focus on particular aspects of provision, including providers' capacity to improve and their safeguarding arrangements.

192. The approach to inspection is proportionate to enable inspectors to focus their efforts where they have the greatest impact. Under the new framework, high-performing providers, judged to be good or outstanding at their previous inspection, may have up to six years between inspections. In contrast, providers judged to be satisfactory at their previous inspection are likely to be inspected at least every four years. All providers judged to be inadequate for their overall effectiveness at the previous inspection will receive a re-inspection monitoring visit around six to eight months following their inspection, and a full reinspection six to eight months after that.

Overall performance of the learning and skills sector

Figure 41 Overall effectiveness of all learning and skills providers inspected between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)



Data exclude armed forces and joint inspectorate inspections including prisons, probation and immigration removal centres.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

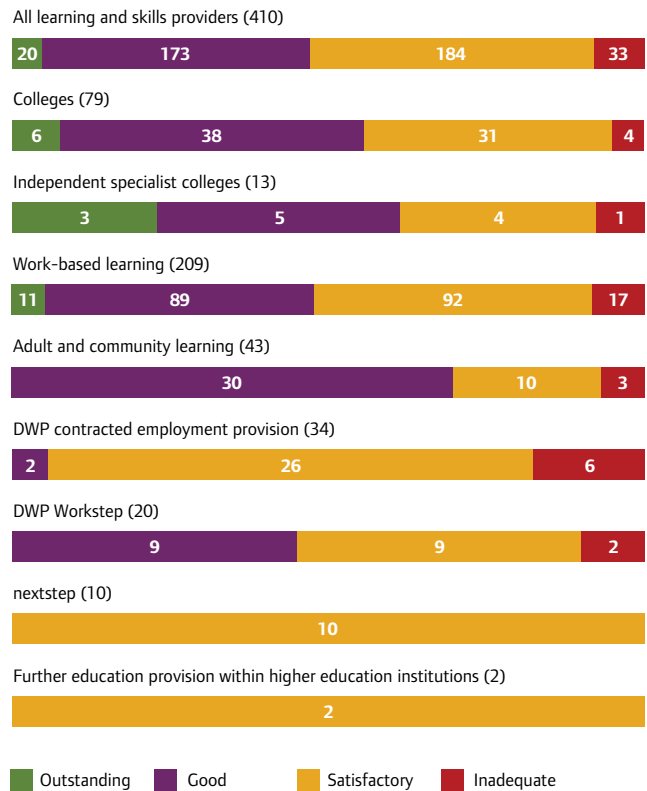
³⁴ Joint inspections and armed forces inspections are excluded from this figure.

193. The new framework consolidates a more proportionate approach to inspection, which gives priority to inspecting weaker providers. The impact of the framework on the sector in this first year is complex. It is encouraging that the proportion of good provision has risen and the proportion of satisfactory provision has decreased compared with last year. However, fewer providers this year are outstanding. This reflects the fact that, under a proportionate system, fewer previously outstanding or good providers will be selected for inspection. However, the drop in outstanding provision inspected since 2007/08 is very evident.

194. The overall grades also mark significant variations between providers as illustrated in Figure 42. These differences are explored in greater detail in the following sections. However, it is noteworthy that while colleges and adult and community learning have the highest proportion of good and outstanding provision overall, it is work-based learning where the trajectory of improvement appears to be strongest.

While colleges and adult and community learning have the highest proportion of good and outstanding provision overall, it is work-based learning where the trajectory of improvement appears to be strongest.

Figure 42 The overall effectiveness of learning and skills providers inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)



Colleges

Overall effectiveness

195. The college sector includes general further education and tertiary colleges, sixth form colleges and specialist further education colleges such as land-based colleges. In 2009/10, Ofsted carried out 79 inspections of colleges, covering provision for 200,000 full-time and 333,000 part-time learners.³⁵

Figure 43 Overall effectiveness of colleges inspected between 1 September 2005 and 31 August 2010 (number of colleges)

	Introduction of new framework				
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Outstanding	10	19	36	18	6
Good	39	45	44	38	38
Satisfactory	24	35	24	29	31
Inadequate	6	4	7	4	4
Total	79	103	111	89	79

2009/10 data include 54 general further education colleges, 20 sixth form colleges, five specialist land-based colleges and art and design colleges.

196. In 2009/10, 44 of the 79 colleges inspected were good or outstanding and four were inadequate. The fall in the proportion of colleges judged good or outstanding and the corresponding rise in satisfactory and inadequate provision can be attributed in part to the impact of the new framework, which has both established a more risk-based approach to inspection and increased the challenge in relation to specific aspects of provision.

197. Of those colleges inspected in 2009/10, 16 have improved since their last inspection compared with 17 which have declined. It is a concern that of the nine colleges inspected this year that were previously outstanding, six had not maintained their excellent performance under the new framework. Common weaknesses in these colleges were the underperformance of some groups of learners and variations in the quality of teaching resulting from a lack of challenge in activities and insufficient planning to meet individual students' needs. Arrangements for lesson observations were often not rigorous enough to have addressed these deficiencies. Weaker lessons in these colleges tended to be slow-paced, students were passive and teachers missed opportunities to consolidate new information.

198. Too many colleges continue to be no better than satisfactory. This was highlighted in last year's Annual Report and improvement remains too slow. Of the 33 colleges inspected this year that were previously judged to be satisfactory, 23 had either remained the same or declined in their overall effectiveness. Similarly, of those judged to be satisfactory this year, less than a third were deemed to have good capacity to improve. Thirteen colleges inspected this year have been judged satisfactory in their last three inspections. In these colleges, self-assessment is often not insightful resulting in over-generous judgements; weaknesses identified in the previous inspection may remain; and accountability for performance is not always secured sufficiently.

199. Nonetheless, 16 colleges improved since their previous inspection. In these colleges, excellent leadership and management galvanise staff and students around a shared vision and a commitment to raise outcomes and aspirations. There is a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, reinforced in some cases by lesson observation and targeted professional development. Robust performance management and accurate self-assessment systems are informed by the good use of data. The involvement of leaders at all levels and close attention to the views of learners both contribute strongly to improvement.

³⁵ Learner numbers were correct at the point of inspection.

200. During inspections, Ofsted consults learners and takes their views into account. In the best colleges, learners told inspectors that staff were supportive and caring and provided guidance to challenge them and enhance their progression, not only within the college but also beyond. Learners also appreciated the extensive enrichment activities which, combined with formal studies, develop their confidence. In colleges judged satisfactory and inadequate, frequent weaknesses highlighted by learners include the poor design of the timetable which leaves too much time between lessons, dull or monotonous teaching styles, high staff turnover and lack of information and communication technology equipment. Learners were also often concerned about poor assessment practices, which left them unaware of how targets are set or how to improve their work, and unstructured and infrequent tutorial sessions.

201. In addition to overall inspections, Ofsted undertakes monitoring visits to colleges previously judged to be satisfactory and where the capacity to improve is less than good, or where colleges have inadequate grades but are not judged inadequate overall. Monitoring visits can also be triggered by the process used to carry out risk assessments of colleges. In 2009/10, 44 monitoring visits were carried out. These visits assessed a total of 282 aspects of provision and areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. These are known as 'themes'. Significant or reasonable progress was made in addressing 95% of these.

202. Figure 44 shows how the overall effectiveness of sixth form colleges compares with other colleges inspected this year. In previous inspection years, sixth form colleges have tended to outperform general further education colleges. However, this year the distribution of inspection grades is very similar. In part this may be explained by the proportional approach taken to all college inspections, which means that weaker providers were more likely to be selected for inspection in both sub-sectors.

203. Over the course of the last inspection cycle, 78% of sixth form colleges were judged good or better. This year, however, only half of those inspected performed at a good or better standard and two were judged inadequate. Compared with general further education colleges, outcomes for learners in sixth form colleges inspected this year tend to be more polarised, with higher proportions of both outstanding and inadequate judgements. In the best sixth form colleges, students make exceptional progress, achieving grades significantly higher than their previous performance might have suggested. However, in weaker sixth form colleges, the proportion of top grades achieved at A level is low and too many students leave at the end of their first year of study. As a result, attainment and progress in these colleges are modest.

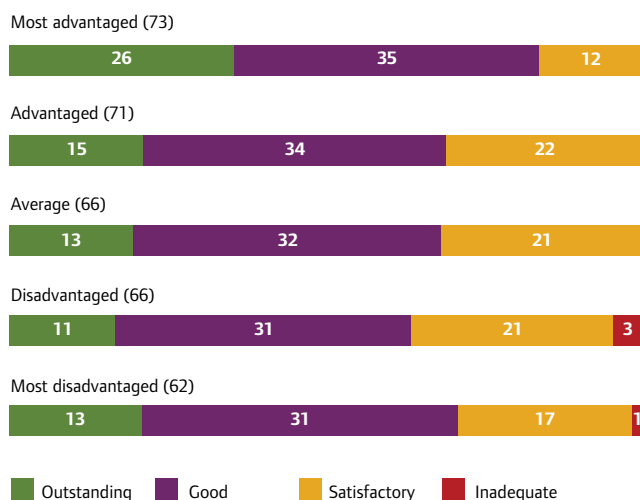
Figure 44 Overall effectiveness of colleges inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 by type of college (number of colleges)

	Special further education college	Sixth form college	General further education college/tertiary college
Outstanding	2	2	2
Good	1	8	29
Satisfactory	2	8	21
Inadequate	0	2	2
Total	5	20	54

Quality and standards

Learning and skills

Figure 45 Overall effectiveness of all colleges at their latest inspection (2005–09) by level of deprivation of learners enrolled on long courses (number of colleges)



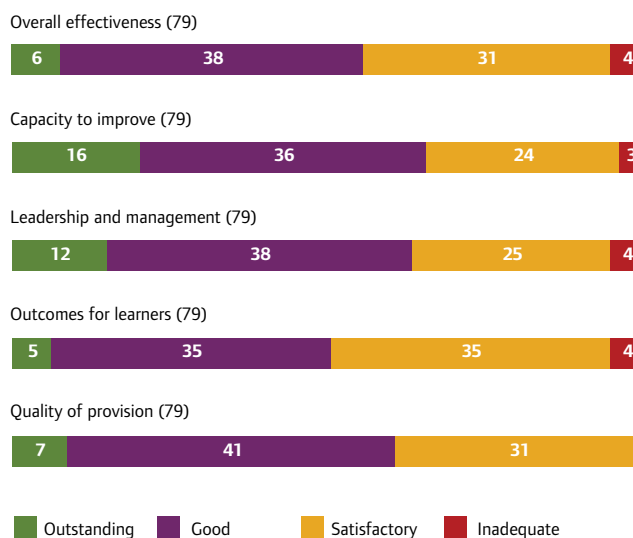
Long courses are 24 weeks or more.

This chart is based on deprivation as measured by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007. See Glossary for a detailed explanation. Colleges are grouped into quintiles of deprivation. 'Most disadvantaged' indicates colleges in the lowest 20%.

Postcode data for learners are based on pilot data provided by the Data Service.

204. The performance of colleges is not strongly affected by deprivation. Figure 45 shows the most recent inspection of all colleges inspected during the period 2005 to 2009, banded according to the level of deprivation of learners attending the college. The strongest performance is seen in colleges serving the most advantaged learners. However, for all other levels of deprivation, the proportion of colleges judged good or outstanding differs very little. Many colleges have a history of catering for learners with a very diverse range of needs and aspire to support them to succeed, irrespective of their background. It is certainly striking that 44 of the 62 colleges catering for the most disadvantaged learners were good or outstanding at their most recent inspection and only one was inadequate.

Figure 46 Key inspection judgements for colleges inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of colleges)



Capacity to improve

205. Capacity to improve was the most positively judged of the key areas for inspection in 2009/10, as shown in Figure 46. Almost three times as many colleges were found to have outstanding capacity to improve as were found to be outstanding overall. However, it is striking that all the colleges where the capacity to improve was judged to be outstanding were also either good or outstanding for their overall effectiveness, and over two thirds of the colleges where capacity to improve was judged good were also judged good for their overall effectiveness. This suggests that, among the colleges inspected this year, the more successful colleges have good systems to continue to improve further, but the prospects for improvement of less successful colleges too often remain limited.

Close attention to the views of learners contribute strongly to improvement.

206. In the 16 colleges whose capacity to improve is outstanding, a record of delivering change is combined with a rigorous, established approach to quality assurance. Systems are not only well designed, but are also well used, providing support to managers to enable them to review performance and plan improvement. In these colleges, leadership is strong, described variously by inspectors as ‘inspirational’, ‘dynamic’ and ‘focused firmly on outcomes for learners’. Nonetheless, commitment and responsibility for delivering excellence for learners are owned at all levels.

Leadership and management

207. Leadership and management are good or outstanding in 50 of the 79 colleges inspected this year. One of the strongest elements of leadership and management was effectiveness in raising expectations and ambition, in which 57 of the 79 colleges inspected were judged to be good or outstanding. In these colleges, developing a positive culture was very important. Effective organisational cultures were transparent, friendly and supportive. They focused on continuing improvement, and imbued the organisation with high aspirations and standards. These were reinforced through robust systems for monitoring and managing performance, and strong links to local and national priorities.

208. Working in partnership with other organisations such as employers, schools and other public sector organisations is an area where, overall, colleges are relatively strong. Judgements on partnership working include specific consideration of the impact of the partnership on improving provision and outcomes for learners. Local schools are important partners for colleges and where partnership work is strong it frequently supports the provision of a broader curriculum for young people in the area.

The quality of teaching and learning

209. The quality of provision is good or outstanding in 48 of the 79 colleges inspected this year, and inadequate in none. An important contribution to the judgement on the quality of provision comes from the evaluation of teaching, training and assessment. These were judged to be good or outstanding in 45 of the colleges inspected this year and satisfactory in 33. Nearly 3,000 lessons in colleges were observed during inspections carried out this year to inform the judgements on teaching. Of these lessons, 10% were judged outstanding, 55% good and 3% inadequate. Within a single college, the range of teaching practice can be wide. In colleges judged outstanding overall, 22% of lessons observed were judged satisfactory and 2% inadequate. In contrast, in colleges judged inadequate overall, fewer than half the lessons observed were good or outstanding.

210. It is worrying that, although little inadequate teaching was seen in colleges inspected this year, too much is mediocre. In colleges where teaching, training and assessment are weak, there is insufficient focus on the effectiveness of teaching and its impact on learning. Staff focus on checking that tasks have been completed but do not assess learners’ understanding. Low expectations, insufficient challenge, particularly for the most academically able, and lack of clear learning objectives all impede the progress made by learners. Action plans to help students reach their target grade are not sufficiently specific to be helpful in supporting them to improve, and learners’ progress is not monitored closely enough. Often lessons involve routine work such as gathering information and note-taking, rather than more challenging activities.

211. In contrast, where teaching is good or outstanding, skilled staff know their learners’ abilities and plan interesting and relevant lessons that motivate and engage them. Learners in need of additional help are identified early and support is provided promptly. In this way, the provision minimises any barriers to learning. Good classroom management skills mean that teachers focus on learners’ understanding, deepening and testing it through targeted questions. Internal observations of lessons are carefully evaluated and have a direct and sustained impact on the quality of teaching and learning. In the best colleges, this is closely related to professional development focused specifically on areas for improvement.

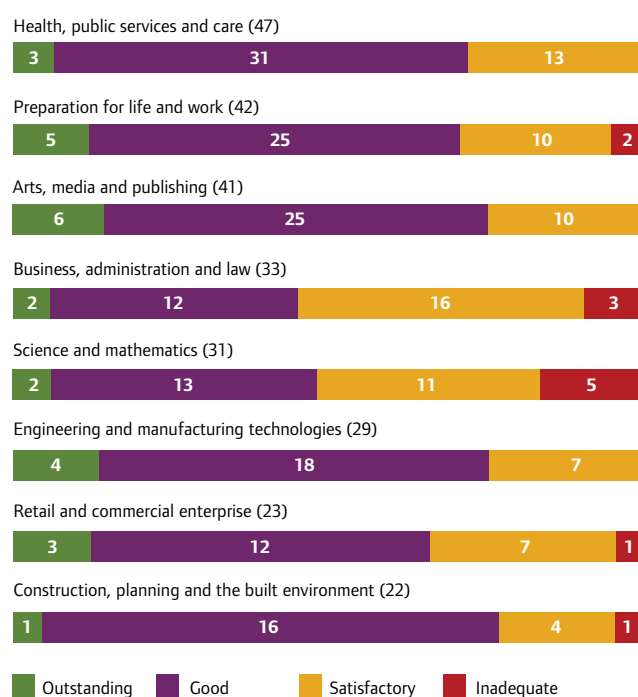
Learning and skills

212. The best colleges use frequent and accurate assessment to promote learning effectively. Learners have clear briefs for their assignments and receive regular, prompt and perceptive feedback on both coursework and homework that enables them to understand fully how their work might be improved. Individual targets are very specific, challenging and clearly linked to learners' goals. Internal quality assurance processes are used well to maintain standards. Teachers meet to review each other's assessments and help one another to improve.

213. In the best sixth form colleges, students make exceptional progress. This progress is underpinned by inspiring and challenging teaching. However, in weaker provision, there can be too much exposition by the teacher in lessons and students are not sufficiently challenged. In many of the weaker colleges, there was a lack of rigour in the monitoring of learners' progress and targets lacked precision. There was also too much variability in the quality and timeliness of feedback to learners on their written work.

Subject areas

Figure 47 Sector subject area grades in colleges inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of colleges)



Based on coverage of 20 or more inspections in sector subject areas.

214. Since September 2009, all college inspections have included a sample of graded judgements on sector subject areas. In the previous four years, subject grades were not included in inspections of good and outstanding colleges. Subject areas are taken from the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency's classified 15 sector subject areas. A total of 320 subject inspections were conducted in colleges in 2009/10 across the main sector subject classifications. Figure 47 sets out the overall judgements for all the sector subject areas in which more than 20 inspections were conducted. Due to the small number of inspections undertaken, these figures do not give a reliable picture of national performance in these subject areas, but they do show interesting differences in performance in subjects between the colleges inspected this year.

215. The strong performance of colleges in engineering and manufacturing technologies is a feature of subject inspections this year. This is particularly important in the context of the current labour market. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills has identified technical manufacturing and process as one of seven red-rated skills shortages.³⁶ Where provision for engineering and manufacturing technologies is outstanding, colleges use a wide range of teaching and learning approaches to capture learners' interest and develop their understanding. Learners benefit from excellent resources, including high-quality specialist equipment and industry standard technology. Extensive and direct work with employers helps students to gain technical skills, but it also bridges skills gaps in the college workforce. These colleges make excellent use of data to monitor learners' progress along well thought-out progression routes to further and higher education.

36 *Skills for jobs: today and tomorrow – the National Strategic Skills Audit for England 2010* (ISBN: 978-1-906597-42-9), UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2010; available at www.ukces.org.uk.

216. Arts and media also perform well, with three quarters of colleges judged good or better. In the best provision, learners make good, and sometimes exceptional, progress compared with their starting points. Teachers, who are often creative practitioners themselves, encourage students to pursue highly personalised exploration and experimentation. Learners' work is frequently innovative, expressive and thought-provoking. Teachers monitor progress closely and the frequent use of peer and self-evaluation enables learners to reflect critically on their own practice. Teachers and learners often use digital media creatively to enhance learning and develop industry-related skills. Practical projects with employers and clients help learners to develop relevant work-related skills and teachers provide good personal support for those progressing to higher education.

217. By contrast, a much smaller proportion of colleges were judged to be good or outstanding for business, administration and law. Although success rates for this subject area rose slightly in 2009, they remain the second lowest of all subject areas. Inspection identifies low success rates in A level as a particular problem in many colleges where business, administration and law were judged satisfactory or inadequate. This suggests that some learners may not have received appropriate advice in selecting their programmes and lacked the prior knowledge, skills and understanding needed to complete the course successfully.

218. The comparatively high number of colleges in this sample judged to be inadequate for science and mathematics is a concern because of the particular importance of this sector subject area for economic competitiveness. This, too, is one of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills red-rated skills-shortage areas. In good provision, science teachers work well together in teams to plan interesting and engaging lessons with a good balance of practical work and theory, and through skilfully managed discussions informally assess students' progress and develop their confidence. However, too often the teaching is uninspiring and based on a narrow range of activities. Enrichment opportunities are too limited, courses at foundation and intermediate levels are not well developed and progression routes to advanced learning are unclear.

Safety and care

219. When inspecting colleges, Ofsted considers both how safe learners feel and also how well providers promote the safeguarding of learners. This judgement, if inadequate, can affect the judgement on the college's overall effectiveness. Of all the judgements about outcomes in colleges, the extent to which learners feel safe is the most positive. In 73 out of the 79 colleges inspected this year, this outcome was deemed to be good or outstanding.

220. In the main, colleges have responded well to the Government's requirements for safeguarding learners. This aspect was judged to be good or outstanding in three quarters of the colleges inspected. Training is comprehensive, risk assessments are thorough, safe working practices are promoted, and vulnerable learners are well protected. Two colleges were judged inadequate for safeguarding because vetting procedures for staff were incomplete.

221. Residential accommodation is provided for learners in 45 further education and independent specialist colleges. Ofsted carries out social care inspections in these colleges to ensure that they fulfil the requirements of the national minimum standards.³⁷ In 2009/10, Ofsted undertook 16 inspections of residential provision, six of which were joint inspections of social care and further education provision in colleges. Residential provision was judged to be outstanding in five providers, good in six and satisfactory in five.

In the main, colleges have responded well to the Government's requirement for safeguarding learners.

37 The National Minimum Standards for Accommodation of Students under 18 by Further Education Colleges: Department of Health, under Section 23(1) Care Standards Act 2000.

Learning and skills

222. In good and outstanding colleges, managers of residential provision ensure that learners are well supported by care staff and personally assisted in their studies by teaching staff. Learners confirm that they feel safe and know how to raise concerns about their welfare should they arise. A ‘zero tolerance’ policy towards bullying and harassment creates a harmonious environment where others’ views are respected.³⁸ Common areas for improvement in the colleges judged satisfactory include the need to improve the consistency of safe recruitment practices for all staff working in the college, to improve residential accommodation and to ensure that the risks on the premises have been properly assessed.

Independent specialist colleges

223. Independent specialist colleges provide education and training for students with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities, whose learning and support needs cannot be met by their local college. There are 55 independent specialist colleges with over 3,500 learners. In 2009/10, inspections were undertaken in 13 colleges. In addition 20 focused monitoring visits and two re-inspection monitoring visits were carried out to assess the progress made in relation to aspects of provision and areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Significant or reasonable progress was made in 90% of these.

Figure 48 Overall effectiveness of independent specialist colleges since 2007 (number of colleges)

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Outstanding	1	0	3
Good	10	2	5
Satisfactory	8	3	4
Inadequate	3	0	1
Total	22	5	13

224. Three independent specialist colleges were judged to be outstanding for the progress their learners made, as well as being judged outstanding overall. These colleges place emphasis on developing skills for independent living, such as learning how to travel independently, and they enable learners to make choices about how they wish to live and learn in the future. They are successful at helping learners make considerable gains in their communication and personal skills. These skills contribute to the progress learners make towards employment, further education and learning, and to making a contribution to their community.

225. Good providers are adept at developing individual learning programmes which meet the needs of the young people effectively; teachers skilfully use a wide range of strategies to motivate, challenge and raise learners’ expectations. Targets for learners are demanding and closely monitored. In the colleges where performance has improved, governors are instrumental in scrutinising and challenging progress, performance measures are monitored regularly and staff held accountable for their improvement.

226. Less successful independent specialist colleges do not use data sufficiently well to set challenging targets across all areas of their provision, nor do they analyse the achievements of their learners effectively in order to identify what needs to be done to bring about improvements. Tutorials do not meet the needs of individual learners consistently and, in some cases, teachers fail to use a sufficient range of strategies to enable learners to make progress. The use of information and communication technology to support learners and staff is often insufficient. In poorer performing colleges, strategic planning is not effective. This has a detrimental impact on outcomes for learners.

38 *Life in residential further education (080251)*, Ofsted, 2009, reports the views of a sample of residential students from colleges across England.

Further education in higher education

227. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, in 2008/09 about 46,000 students enrolled on further education courses in 29 higher education institutions.³⁹ In 2009/10 Ofsted focused its inspection activities on the weakest providers. Inspectors undertook two full re-inspections and three re-inspection monitoring visits to three higher education institutions that had further education provision. Both institutions which received a full inspection were judged satisfactory and in all three of the monitoring visits undertaken there was clear evidence of improvement.



39 *Students in higher education institutions, 2008/09*, Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2010.

Work-based learning

228. Work-based learning includes apprenticeships, Train to Gain and Entry to Employment programmes.⁴⁰ These schemes have a common focus on teaching and training that equips learners for employment. The focus may be on giving people the skills to enter employment, to change their career, or to raise their levels of skill in order for them to do better in their existing roles. Latest available figures suggest that work-based learning reaches over one million learners, around 77% of whom were engaged on Train to Gain programmes.⁴¹

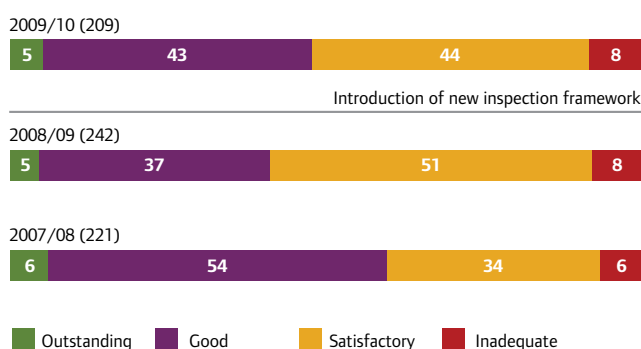
229. In 2009/10, 209 inspections of work-based learning provided by independent learning providers and employers were undertaken. A further 63 inspections of work-based learning were carried out in the course of inspecting colleges of further education. Apprenticeships were the most frequently inspected programme. Inspectors also undertook 47 focused monitoring visits to work-based learning providers whose last inspection had judged them to be satisfactory with their capacity to improve being judged as less than good, or where concerns were raised through Ofsted's risk assessment process. In addition, 22 re-inspection monitoring visits were undertaken. In 80% of the themes inspected significant or reasonable progress was made.

40 For full details of types of work-based learning see the Glossary.

41 *The impact of Train to Gain on skills in employment: a review to follow up the 2007/08 survey (090033)*, Ofsted, 2009.

Overall effectiveness

Figure 49 Overall effectiveness of work-based learning providers inspected between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)

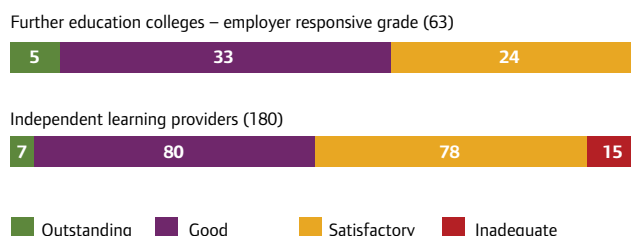


Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

230. Of the work-based learning providers inspected this year, 48% were good or outstanding for their overall effectiveness compared with 42% in 2008/09. This is encouraging given that, as with colleges and schools, outstanding and good providers are now inspected less often and weaker providers are prioritised for inspection. The high proportion of provision that is no better than satisfactory across the learning and skills sector as a whole continues to be a concern. It is therefore particularly positive that this year has seen an increase of six percentage points in good provision and a seven percentage point decrease in less effective provision in work-based learning.

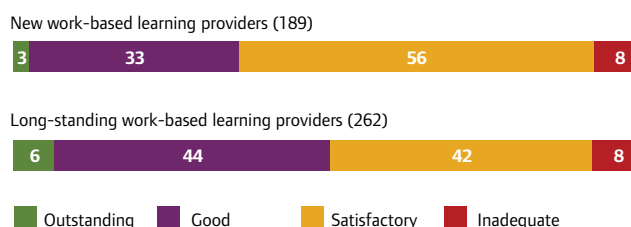
231. This trajectory of improvement is confirmed by analysing how inspection outcomes have changed for individual work-based learning providers between inspections. Of the providers inspected this year, 62 had improved since their last inspection, 95 had maintained their performance and 34 had declined. However, in the 113 providers previously judged satisfactory, 58 showed no improvement and a further seven providers declined. There is still some way to go in stimulating more rapid improvement in satisfactory provision.

Figure 50 Overall effectiveness of work-based learning in independent learning providers and further education colleges inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)



232. Figure 50 shows how the overall effectiveness of work-based learning was judged in further education colleges and independent learning providers. Colleges tended to perform better than independent learning providers in terms of the quality of leadership and management and this is critical in informing the judgement about overall effectiveness. Fifteen independent learning providers were judged to be inadequate. Of these, three were inadequate on the basis of weaknesses in their safeguarding practice. In the remainder, common weaknesses were observed in the slow progress made by learners, inadequate strategic planning and poor use of data to promote improvement, weak self-assessment and insufficient involvement of employers to support learners and promote better outcomes. Of the 15 independent learning providers judged inadequate, five offered training solely in hairdressing and beauty.

Figure 51 Overall effectiveness of new work-based learning providers compared with long-standing work-based learning providers inspected during 2008/09 and 2009/10 (percentage of providers)

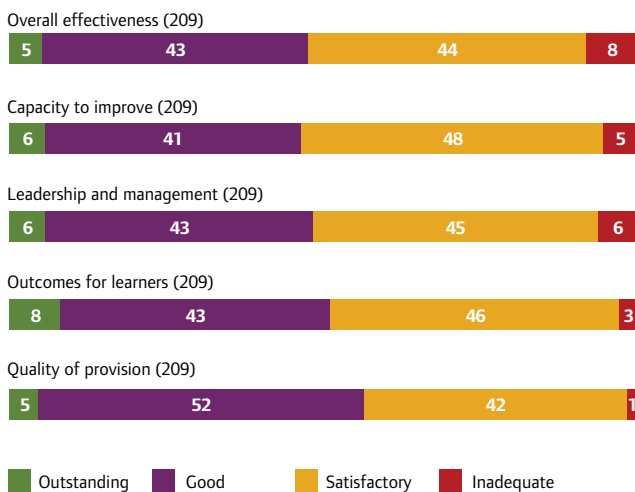


A new work-based learning provider is defined here as a provider that had a first inspection in 2008/09 or 2009/10. A long-standing work-based learning provider is defined as one that had at least two inspections with one inspection before 2008/09.

Figures have been rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

233. The work-based learning sector has long been characterised by considerable churn, with many new providers entering the sector and other providers leaving the sector within a single year. This is often a result of changes to funding, contracts or government policy. Ofsted's inspections show that, on average, work-based learning providers that are more established are more likely to be judged good or outstanding than newer providers (Figure 51).

Figure 52 Key inspection judgements for work-based learning providers inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Leadership and management

234. Inspections of work-based learning this year show some encouraging improvement in overall effectiveness. However, this is compared with a relatively low base of performance in 2008/09. Some significant challenges remain to be tackled. The quality of leadership and management is variable across the sector. In college work-based learning, leadership and management are generally good, as they are frequently supported by mature quality improvement systems, but in the independent sector only around half were judged good or outstanding for leadership and management. This is a similar percentage to previous years.

235. Where leadership and management are outstanding, robust quality improvement arrangements, including regular observation of teaching and training sessions, provide leaders with an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development. The views of learners and employers form an important aspect of this evaluation. The impact of strong self-assessment is seen in high success rates, the narrowing or closing of achievement gaps and increased participation rates, particularly by under-represented groups.

236. However, this is the exception. Self-assessment, in the independent sector in particular, is not being sufficiently well used to drive continuing improvement. Over half of the independent providers are judged satisfactory and 12% are inadequate for this aspect. Providers that were judged to be inadequate were insufficiently self-critical and were often poor in using evidence from lesson observations to inform planning and action.

Outcomes for learners

237. Outcomes for learners were judged to be good or outstanding in 51% of the providers inspected this year (Figure 52). This shows little change from 2008/09. Improving the proportion of learners who complete their programmes remains a priority in the work-based learning sector.

All work-based learning providers that were judged to be outstanding for their learners' outcomes were also judged to be at least good in terms of teaching, training and assessment.

238. Overall success rates on apprenticeships increased from 64% in 2007/08 to 71% of starters in 2008/09. However, provisional data used during the 2009/10 inspections indicated that only just over half the learners on apprenticeship programmes complete their programme within the timescale the provider has estimated.⁴² Too often, providers do not identify additional needs, provide support or monitor progress effectively. Lack of training, development and the sharing of good practice between assessors are also common weaknesses.

239. The overall success rate on Train to Gain programmes rose slightly from 72% in 2007/08 to 73% in 2008/09. It is still the case that not all learners are placed on the right programmes or are not supported appropriately. Poor target-setting, so that the learner does not know what is required or by when, also contributes to low success rates.

The quality of teaching

240. All work-based learning providers that were judged to be outstanding for their learners' outcomes were also judged to be at least good in terms of teaching, training and assessment. In the best provision, expectations of learners' work are ambitious, learners have opportunities to gain additional qualifications and they develop their confidence and personal skills well. The involvement of employers in planning the learning is key, coupled with frequent and effective reviews of learners' progress. A wide range of teaching and training methods sustains learners' interest, including the effective use of e-learning. Where learners achieve outstanding outcomes, providers take a rounded view of their skills. Some providers do this through a focus on assessing and improving literacy and numeracy, regardless of the employment context.

241. However, teaching, training and assessment are not good enough across the sector as a whole. Only 48% of all providers are judged to be good or outstanding for the effectiveness of these key aspects. Too much teaching and training are still uninspiring, particularly in classroom-based sessions. A further weakness is that too few providers give adequate feedback on learners' performance in the workplace.

The quality of provision

242. In 57% of work-based learning providers, the quality of provision is good or outstanding. One of the strongest aspects of this judgement is how well partnerships with schools, employers and others lead to benefits for learners; 70% of providers are graded good or outstanding in this respect. Productive partnerships are those which expand the scope and variety of teaching and learning effectively. For example, some colleges of further education are particularly successful at involving employers in designing and delivering work-related training to develop the knowledge and employability skills that learners, and employers, need for success.

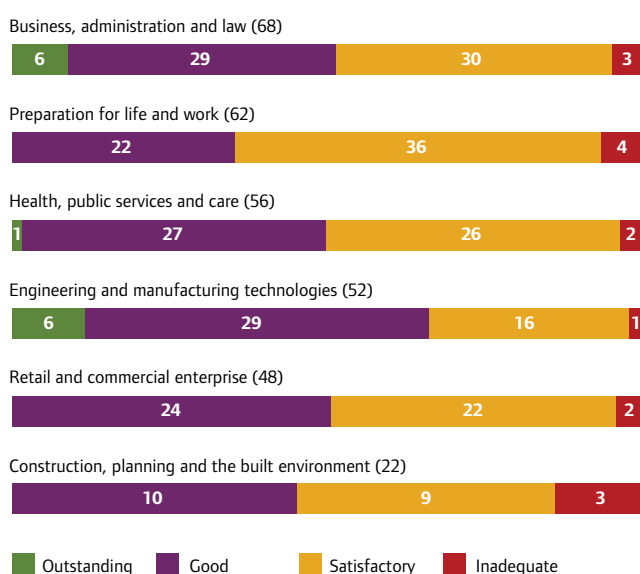
243. Employers are very positive, on the whole, about the quality of work-based learning. In around a fifth of providers inspected, employers feel there is nothing further for the provider to improve. Employers working with good or outstanding providers frequently comment on the wide choice of well-structured programmes and how training is carefully organised to minimise disruptions in the workplace. However, there is scope for improvement. A minority of employers do not feel sufficiently involved in planning training and assessments; nor do they receive frequent reports on learners' progress. Specific improvements employers would like to see are fewer changes in assessors and simplicity and stability in funding arrangements.

⁴² In addition to the Statistical First Releases, inspectors have access to and use 'in year' data which are based on 2009/10 outcomes to help them prepare and inspect work-based learning provision. These data are provided by the Data Service and are indicative only. Final 2009/10 data will be published in a future Statistical First Release in 2011.

244. Learners in the best work-based learning providers told inspectors that courses are well-planned and designed around hours that suit them. They valued the knowledge and experience of trainers and felt that they were given the opportunity to work at industry standards. They also commented on the positive impact that frequent assessments, reviews and tracking undertaken by assessors had on their progress. In providers judged inadequate or satisfactory for their overall effectiveness, learners told inspectors that courses were poorly planned and structured, teaching was often mundane, there was a lack of communication from staff, and there were too few opportunities to consolidate skills in training sessions or apply them in work settings.

Subject areas

Figure 53 Sector subject areas in work-based learning inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)



Based on coverage of 20 or more inspections in sector subject areas.

245. A total of 327 subject inspections were conducted in work-based learning providers. Subject areas are taken from the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency's classified 15 sector subject areas. Figure 53 sets out the overall judgements for all the sector subject areas in which more than 20 grades were awarded. Approximately half of all subject area provision is good or better. However, only 5% of subject areas were judged to be outstanding. The same proportion were found to be inadequate.⁴³

246. Performance has been particularly strong in engineering and manufacturing, as it was last year. Four of the six outstanding grades awarded were in provision run directly by national employers. These employers typically deliver only engineering programmes – primarily advanced apprenticeships. The key qualities of outstanding engineering provision provide some clear exemplars for the skills sector generally. Very high success rates are built on well-planned training which motivates and enthuses learners. The availability and use of specialist resources to support learning are generally outstanding. Close supervision and support for learners by dedicated staff promote good individual progress; any difficulties are dealt with promptly. Many providers work with young people to encourage awareness and take-up of engineering as a career; some provide opportunities for learners to act as engineering role models and ambassadors in schools.

247. Half of health, public services and care provision was graded good or better. This is an improvement on last year and inadequate provision has been reduced. The range of provision is broad and meets the needs of learners and employers. In the better provision the standard of learners' work is good and they develop valuable occupational skills. However, even in good provision, teaching and learning is too often only satisfactory. Too many learners make slow progress and remain on their programmes beyond planned end dates. In satisfactory provision there is frequently insufficient focus on quality improvement, a lack of monitoring of learners' progress and insufficient collection and use of data to help drive improvement.

⁴³ As with subject inspections in colleges, the small number of inspections means that these figures do not give a representative picture of national performance. However, they do show interesting differences in subjects between providers inspected this year.

Learning and skills

248. The range of programmes in business, administration and law has grown since last year. It has improved from a subject area with some significant underperformance to one in which just over half of provision is good or better and inadequate provision has been reduced. The best provision is characterised by high success rates within planned timeframes, high standards of work, additional qualifications gained and good development of learners' confidence and personal skills. Close involvement of employers in planning learning is a key enabling factor; by contrast its absence leads to poorly coordinated training and assessment. The development of more self-critical self-assessment is identified as a key area for improvement.

249. Unlike last year, there was no outstanding provision for preparation for life and work inspected this year, and the amount of satisfactory provision has increased. The principal programme in this subject area is Entry to Employment, which is in the process of winding down. Most learners on these programmes face multiple barriers to entering training or employment, and some are at risk. In this predominantly satisfactory area, staff generally demonstrate strong empathy with and support for learners and provide good support to succeed. Most learners develop additional expertise, confidence and employability skills, including their literacy and numeracy, to progress further. However, the actual number demonstrably doing so as a direct consequence of their programme is at best satisfactory. The quality of teaching and training is satisfactory, but also often routine and uninspiring.

Equality, diversity and safeguarding

250. This year, 97% of providers were judged to be satisfactory or better at promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination; an encouraging increase from 90% last year. However, the majority of providers were judged to be just satisfactory. There are two common weaknesses. First, data about achievement and participation rates are not used well enough to make sure that barriers to achievement are tackled. Second, training for staff in equality and diversity is insufficient. This leads to ineffective practice in developing learners' understanding about equality and diversity.

251. The effectiveness of providers' systems to safeguard learners is a stronger focus of the new inspection framework. It is now graded on the same four-point scale as other inspection judgements. It is particularly positive, therefore, that in 96% of work-based learning providers inspected this year, safeguarding was judged to be at least satisfactory and was good or better in over one third. This reflects a continuing pattern of improvement in work-based learning: in 2007/08, 20% of providers inspected were found to have unsatisfactory safeguarding practice, and in 2008/09 this figure was 11%.

Adult and community learning

252. Adult and community learning covers a wide range of post-16 education and training and is provided by a variety of organisations: local authorities, voluntary and community organisations, general further education colleges and specialist designated institutions. Some learners aim to achieve a qualification; some learn for their social and personal development.

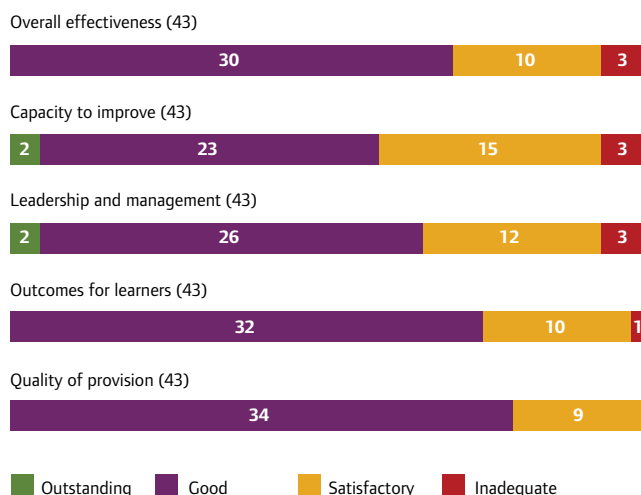
Overall effectiveness

Figure 54 Inspection judgements for the overall effectiveness of adult and community learning providers since 2007 (number of providers)

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Outstanding	3	4	0
Good	17	30	30
Satisfactory	22	32	10
Inadequate	7	2	3
Total	49	68	43

253. This year, 43 providers were inspected, almost all of which are satisfactory or good in terms of their overall effectiveness. In addition, 26 monitoring visits and seven re-inspection monitoring visits were undertaken. A total of 207 themes were explored in these visits and significant or reasonable progress was made in 91% of cases. No provision is outstanding, and three providers have been judged to be inadequate. Overall, this is a slightly less positive picture than last year.

Figure 55 Key inspection judgements for adult and community learning inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)



Leadership and management

254. The quality of leadership and management and capacity to improve were the least positively judged aspects of provision this year (Figure 55). Providers judged to be good or outstanding in leadership and management tended to make good use of ambitious target-setting at all levels, with wide-ranging systems allowing managers to monitor provision. Strategic direction was usually strong, and clearly focused on learners' engagement, skills and employability.

255. Providers with weaker leadership and management set targets that were insufficiently ambitious; even these were seldom achieved. An important area for development, therefore, is to introduce routine and comprehensive quality assurance to monitor key aspects of performance and to embed challenging targets into realistic plans for action. This is a persistent weakness in this sector. The collection and use of data were also often insufficient. In the best providers, managers analysed data appropriately to track learners' retention, achievements and progression rates. However, in many cases, providers made insufficient use of data to plan interventions and improve outcomes for learners. Arrangements to safeguard learners were good or outstanding in 21 of the providers inspected this year and inadequate in just two.

The quality of provision including teaching and learning

256. Teaching was good in 32 out of the 43 adult and community learning providers inspected and satisfactory in the remainder. Similarly, just under 70% of the 757 lessons observed by inspectors were judged to be good or outstanding, which reinforces the picture of generally good-quality teaching. Where teaching is most effective, activities are exciting, learning materials are well thought through, and tutors are skilled in using a mixture of individual, paired and group work to engage learners. In the minority of providers where teaching and learning are satisfactory and not improving, tutors do not reflect sufficiently on how to improve their practice and managers are not precise about identifying areas for improvement in teaching; when weaknesses are identified, they are not tackled rigorously enough. In around half the inspections, tutors did not plan their teaching to cater for individual learners' needs, set targets or record learners' progress well enough.

257. No providers were judged outstanding for the quality of their provision, the outcomes achieved by learners, or the quality of teaching and learning. However, 11% of lessons observed by inspectors were outstanding. This is in line with other remit areas. It suggests that many providers can demonstrate some outstanding teaching but that it is not embedded or consistent enough across their provision. In order to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons, tutors need to improve their planning of teaching and learning by setting individual learning targets, monitoring progress, embedding equality and diversity better into the curriculum, and increasing the use of information and learning technology in sessions. Providers need to improve their observation of lessons to pay more attention to what is learnt and the progress learners make, be more precise in identifying and recording areas for improvement in teaching and link findings from lesson observations explicitly to plans for staff training.

Preparation for life and work

258. The most frequently inspected sector subject area in adult and community learning is preparation for life and work. The range of support offered in preparation for life and work includes training to develop literacy, numeracy and other basic skills such as information and communication technology; classes in English for speakers of other languages; and targeted support, such as developing team-working skills, to help people find and sustain work. This is therefore a very important aspect of adult and community learning, providing vital skills to some of the most vulnerable learners. Thirty-nine sector subject inspections were conducted of preparation for life and work. The provision was judged to be good in 24 inspections and satisfactory in 13.

259. Across much of the provision for preparation for life and work, there are a number of important and consistent strengths. Participants enjoy their learning and often speak positively about the safe and supportive environment in which they are taught. Many learners report that as a result of their participation in learning they have better social contact and feel less isolated. They also report improved literacy, language and technology skills and greater knowledge of how to support their families through understanding healthy eating or being able to communicate more effectively with their children's doctor or teacher. Teaching in this subject area is often lively and varied, and this contributes to many learners' good progress and achievement. They acquire critical basic and employability skills, they grow in confidence, and they build social skills which, in turn, have a positive impact on the communities in which they live and work.

260. In order to improve preparation for life and work further, providers need to improve the quality of the initial assessments of learners, and ensure that learners have clear and precise targets. Data on learners' progress and their destinations are not used effectively to understand the impact of interventions. In many cases, information learning technology in lessons has the potential to enrich learners' experience but is underused.

261. In weaker providers, the planning of the curriculum in preparation for life and work does not always ensure that it meets the needs of local learners or support the regeneration of communities. Opportunities for tutors to learn from each other, for example through peer coaching and sharing of their practice, are also insufficient. In some of the providers inspected, links with employers to support opportunities for work experience and progression into jobs are underdeveloped.

Employment provision contracted by the Department for Work and Pensions

Provider-led Pathways to Work, New Deal and European Social Fund programmes

262. During 2009/10, the contracted employment provision funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and inspected by Ofsted involved over 55,000 participants in Provider-led Pathways to Work, 268 participants in New Deal for Disabled People, approximately 12,000 participants in European Social Fund contracts and 574 participants in New Deal prime contractor programmes.⁴⁴

- ✘ Provider-led Pathways is a programme of activity designed specifically to reduce the number of adults who are not in work as a result of long-term or complex conditions and who receive Employment Support Allowance or an Incapacity Benefit. New Deal for Disabled People is similar but is not available in all Jobcentre Plus districts.
- ✘ European Social Fund programmes vary according to region and are aimed at supporting individuals with significant barriers to work to fulfil their potential and gain sustainable employment.⁴⁵
- ✘ New Deal provision offers a range of programmes to help participants, either as New Deal for Young People (NDYP) if they are aged 18 to 24 or as New Deal 25+ for older participants. Providers have a prime contract for the programme within a specific district or region. Most prime contractors subcontract part of the work to other providers.

⁴⁴ Based on the total number of participants at the point of inspection.

⁴⁵ Three providers had two contracts inspected during their inspection visit.

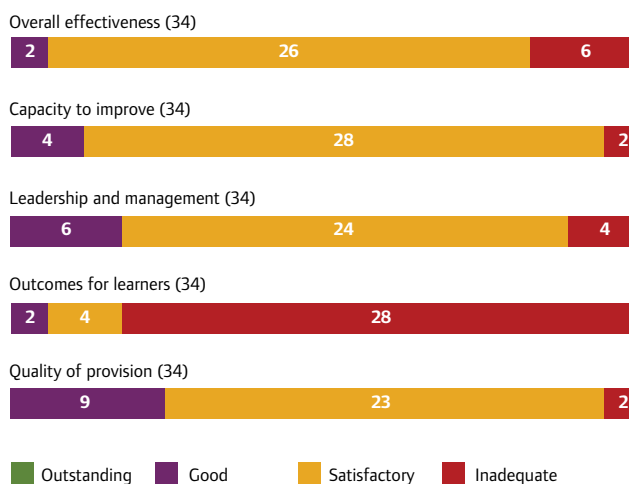
263. Since the end of the reporting period covered by this Annual Report the DWP has stopped commissioning inspection in all these areas. Some functions will now be carried out by the DWP.

Figure 56 Overall effectiveness of DWP contracted provision inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of contracts)

	Provider-led Pathways to Work	New Deal for Disabled People	European Social Fund	New Deal prime contractors	Total
Outstanding	0	0	0	0	0
Good	0	0	2	0	2
Satisfactory	9	1	12	4	26
Inadequate	4	0	2	0	6
Total	13	1	16	4	34

264. The majority of DWP contracted employment provision inspected this year was just satisfactory, with only two providers judged to be good overall. There was no outstanding provision. These inspection judgements reflect the fact that the majority of the contractors inspected did not achieve their contractual targets agreed with the Department for Work and Pensions for supporting participants on the programmes into sustainable employment. As a result, all but six of the 34 providers inspected were judged inadequate for the outcomes achieved by participants. Although the majority of the participants made at least satisfactory progress in developing their confidence, motivation and self-esteem, progression into sustainable jobs was low. The inspection judgements reflect this.

Figure 57 Key inspection judgements for DWP contracted provision, inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)



265. In the nine programmes in which the quality of provision was judged to be good, outcomes for participants were poor in all but two. On these programmes, it is likely that the economic climate is limiting the opportunities to support participants into work. However, it is not just the economic climate that is leading to poor outcomes for participants. The quality of teaching, training and assessment was inadequate in seven providers and only satisfactory in a further 20. Too many providers failed to promote or make good use of the wider training opportunities available to participants. To be able to guide participants, advisers needed better, up-to-date information about existing options.

266. The least effective providers inspected failed to identify and record participants' barriers to work effectively. The result was poor target-setting and a failure to measure the progress participants make. In some of the provision, not enough emphasis was placed on developing the skills participants need in order to be employable. The analysis of data to evaluate the progress participants make was insufficiently sophisticated and quality improvement systems lacked consistency. Services lacked sufficient focus on the user: training and learning sessions were not always tailored to individual needs and feedback from learners and employers was not always used to improve the provision.

Learning and skills

267. Job search arrangements across DWP contracted provision were predominantly satisfactory, although little ingenuity or creativity was used to stimulate participants to identify and apply for suitable jobs. Traditional methods dominated the approach with some long-term unemployed participants continually using the same unsuccessful activities. For others, poor information technology skills reduced the effectiveness of their search for employment.

Workstep

268. The Workstep programme provides support to disabled people facing complex barriers to getting and keeping a job. It also offers practical assistance to employers. During 2009/10, Ofsted inspected 20 Workstep providers covering 2,240 participants. In addition, eight focused monitoring visits to providers and four re-inspection monitoring visits were undertaken. Significant or reasonable progress was made in over three quarters of the 71 themes explored.

Figure 58 Overall effectiveness of Workstep providers inspected between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Outstanding	1	0	0
Good	18	13	9
Satisfactory	16	15	9
Inadequate	2	5	2
Total	37	33	20

269. This year, Workstep participants continued to develop their personal skills and make good progress towards employment. Personal support remains a key strength and in effective providers programmes are well matched to individual needs. The providers that successfully improved progression into unsupported employment had a clear focus on progression and communicated this highly effectively to front-line staff. Successful providers actively promoted the valuable contributions disabled people bring to the workplace and helped to break down myths. Larger Workstep providers have built strong arrangements with national companies. These often result in improved progression into work, guaranteed interviews and specific training linked to vacancies.

270. Of the 90 Workstep providers inspected over the past three years, 56 were local authorities. However, awareness of the programme in local authorities is still poor, resulting in too few council departments offering suitable employment or placement opportunities to Workstep participants.

271. Another priority for improvement across all providers is to strengthen the support for employment-related literacy, numeracy and language skills which is, in the main, too limited. Only a few of the providers visited as part of Ofsted's recent survey offered vocationally relevant Skills for Life training; at best, this provision was satisfactory. Too often, providers had insufficient expertise in literacy, numeracy and language training, although the better providers made arrangements with specialist organisations to develop these skills.⁴⁶

Adult information, advice and guidance

272. During 2009/10 the brand name for the adult information and advice service was nextstep. The provision is managed regionally and provided locally. It aims to improve the employability of participants by helping them to take part in learning or training or move into sustainable employment. The latest available figures show that, during the period August 2008 to July 2009, over 390,000 people in England used the nextstep service.

273. Between August 2008 and August 2010, the service was managed by 10 geographically based contractors. The contractors subcontracted parts of the service to specialist agencies, as well as education and training providers. Ofsted inspected the 10 contracts for the nextstep service between September 2009 and April 2010. The absence of outstanding provision in the providers inspected this year is a concern.

⁴⁶ *Improving progression to sustainable unsupported employment (080258)*, Ofsted, 2010.

Figure 59 Inspection judgements for nextstep contracts inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)

	Overall effectiveness	Quality of provision	Outcomes achieved by participants
Outstanding	0	0	0
Good	0	1	0
Satisfactory	10	9	10
Inadequate	0	0	0
Total	10	10	10

274. Contractors provided clear direction for and management of the changes associated with larger contracts. They responded effectively to the expansion of and revision to the service in the light of changed economic circumstances. They worked well with Jobcentre Plus to serve a growing number of unemployed people or those threatened with redundancy. They were successful in building effective partnerships with their networks of subcontractors and with external agencies. Links with external agencies enabled nextstep contractors to refer participants for further support or training to meet their needs.

275. Advice sessions were effective in improving participants' self-esteem and motivation. Common feedback from participants was that their advisers were helpful, friendly and encouraging. They were pleased with the service they had received and felt more confident than before about applying for work or pursuing education and training courses.

276. Participants' progression into education, training or employment was satisfactory. However, in too many sessions, advisers' completion of paperwork dominated individual sessions with participants. In the weaker sessions, they did not explore participants' needs in sufficient detail or pay enough attention to probing their literacy or numeracy needs. They did not always involve participants effectively in agreeing an action plan for progression.

277. Participants' attendance at sessions was often low, particularly when they were referred by the Jobcentre. Although most contractors took action to monitor and tackle this, it was an area for improvement in most of the provision inspected. Many of the participants who kept their appointments had not previously been aware of what the service offered.

Prisons and young offender institutions

278. Ofsted collaborates with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons to inspect learning and skills provision in adult and young offender establishments. In 2009/10, inspectors completed 27 inspections of custodial settings: 22 were of institutions housing predominantly adults and five were young offender institutions accommodating young people aged, mainly but not exclusively, between 18 and 21.

Figure 60 Key inspection outcomes for learning and skills in adult and young offender institutions inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)



279. Five out of the 27 prisons and young offender institutions inspected were judged to be inadequate for learning and skills this year compared with two last year. In addition, no prisons have been judged outstanding for the overall effectiveness of their learning and skills, whereas last year saw the first prison achieve this overall judgement. This profile of inspection judgements is a serious concern.

Learning and skills

280. Inspectors make recommendations for improving learning and skills in prisons, and monitor progress in implementing the recommendations through follow-up inspections. In 2009/10 Ofsted carried out 20 follow-up inspections and monitored the progress made on recommendations relating to learning and skills activities, entry to employment, work, resettlement, libraries and physical education. Overall, 49% of recommendations were fully achieved, 27% were partially achieved and 25% were not achieved.

281. Overall, standards of teaching and learning in prisons are generally satisfactory with some good aspects, and access to education and training for vulnerable prisoners has improved. Many learners achieve well and make good progress, but pockets of poor performance remain. In too many instances, punctuality and attendance remain poor. Often this is because other prison regime priorities or scheduled activities for prisoners conflict with the learning and skills schedule.

282. The range of learning and skills provision in prisons is mostly satisfactory with some good examples of extensive vocational training and employability skills training. However, provision for literacy and numeracy is not always available in the workshops to support vocational training. Prisons have increased the breadth of vocational training and programmes which meet individual learners' needs, but links to regional skills gaps remain poorly explored. There are still too few education and work places in prison and, generally, too many prisoners on waiting lists for vocational training. Furthermore, not all prisons ensure that prisoners are able to develop their job-searching skills before release.

283. The quality of initial assessments and information-sharing between prisons continues to improve. As a result, the number of repeat assessments has significantly reduced. However, assessments of English for those for whom it is an additional language are still underdeveloped. Some individual learning plans are detailed and helpful, with clear objectives agreed with learners that help them to manage their learning. Others do not enable learners to understand sufficiently what they need to do to make progress. Learning plans are not always shared with other staff across the prison who need to know their contents and, too often, they are not linked to sentence plans. Links between education, training and

sentence planning are frequently insufficient, which detracts from the learner's understanding of their individual progress.

284. Although resources are available to support learning and the development of employment skills, they are not always used. Access to technology and computers has improved. Access to libraries, however, remains generally poor, particularly in the evenings and at weekends, and there is not enough space for private study. Physical education resources have improved significantly, as has the accreditation of some part-time programmes.

285. Resettlement programmes remain underdeveloped in some prisons. Information, advice and guidance are not planned well enough to support resettlement needs and preparation for work in the community. Links with employers generally remain poor. The use of release on temporary licence is restricted and too many prisoners are unable to attend training courses or gain work experience to support their resettlement.

Resettlement programmes remain underdeveloped in some prisons. Information, advice and guidance are not planned well enough to support resettlement needs and preparation for work in the community.

286. Of the five young offender institutions which were inspected during the year, three were satisfactory and two were inadequate. In the better institutions, the strategic management of learning and skills was good, and the provision was generally broad and relevant. Learners made good progress towards their learning goals and standards of practical work were high. However, too much provision was of poor quality. In the weakest, the quality of teaching and learning was poor, marked by learners' lack of enthusiasm and poor attendance and punctuality. In one institution there was too much poor behaviour and bad language by prisoners which disrupted learning. There was sometimes a marked difference in the quality of the vocational training and other education. In general, vocational training tended to be better than other learning on offer. The range of provision for life skills or personal and social development was often insufficient.

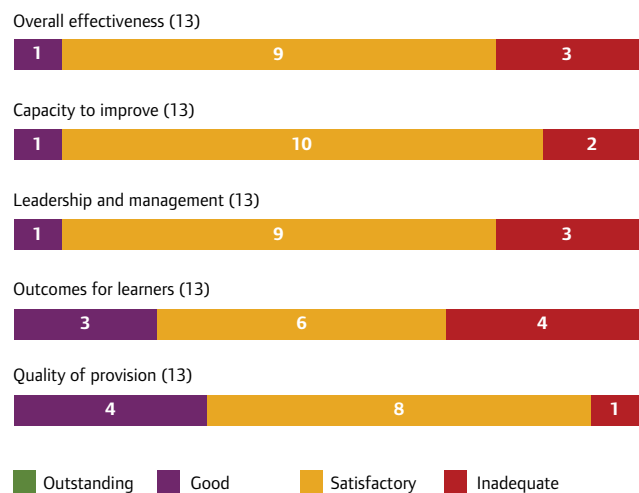
287. In addition to the prisons and young offender institutions, five juvenile establishments were also inspected this year. A broad curriculum and generally good teaching enabled the young people accommodated in these establishments to make good progress. In the most effective settings, a thorough initial assessment meant young people were placed on courses that met their needs and enabled them to achieve well. Although punctuality was generally good, attendance was variable, ranging from good to satisfactory. As a result of high standards demanded by staff, behaviour was also generally good.

Probation

288. Ofsted collaborates with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation to inspect learning and skills provision for learners on probation. Since April 2010 the country has been divided into 35 probation trusts; formerly, the National Probation Service was organised into 42 probation areas.

289. In 2009/10, Ofsted undertook 13 inspections as part of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's Offender Management Inspection programme. The role of offender managers within the probation trust is to act as facilitators for offenders and to help them to access interventions to tackle their offending behaviour. Staff in probation trusts work with learning and skills providers to help offenders gain the skills and qualifications they need to re-integrate effectively into the community, often after a custodial sentence. Probation staff may also give advice to those passing sentence, which can lead to education and training being included in sentence plans.

Figure 61 Key judgements for probation trusts inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)



290. In 2009/10 a large majority of probation trusts were judged satisfactory. This has been the case for the past two years. None was outstanding and three were inadequate. Only one trust was deemed to have good capacity to improve. This lack of significant progress is a concern.

Learning and skills

291. A number of good and satisfactory probation trusts have developed effective approaches to engaging offenders. The probation trusts' use of court orders to ensure that offenders gain access to appropriate learning and skills provision to develop their literacy, numeracy and employability skills has significantly improved.

292. The range of provision to help offenders gain the skills to move into work is also improving, but too many inconsistencies remain. Provision for literacy and numeracy is available in all trusts, but entry level provision and provision for English for speakers of other languages are poor. Opportunities for offenders to gain recognised qualifications or to have a record of the skills they have acquired that they could use later to support a job application are still weak. Approved premises offer relevant independent living programmes and some information and communication technology programmes, but they are often only available for short periods because funding is insufficient. The sharing of information across probation trusts and learning and skills providers is frequently poor.

Immigration removal centres

293. Immigration removal centres are required to provide a secure environment for people subject to immigration control. Education and training in immigration removal centres are inspected by Ofsted in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons. Between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 Ofsted worked with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons to undertake seven inspections of immigration removal centres; four were full inspections and three were unannounced follow-up visits which evaluated the progress made against the recommendations set at the previous inspection.

294. In too many centres, the management and planning of education are weak. Education is not promoted sufficiently and a narrow range of provision is offered. The take-up of education tends to be low. In one centre the quality of education was good overall, but even there take-up was limited. Centres often do not plan sufficiently to meet the differing needs of short stay detainees or for those held for longer periods of time. In general, they do not respond adequately to the varied levels of the detainees' proficiency in English, nor do they make enough use of data to monitor detainees' participation in activities or to promote improvement. In one centre, in which the needs of detainees learning English were well met, classroom practice focused effectively on developing detainees' speaking skills. Topics studied were carefully chosen to reflect detainees' most important communication needs. Access to libraries in centres is satisfactory.

295. One of the immigration removal centres that received a follow-up inspection accommodated 24 children and young people under the age of 18. Provision consisted of one primary class and one secondary class. In addition, the centre provided a nursery that was inspected by Ofsted and judged to be good. In this centre, several of the recommendations set at the previous inspection had been implemented or partially achieved. A full curriculum review, good timetabling and planning had led to a more appropriate school day for primary-aged children. Formal systems had been established to gain an indication of each child's previous learning and age-appropriate targets had been set which were routinely monitored. Short units of work had been designed to enable children to gain internal accreditation for their work. The centre also catered separately for women detainees. The provision for them was judged to be poor.

Armed Forces training

296. The Ministry of Defence commissioned Ofsted to inspect welfare and duty of care in nine training establishments between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010.

Figure 62 Overall effectiveness of armed forces training inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)

	Overall effectiveness	Capacity to improve	Self-assessment
Outstanding	0	0	0
Good	5	3	1
Satisfactory	3	5	7
Inadequate	1	1	1
Total	9	9	9

297. The effectiveness of welfare and duty of care in a range of training establishments has remained fairly static over the past two years, with only two establishments improving their provision since their previous inspection. This reflects the establishments' slow progress in introducing and developing rigorous self-assessment, and in using the outcomes of such evaluation to drive improvement. No establishment has ever been judged outstanding.

298. The vast majority of recruits and trainees feel well supported, personally and professionally, during their training. Despite operational pressures and understaffing in some establishments, instructors are highly committed and play a key role in ensuring that recruits' and trainees' needs are well met and that they are safe. However, further progress needs to be made in carrying out full Criminal Records Bureau checks on relevant staff before they take up their employment.

299. The proportion of trainees who do not complete their training is often high. The highest level observed in inspections this year was around 40%. Some recruits and trainees find the physical demands of the course too challenging. Liaison with parents and guardians is good, especially regarding the arrangements for recruits and trainees under the age of 18. Support for those with low levels of skill in literacy and numeracy remains a key area for further improvement.



Quality and standards

Children's social care



Key findings

- ✘ At the end of 2009/10 there were more outstanding children's homes and fewer inadequate homes than at any time since Ofsted took over responsibility for the inspection of children's homes. The proportion and number of homes judged good or outstanding have risen steadily since autumn 2008.
- ✘ Of the fostering services inspected this year, 49 out of 77 were good or outstanding. However, fewer than half of fostering services have improved since their previous inspection.
- ✘ All adoption agencies inspected this year were at least satisfactory, but one had deteriorated since its previous inspection.
- ✘ Residential special schools show very good performance, with an 11 percentage point increase since 2008/09 in the number of providers judged to be outstanding in terms of the care they provide: 85% of residential special schools are now good or outstanding.
- ✘ The majority of local authorities provide front-line safeguarding services that meet the minimum requirements for keeping children and young people safe, and many have areas of strength. However, safeguarding services are inadequate in a third of the local authorities that have been inspected to date. The sample inspected is not representative of local authorities nationally, since many of them were prioritised for inspection on the basis of risk.

- ✘ Just under half of the local authorities inspected were judged good overall in their services for looked after children. However, no local authorities were judged outstanding. A common strength in services for looked after children is the effectiveness of partnership working.
- ✘ The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) is performing poorly, with four out of five service areas inspected this year judged to be inadequate overall.

Introduction

300. The purpose of children's social care is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who are 'in need', as defined by the Children Act 1989. The commissioning and much of the delivery of children's social care services are primarily the responsibility of local authorities, working in partnership with other organisations. The experiences of children and young people who use social care services are at the centre of Ofsted's work. Inspections routinely include discussions with children to ensure that their voice is heard and that inspections focus on their needs and interests.

301. Ofsted is responsible for the regulation and inspection of all children's social care services that require statutory registration: children's homes, residential family centres, independent fostering agencies, voluntary adoption agencies and adoption support agencies. Ofsted assesses the performance of these social care services, ensuring that they are meeting the relevant regulations and taking into account the appropriate national minimum standards. Where regulations are not met, Ofsted sets actions for

Children's social care

providers and may take enforcement action. Where national minimum standards are not met, Ofsted sets recommendations that identify areas for improvement.

302. Additionally, Ofsted inspects, but does not regulate, local authority fostering and adoption services, residential special schools, secure training centres, secure children's homes and Cafcass, the national organisation that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children and families involved in family court proceedings. Ofsted also inspects the quality of care in other settings where children are living away from home such as further education colleges and boarding schools. The outcomes of inspections of further education and boarding schools are reported on pages 79 and 67 of this report.

303. A new framework for the inspection of local authority safeguarding services and looked after children services was introduced in June 2009. This is a three-yearly cycle of inspections. The inspections of safeguarding assess the effectiveness of children's services within a local area. The looked after children inspections focus on evaluating the impact of local services on improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

304. Ofsted also undertakes unannounced inspections in local authorities of front-line practice of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection. These inspections assess how well the local authority manages the risk of harm to children and young people and minimises the incidence of abuse and neglect. The findings of the unannounced inspections help to determine the specific timing of inspections within the three-year programme of inspection of local authority arrangements for safeguarding and looked after children.

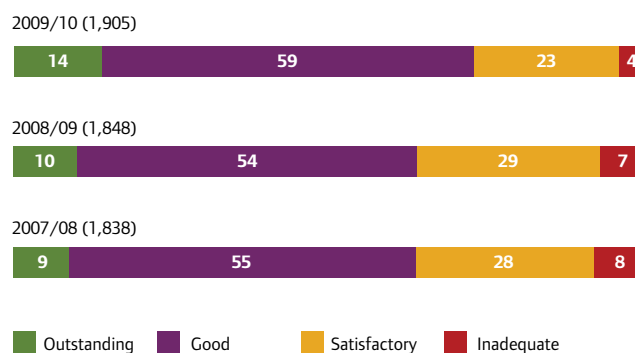
Children's homes

305. As at 31 August 2010, there were 2,053 children's homes in England, providing care and accommodation for approximately 12,000 children and young people, mostly under the age of 18. In 2009/10, 150 children's homes left the sector and 245 joined. This resulted in a net gain of 144 additional places. Ofsted carries out inspections of all children's homes at least twice each year.

306. Children's homes are diverse in type and generally accommodate children who are looked after by a local authority. This may be for respite care, for short-term care, or for a long-term placement. They may care for children and young people who have, for example, physical or learning disabilities, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, a mental health condition, or a drug or alcohol addiction. Residential special schools and boarding schools that provide accommodation for pupils for more than 295 days each year must also register as children's homes. There are currently 16 secure children's homes, approved by the Secretary of State to restrict the liberty of children and young people.

Overall performance

Figure 63 The quality of care at the most recent inspection of children's homes inspected between 2007/08 and 2009/10 (percentage of providers)⁴⁷



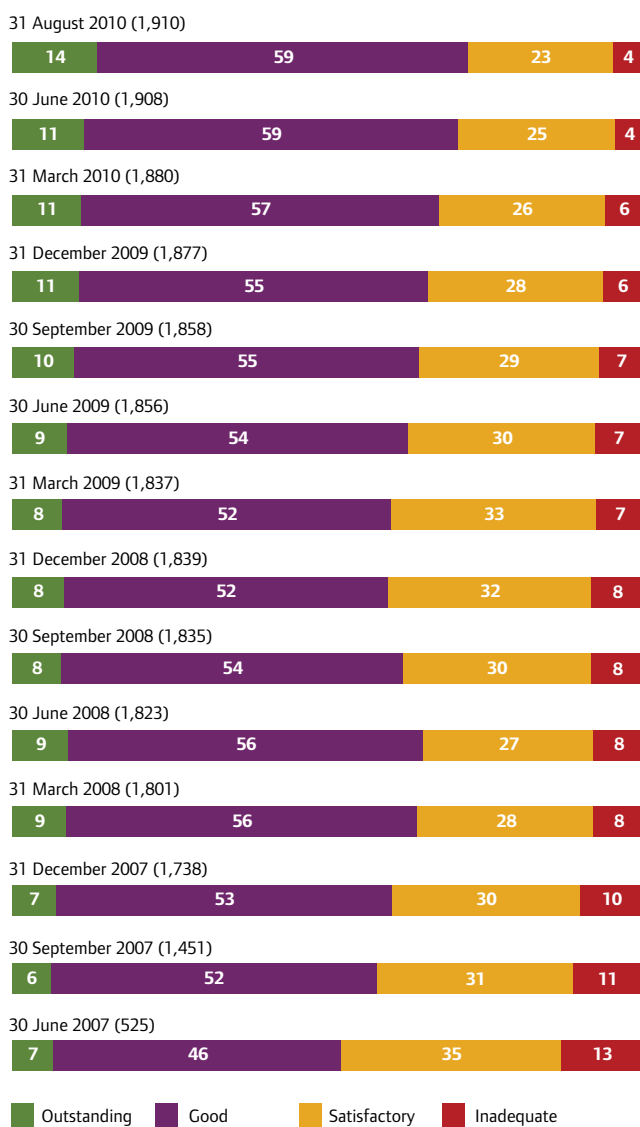
Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

307. Figure 63 shows that 73% of children's homes inspected this year are good or outstanding, a considerable improvement on the figure of 64% in 2008/09 and 2007/08. The proportion of inadequate homes continues to fall and is now at 4%, representing 84 children's homes. These homes remain a concern, not least because the children and young people who live in them are very vulnerable.

⁴⁷ As new providers join the sector and the inspections are undertaken in the financial year, the number of providers inspected does not equate to the total number of providers as at 31 August 2010.

308. This year Ofsted issued approximately 5,200 actions requiring providers to comply with regulations and over 8,000 recommendations to improve the quality of care in homes. At least one action was issued in 49% of the children's homes inspected this year. The most common areas for action were behaviour management, the health, safety and security of the home environment, the treatment and administration of medicines in the home, and the vetting of staff and visitors.

Figure 64 Overall care judgement of all children's homes at their most recent inspection for each quarter between 30 June 2007 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

309. An analysis of the most recent inspection judgement for children's homes in each quarter from 30 June 2007 reinforces the overall pattern of improvement. Figure 64 shows that the proportion of outstanding children's homes has risen from 7% to 14% and there has been a steady decrease from 13% to 4% in the proportion of homes judged to be inadequate.

310. In outstanding children's homes the quality and stability of staffing are very often key strengths. A high level of stability in staffing, with a core of permanent staff, provides continuity for the children and young people and consistent approaches that are beneficial for them. Staff recognise the importance of listening to children and young people's views, particularly where it affects their everyday lives and their plans for their future. Staff themselves are supported by strong management systems and training which focus on the specific needs of the children and young people in their care. The deployment of staff is also planned on the basis of detailed assessments of young people's needs. Sufficient competent staff are therefore always on duty. Such conditions encourage staff to be relaxed, confident and effective. The impact of this good practice is that young people feel they are listened to, feel safe and cared for and, importantly, learn to trust their carers and others.

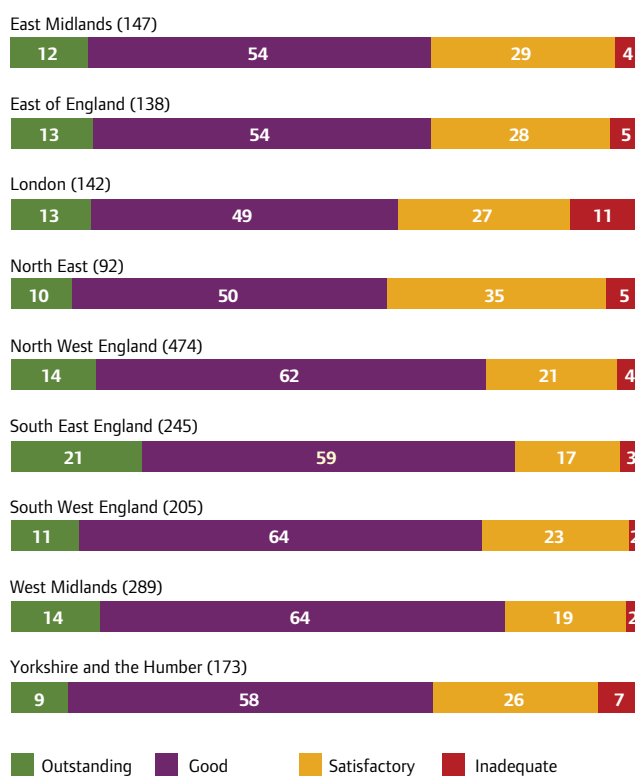
311. High-quality care planning, which is built around young people's needs, is always central in effective homes and ensures that there is an appropriate response to changing needs. Success in education is an important focus. The best homes keep exemplary records in areas such as health and restraint, but they also attend to other important details which help ensure that young people are treated as individuals; one report explains how managers kept records of young people's hobbies and interests so that agency staff would be better able to relate to them. The best homes combine this attention to detail with a personalised approach to the management of each young person's behaviour. All these elements are brought together through highly effective leadership and management, which not only ensure that the required policies are in place but also support staff to understand and use them well.

312. In contrast to the homes judged outstanding, in 69 of the 84 children’s homes judged to be inadequate, inspectors found serious weaknesses in their organisation and, in 70 of the 84, in keeping children and young people safe. In inadequate homes, poor leadership and management very frequently have a major impact on the experience of children and young people living in them. High staff turnover and problems with retaining staff are detrimental to children’s relationships with their carers. Other significant weaknesses include the maintenance of records and the admittance to the home of children and young people whose needs the home is unable to meet. A very common priority for development in inadequate children’s homes, based on weaknesses identified during inspections, was the need to improve the training and qualifications of staff. Poor training can result in practice which puts children and young people at risk. In homes where training and qualifications were unsatisfactory, weaknesses were found in:

- ✘ safeguarding and child protection
- ✘ the use of specific health interventions, including the handling of medication
- ✘ countering bullying
- ✘ awareness among staff of issues of race, ethnicity, religion and culture.

313. The most common area for action in the children’s homes inspected this year was the management of behaviour. Specifically, inspections identified shortfalls in the consistent application of behaviour management policies, appropriate training for staff and recording of the use of sanctions and physical restraint. Weak record-keeping means that the use of sanctions cannot be properly monitored and strategies to reduce their use are not informed by accurate data.

Figure 65 Overall care judgement at most recent inspection of children’s homes by region (percentage of providers)



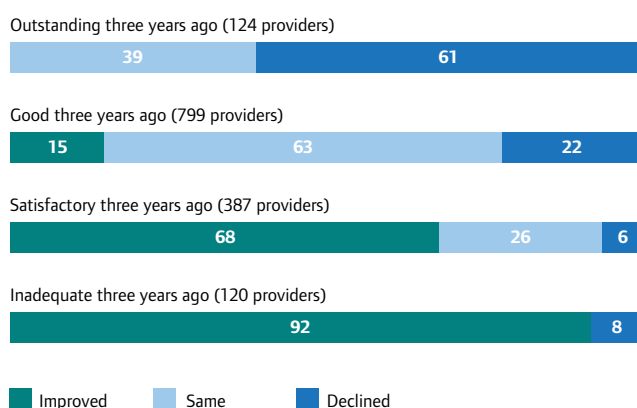
The regions defined in this chart are the nine Government Office regions. Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

314. Despite the improvements seen over the last two years in the performance of children’s homes, the overall picture masks considerable variation in quality between one region and another; 11% of children’s homes in London were inadequate at their last inspection, but only 2% in the West Midlands and the South West.

In outstanding children's homes the quality and stability of staffing are very often key strengths. A high level of stability in staffing, with a core of permanent staff, provides continuity for the children and young people.

Quality over time

Figure 66 Children's homes inspection outcomes at the most recent inspection compared with their inspection outcomes three years ago (percentage of providers)



Based on 1,430 children's homes which have been inspected at least six times in the past three years as at 31 August 2010.

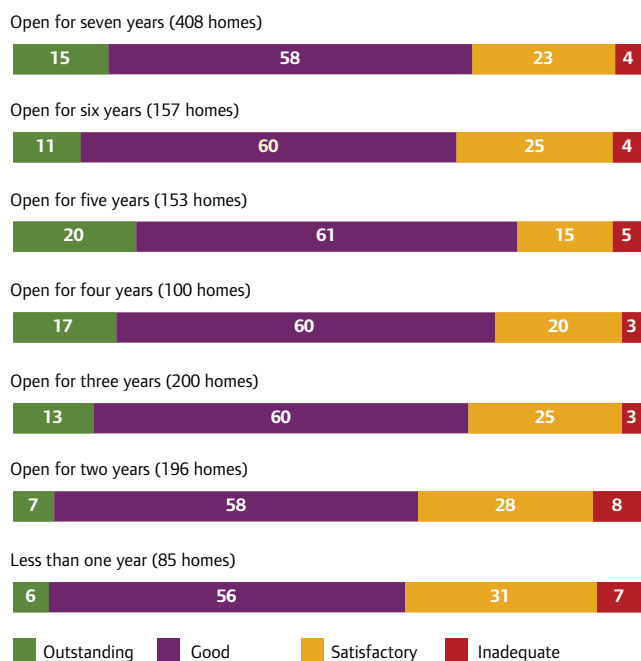
Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

315. The pattern of improvement or decline in individual children's homes is complex. Figure 66 shows how the quality of care in children's homes has changed over the last three years (since April 2007). It is very encouraging that 92% of inadequate children's homes improved over the three-year period, and 57% of them are now good or outstanding. It is also positive that 68% of satisfactory children's homes improved over the period.

316. However, outstanding children's homes have not consistently maintained their excellent quality. Of those judged outstanding three years ago, 61% had declined by 2009/10 and 1% had become inadequate. Around one in five of those children's homes which declined from outstanding to satisfactory or inadequate experienced turbulence in staffing or management. A number of weaknesses in organisation were also identified which often related to management issues external to the children's home. These included shortcomings in the independent oversight of the children's homes or poor processes for ensuring the right placements were made.

317. Children's homes that have improved significantly over the past two or three years have strong systems to ensure success. Internal monitoring is regular and identifies any shortfalls in care or provision, enabling them to be addressed; there is clear evidence of the impact of monitoring on improving the quality of care. External monitoring is conducted frequently and reported promptly. This always includes discussions with staff and young people, using a broad range of evidence, and those carrying out the monitoring are clearly at 'arm's length' from the home. The process is most helpful where it judges quality rather than mere compliance. In contrast, external monitoring is often a weakness in homes which have suffered a sharp decline in their performance.

Figure 67 Overall care judgement at the most recent inspection of children's homes by registration date (percentage of providers)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

318. The proportion of good or outstanding homes increases steadily in each of the first five years of operation, from 62% to 81%, as shown in Figure 67. This suggests that during this period providers learn from experience, and from frequent inspection and regulation, to improve. However, this pattern of improvement is less consistent for homes that have been open for five or more years.

As noted in previous Annual Reports, the quality of individual children's homes continues to fluctuate too much.

Figure 68 Percentage of children's homes in which the quality of care has varied at each inspection over the last three inspections⁴⁸

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Percentage in which the quality of care has fluctuated	12	11	10

319. As noted in previous Annual Reports, the quality of individual children's homes continues to fluctuate too much (Figure 68). Although the extent of fluctuation has reduced slightly over the last three years, at 10% the proportion of children's homes which have a very varied pattern of inspection outcomes is too high.

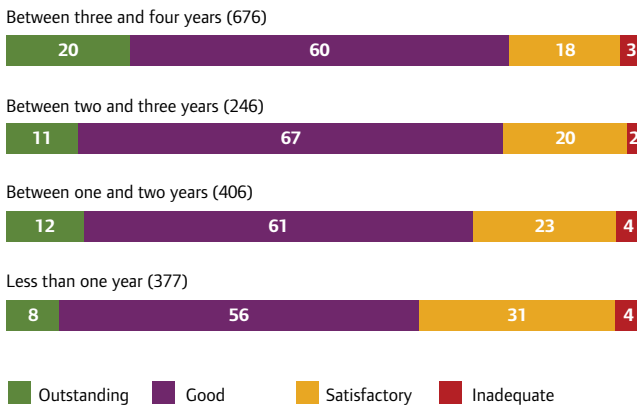
320. Rapid staff turnover is a significant factor in fluctuating quality, often leading to inconsistently applied policies, especially regarding behaviour management and record-keeping. In this situation, managers are sometimes too slow to respond to developing problems because temporary staff are not adequately supervised and monitoring is weak.

321. A few homes show a pattern of improving from being inadequate to satisfactory or even good, only to slip back again the following year. In these cases, managers have responded well to inadequacies identified by inspectors but have then failed to ensure that their monitoring identifies any developing weaknesses before they become a concern. Similarly, improvements in planning and record-keeping seen during inspections were not maintained.

322. The stability of management is also critical in ensuring the continued good performance of children's homes. Figure 69 shows how the performance of children's homes varies in line with the length of time the manager has been in post. Children's homes in which the manager has been in post for three or four years are much more likely to be judged good or outstanding than those where the manager has joined the home within the last year.

⁴⁸ 'Variability' is defined as those children's homes where inspection results moved both up and down over their last three inspections.

Figure 69 Overall effectiveness of children’s homes by length of time the registered manager has been in post (percentage of providers)

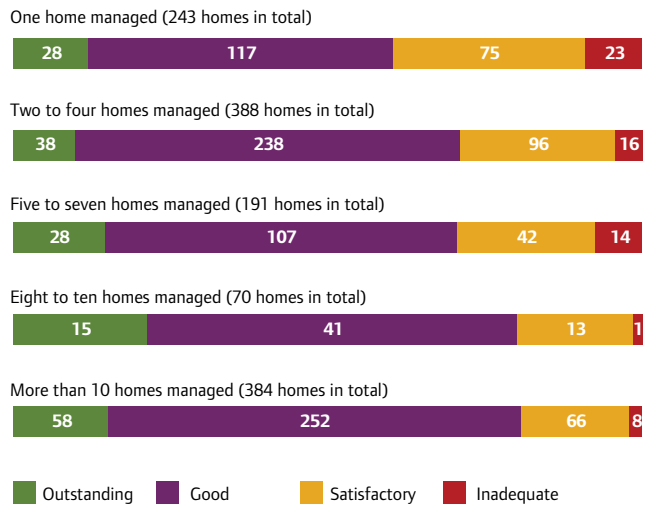


Where a manager has changed their name, this is recorded as a change in manager. The data may not capture situations where in a job share one or the other manager has changed jobs. Ofsted assumed responsibility for inspecting children’s homes in April 2007, so no manager will be recorded as being in post for more than four years.

Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

323. The impact of strong management and quality assurance systems is also demonstrated by the overall effectiveness of children’s homes that belong to groups of providers compared with those run as single entities. Individual homes run as a single entity are more likely to be inadequate than homes which are part of a larger group (Figure 70). Homes in larger groups are also more likely to be good or outstanding than single independent homes. These findings, combined with evidence about the factors that contribute to fluctuating quality in children’s homes, suggest that when organisations run a number of homes the continuity in management and expertise may have an impact on quality. It also reinforces the need for smaller organisations to ensure that their management is rigorous and does not depend too much on individuals who may move on. The same pattern does not emerge for groups of homes managed by local authorities in which a higher proportion of inadequate judgements is found where local authorities are managing larger groups of homes (eight or more).

Figure 70 Overall care judgement at most recent inspection of children’s homes by number of homes managed by non local authority organisations (number of providers)



Secure training centres and secure children’s homes

324. Ofsted inspects both the care and educational provision for children in secure training centres and secure children’s homes.

325. There are four secure training centres which, together, provide 301 places for children and young people between the ages of 12 and 17 who have been remanded or sentenced by the courts. Secure training centres are under contract to the Youth Justice Board, which monitors their compliance with requirements. Ofsted does not regulate secure training centres but has a service level agreement with the Youth Justice Board to inspect care twice a year and education once a year.

326. Secure children's homes accommodate children and young people who are remanded or have been sentenced for committing a criminal offence. They also accommodate children and young people in 'welfare' placements when a court determines that their behaviour is such that it presents a significant and immediate threat to their safety or the safety of others unless they are placed in a secure environment. In a survey carried out by the Children's Rights Director for England, young people interviewed felt that, in general, it was not beneficial for children accommodated for such different reasons to be placed in the same secure establishment.⁴⁹

327. The number of secure children's homes has continued to decrease each year since 2002. There were 29 secure children's homes in 2002, 19 in 2007 and in 2010 there are 16. The closures have left parts of England with no secure children's homes; for example, there is none within Greater London. Although these have been planned closures, there is now less opportunity for young people to be placed locally. This creates greater challenges for the secure children's home to manage an effective and sustainable transition for young people when they return home or move to a new placement.⁵⁰

Figure 71 Quality of care at most recent inspection of secure training centres and secure children's homes inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)

	Secure training centre	Secure children's home
Outstanding	2	1
Good	1	13
Satisfactory	1	1
Inadequate	0	1
Total	4	16

328. The quality of care in secure training centres and secure children's homes is predominantly good. Particular strengths are seen in the relationships between staff and children and young people, the individual care they receive to meet their needs and the use of external partners to provide activities which they enjoy and from which they learn. As one child told the inspectors, 'They are good at keeping us safe and allow us to do things we are interested in.' One parent told inspectors that her son had become 'more mature' and reflected on the consequences of the crimes he had committed.

329. In comparison with last year, the number of secure training centres and secure children's homes judged outstanding has increased. These secure homes and training centres are characterised by a calm and purposeful atmosphere and positive, professional relationships between staff and young people. Clear boundaries and consistent routines underpin very effective behaviour management, and staff are skilled at diffusing difficult situations. These providers have well-established systems for consulting the young people in their care and engage successfully with the relevant local authority and other agencies to ensure their continuing safety.

330. Weaknesses seen during this year's inspections in providers judged satisfactory or inadequate include the management of complaints, which is of particular importance where young people are confined, arrangements for self-medication and insufficient action taken to assess the risk of bullying and counteract it. One secure children's home was judged inadequate this year, having previously been satisfactory.

331. The variety and quality of enrichment activities are generally good and improving across the range of secure accommodation. Increasingly, young people are consulted on the range of activities available, which are well planned and structured. However, this is not universally the case. For example, in one of the secure training centres inspected, access to such activities is inconsistent because of the limited number of staff available.

⁴⁹ *Life in secure care* (080241) Ofsted, 2009.

⁵⁰ *Admission and discharge from secure accommodation* (090228), Ofsted, 2010.

332. While there is evidence of further progress in resettling young people into their communities, too many young people and staff report difficulties with planning for resettlement. A recent Ofsted survey found that the work undertaken to prepare young people for a successful transition in the secure establishments is well managed and careful account is taken of individuals' needs.⁵¹ However, too many home local authorities are failing to meet their obligations towards young people. It is not uncommon for young people to be discharged from a secure placement without having an appropriate education or training placement guaranteed for them. Finding accommodation is sometimes left until the day of the young person's release, with a detrimental impact on training and education. Without a home address, it is very difficult for a young person or the education practitioner to make any plans.

333. In many of the secure establishments, the use of physical restraint is decreasing as a result of good training for staff, the effective use of de-escalation techniques and robust review of individual incidents that require restraint. In one secure children's home, there is an apparent relationship between a dramatic overall decrease in the level of physical intervention and the introduction of restorative justice practice. This has empowered staff to work more creatively with young people, using the skills and experience of staff to good effect. The recording of physical restraint, however, remains a common weakness in satisfactory and inadequate establishments.

Education in secure training centres and secure children's homes

Figure 72 Quality of education in secure training centres and secure children's homes inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)

	Secure training centres	Secure children's homes
Outstanding	2	1
Good	1	5
Satisfactory	1	0
Inadequate	0	0
Total	4	6

334. Overall, improvements in the quality of education and training for children in custody reported in the 2008/09 Annual Report have continued. There have been improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in most institutions, although there are still a few lessons that fail to offer sufficient challenge and pace. Behaviour has also improved significantly in most centres, and relationships between young people and staff are purposeful and respectful.

335. For many young people, their achievements while in custody provide their first experience of educational success. Young people's achievements are generally good and many gain useful qualifications in literacy and numeracy, including at GCSE level. Secure children's homes which accommodate younger children focus on enabling them to make progress in National Curriculum subjects in preparation for their return to mainstream education. In a few establishments, however, there are insufficient opportunities for young people to gain meaningful qualifications, even when their length of stay would allow them to do so.

336. The range of courses available to young people across secure establishments remains too variable, mainly because of the considerable variation in available resources and equipment. Vocational provision, in particular, is too limited, although some centres are working well with external partners and stakeholders to develop appropriately equipped workshops for vocational qualifications alongside their education schedule.

337. The initial assessment of and subsequent support for learners are generally good, and many of them benefit from additional support with their reading, writing and numeracy. Effective establishments have strong communication between education and care staff and involve care staff in supporting young people's learning. The two outstanding secure training centres have effective systems to monitor young people's progress and are tenacious in ensuring that home authorities exercise their responsibilities to support young people's continued education following release.

51 Admission and discharge from secure accommodation (090228), Ofsted, 2010.

Fostering services

338. Ofsted is responsible for the registration, regulation and inspection of independent fostering agencies and the inspection of local authority fostering services. Fostering involves a local authority placing looked after children or young people with foster families. This may be for a few days, weeks, months or sometimes permanently. The reasons for this vary and include children who cannot live at home because of abuse or family crisis, young people on remand, and children and young people who need respite care. Nearly three quarters of all looked after children are placed in foster families.

339. There are currently 287 independent fostering agencies and 150 local authority fostering services. Fostering providers must be inspected once in each three-year inspection cycle. The inspection of these transferred from the Commission for Social Care Inspection to Ofsted in 2007 and all fostering providers were inspected between 2007 and 2009. From September 2009 until April 2010, when a new cycle of fostering inspections began, Ofsted inspected only newly registered agencies or those providers which were assessed as requiring a further inspection. This assessment was based on data submitted to Ofsted by fostering agencies and fostering services,⁵² any concerns raised with Ofsted, and the previous inspection judgement. The slightly lower profile of judgements for this period compared with last year reflects that the sample selected was mainly of lower-performing providers.

Figure 73 Overall effectiveness of fostering services and agencies inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)

	Local authority fostering services	Independent fostering agencies	All fostering services and agencies
Outstanding	1	7	8
Good	11	30	41
Satisfactory	14	11	25
Inadequate	1	2	3
Total	27	50	77

340. The majority of fostering providers inspected this year were judged good or better. However, three were inadequate. Of those inspected this year, 56 had been inspected previously: 20 had improved since their last inspection, 25 had stayed the same and 11 had deteriorated. It is a concern that the quality of 11 fostering providers deteriorated between inspections, particularly as recommendations for improvement had been made at their previous inspection.

341. In good or outstanding fostering services and agencies, effective leadership and management lead to retaining a stable group of staff and social workers who are experienced and skilled in the area of fostering. This results in effective working relationships which benefit looked after children. In these providers, foster carers are treated as part of the team and are given good-quality support and training to help them meet the differing needs of the children placed with them. Good supervision of foster carers also helps to maintain a focus on children's needs, as well as taking into account the needs of the foster carers and their own families. Many foster carers report benefiting from working with the same fostering social worker over time.

342. The best fostering providers match children and young people with carers who can meet their needs. They manage the demand for foster placements well by carrying out focused recruitment campaigns and offering additional support to help carers to cope with the specific needs of individual children. Good and outstanding providers ensure that individual arrangements for safe care are part of the placement process and are made in consultation with a child's social worker. They also provide children and young people with detailed information about the foster family with whom they are matched. The recruitment, training and supervision of foster carers in good and outstanding providers promote equality and diversity. The services and agencies challenge discriminatory practices and actively select carers from all social groups, including single carers, same and different sex couples, disabled people and people from minority ethnic groups.

52 Fostering agencies and fostering services dataset 2008/09, Ofsted, 2010.

343. By contrast, in the services and agencies judged satisfactory or inadequate, common weaknesses were identified in their ability to match children with carers who could meet their needs. Too often these providers failed to manage demand for foster placements by effective recruitment and lacked up-to-date information about the needs of children and young people. In some cases, poor recording of the decisions leading to a foster placement compromised the provider's ability to identify the strengths and weaknesses of placements. This led to a lack of effective follow-up support and increased the risk of disruption.

344. These shortcomings may increase the risk of the placements breaking down. In some cases children are positive about a change in an individual placement, yet frequent and numerous changes of placement can have a detrimental impact on their social and emotional development and on the continuity of education or support they receive. Data submitted to Ofsted by fostering services and agencies indicate that between April 2008 and March 2009 around 2,000 placements ended in an unplanned fashion. This is approximately 5% of placements overall.⁵³ These placements had lasted for over three months, so the figures exclude emergency and planned short-term placements.

345. A further common weakness in the less successful providers was the provision and take-up of training. Although adequate training was normally available for foster carers in satisfactory services, take-up of this could be low or infrequent. This might be because training was not offered at times to suit foster carers or because the importance of maintaining up-to-date training on critical areas such as first aid or safeguarding was not understood by all foster carers. Guidance provided to foster carers or children and young people was at times out of date or incomplete. This led to important gaps in their understanding, such as children in foster care not knowing how to make a complaint.

Adoption services and agencies

346. Ofsted is responsible for the registration, regulation and inspection of voluntary adoption agencies and the inspection of local authority adoption services. There are currently 38 voluntary adoption agencies and 150 local authority adoption services. Adoption services and agencies must be inspected at least once in a three-year cycle. The focus of adoption services is on placing children successfully into adoptive families who will meet their needs and enable them to develop and achieve throughout their lives. Local authorities may recruit and approve adopters themselves or place children and young people with adopters recruited by a voluntary adoption agency or another local authority.

Figure 74 Overall effectiveness of adoption services and agencies inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)

	Local authority adoption services	Voluntary adoption agencies	All adoption services
Outstanding	6	4	10
Good	18	3	21
Satisfactory	10	3	13
Inadequate	0	0	0
Total	34	10	44

347. This year, 31 out of the 44 adoption services and agencies inspected were good or outstanding and none was inadequate. Of the 14 adoption providers that have had a previous inspection, six have improved, one has declined and seven have maintained their previous performance.

53 Fostering agencies and fostering services dataset 2008/09, Ofsted, 2010.

348. In the best adoption providers, leaders and managers promote the core aims of the service or agency and monitor its effectiveness. They develop knowledgeable and skilled staff and establish highly effective adoption panels. These providers understand the circumstances and backgrounds of children who need an adoptive family, and anticipate a child's needs. They recruit a range of adopters able to meet children's needs so that the children are more likely to be placed in families sharing their culture, ethnicity and religion. Less successful services and agencies need to target and prioritise recruitment, assessment and approval more effectively, in order to reduce delays in placing children.

349. Outstanding adoption services and agencies go to great lengths to ensure that placements are stable and secure. Inspectors described one outstanding agency as 'committed to life-long support'. The most successful providers, judged by the low number of disrupted placements, offer flexible and individual support to adoptive families. This is often provided through a multi-agency approach involving a consistent adoption social worker and specialist advisers who recognise the needs of the adopters as well as those of the children. This support can take a number of forms. Some local authority adoption services offer financial assistance to adopters, others have established buddying or peer group support for adopters to enable them to share experiences and good practice. In other cases, providing access to specialist services such as counselling, child and adolescent mental health services, and specialist creative therapies enables the emotional and mental health needs of the children to be addressed effectively and supports the development of strong attachments between the adopters and the children.

350. Most providers have well-organised and managed adoption panels which scrutinise the process of matching children to families. Adoption services and agencies are open about the demands adoption will bring and the potential difficulties families may face. Adopters appreciate the opportunity to discuss and explore the realities of adoption in preparation groups. The involvement of birth families in the adoption process and support for them have developed and improved. However, life story work and 'later life' letters, the purpose of which is to help children in the future, are not always completed thoroughly or promptly by the child's social worker.

Adoption support agencies

351. Adoption support agencies provide services to anyone touched by adoption. This includes counselling and help for children and adults to gain information about their adoption or to trace birth relatives. Adoption support agencies can be either organisations or individuals, and may be contracted by a local authority to provide support services. As at 31 August 2010, there were 47 adoption support agencies in England. Ofsted regulates and inspects all adoption support agencies once every three years.

Figure 75 Overall effectiveness of adoption support agencies inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)

	Adoption support agencies
Outstanding	1
Good	7
Satisfactory	1
Inadequate	0
Total	9

352. All but one of the adoption support agencies inspected this year were good or outstanding. These agencies meet the very diverse and complex needs of people, helping them effectively through a range of services that are tailored to individual circumstances. They have a very clear understanding of the impact of historic abuse and how to help people in such circumstances. A strong approach to equality and inclusion is frequently evident and agencies work at a pace determined by the individuals using their service.

Residential family centres

353. Residential family centres are centres where parents undergo a residential assessment of their ability to care safely for their children, usually arranged and paid for by the local authority, sometimes at the direction of the courts. Residential family centres can also provide advice, guidance and counselling to parents who sometimes are young people themselves. As at 31 August 2010, there were 56 residential family centres in England. Ofsted inspects each residential family centre at least once every three years.

Figure 76 Overall effectiveness of residential family centres inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)

Residential family centres	
Outstanding	1
Good	2
Satisfactory	7
Inadequate	0
Total	10

354. The residential family centres inspected this year are predominantly satisfactory. These centres do not always meet all the requirements of regulations for maintaining residents' welfare. In seven out of the 10 inspections, Ofsted set actions for residential family centres. For example, in six of the 10 centres inspected, staff did not always adhere to policies and procedures in relation to storing and administering medication. In some satisfactory providers, there are shortfalls in training provided for staff, in particular the number of staff who have commenced or completed an NVQ at level 3 or the equivalent. This has an impact on the quality of care provided for resident families with complex needs. While systems are generally in place to deal with child protection concerns, weak risk assessments can hinder the identification of unsafe situations and therefore the safeguarding of children's welfare.

Outstanding adoption services and agencies go to great lengths to ensure that placements are stable and secure. The most successful providers, judged by the low number of disrupted placements, offer flexible and individual support to adoptive families.

355. Nonetheless, in the centres inspected this year, parents and children generally benefit from positive relationships with staff. Families are treated with respect, with parents benefiting from individual support and encouragement. Accommodation and facilities in all the centres inspected are at least satisfactory and frequently good. There are close links with and, when appropriate, access for families to a range of health professionals and other specialist support to improve outcomes for families. Centres have clear admission procedures and families are kept informed of their own progress and are involved in making decisions when this is appropriate. However, in some centres, written placement plans require improvement. All residential family centres undertake regular monitoring. However, those that are good or outstanding review and evaluate all aspects of their provision and care systematically and regularly, identifying areas for further improvement in order to promote and safeguard the welfare of parents and children as best they can.

Residential special schools

356. There are 211 residential special schools in England, about half of which are maintained by local authorities. Roughly a quarter are independent and the rest are non-maintained special schools. All these schools receive an annual inspection of their residential and care provision. Some residential special schools are registered as children's homes because boarders are resident for more than 295 days per year. The inspection judgements for these schools are included in the children's homes findings on pages 98–103.

357. Once every three years, when the inspection of education is timed to take place, the inspection of the residential and care provision is combined with this to constitute an inspection of the whole school. The outcomes of education inspections in residential special schools are included in the overall findings for education in special schools reported in the maintained schools and independent schools sections of this report.

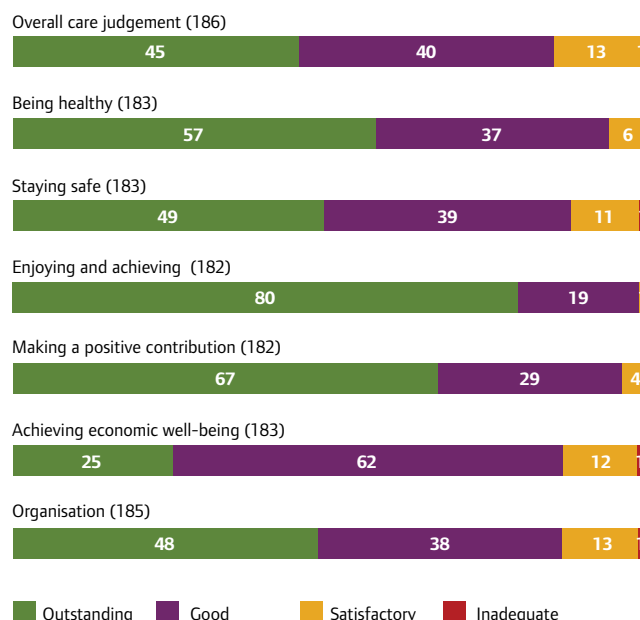
Figure 77 Overall effectiveness of care in residential special schools inspected between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

358. Of the 186 schools inspected in 2009/10, 85% of them provide care which is judged to be good or outstanding. Of the schools inspected this year, 184 had been inspected previously: 57 had improved, 21 had deteriorated and 106 stayed the same.

Figure 78 Main inspection judgements for residential special schools inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (percentage of providers)⁵⁴



Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

359. Of the residential special schools inspected this year, 88% are judged good or outstanding for keeping children safe and protecting them from harm and neglect. This inspection judgement is very strongly correlated with the overall care judgement. Residential special schools which are outstanding in keeping children safe tend to excel in their approaches to managing pupils' behaviour. They promote, reinforce and reward positive behaviour, set clear boundaries, and apply sanctions fairly, sparingly and consistently. Individual behaviour management plans are put in place for children or young people whose needs are particularly complex. These strategies all contribute to a harmonious and caring environment. Children and young people know how they can make a complaint, and pupils who may experience difficulties in communicating are supported to make their feelings known. However, the strong relationships between staff and pupils mean that formal complaints are rare. In supervising the children in their care, staff are adept at respecting children's privacy and giving them space when they want to be alone, while maintaining the necessary oversight to ensure their safety.

⁵⁴ Not all aspects are judged on each inspection.

360. A very large majority (80%) of residential special schools are outstanding in terms of how they help children to enjoy and achieve. A sample of schools that are outstanding in this respect showed two clear areas of common practice. The first is strong relationships between pupils and staff. This means that pupils feel confident to raise their concerns with staff who understand their needs. The second is the seamlessness of the communication and collaboration by staff across the classroom and residential settings. Inspectors described several schools as having a ‘24-hour curriculum’ to support educational progress.

361. In the minority of residential special schools that were judged to be satisfactory overall, inspectors identified a wide variety of areas for improvement. Some of the more common weaknesses included insufficient monitoring provided by governing bodies; poor recording of significant incidents that affect children’s lives such as bullying, unauthorised absence or the use of restraint; and infrequent supervision of staff.

362. In both the schools that were judged to be inadequate overall, weaknesses in their arrangements for safeguarding were identified. In one case child protection guidelines on what to do in the event of a concern being raised were not well understood or adhered to by staff. In the other, safer recruitment policies had not been followed.



Compliance, investigation and enforcement

363. The law gives Ofsted a range of powers to regulate children’s social care services, which set out the action Ofsted can take in order to enforce compliance with legal requirements. Ofsted may take enforcement action when a registered provider is judged inadequate at inspection or following a complaint about a registered provider or in relation to unregistered social care services.

364. Ofsted operates an escalating tariff, taking action at the lowest possible level to ensure compliance and ensuring that the action taken is proportionate to the risk involved. When Ofsted finds non-compliance, it relies on non-statutory actions wherever possible. Where providers fail to respond to non-statutory actions Ofsted has a range of powers it can use to ensure that they meet their statutory obligations. This includes issuing compliance notices, prosecution, restricting accommodation in children’s homes and cancelling registration.

365. A compliance notice sets out the actions that a provider must take by a certain date to meet relevant social care regulations. If a provider does not take the action required in a compliance notice within the set timescale Ofsted can prosecute them.

366. Since 1 April 2010 Ofsted has had the power to restrict accommodation in a children’s home. This power is used when there is evidence that the home taking further placements would present a risk of harm to a child or young person. A children’s home cannot accept further placements while the restriction is in place. Ofsted restricted accommodation in two children’s homes during the 2009/10 Annual Report year. Ofsted also has the power to cancel a social care provider’s registration. Over the same period, Ofsted cancelled the registration of two children’s homes on grounds of suitability. Ofsted prosecuted one provider for operating without registration during the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010.

367. Ofsted's powers to take action on complaints are limited to those situations in which, on investigation, a specific breach of statutory regulations is identified. During 2009/10, Ofsted received approximately 740 complaints about registered social care provision from a variety of sources including the general public, the police and other agencies. Of these, 577 were investigated and closed during the reporting period and 161 continued under investigation. These complaints included approximately 582 complaints about children's homes and 156 about other social care provision, such as fostering or adoption agencies, relating to 14% of registered providers. Just over 30 further complaints were received in relation to unregistered social care.

368. Of the 740 complaints that were investigated in this period, 59% resulted in no further action because the investigation showed that the provider was fully meeting requirements and 22% resulted in Ofsted issuing letters requiring providers to take action to meet their registration requirements. In the remaining complaints the investigation or regulatory action is ongoing.

Contact, referral and assessment arrangements in local authorities

369. Inspections of local authority contact, referral and assessment services were introduced in June 2009 and were completed in all local authorities by the end of August 2010. Contact, referral and assessment services are the front line of child protection, and the inspections are unannounced. The inspectors use observations of direct practice, including scrutinising and discussing individual cases and interviews with front-line workers, as the key source of evidence to inform their findings.

370. These inspections focus on the local authority as the lead agency for child protection. They assess how well practice helps to manage the risk of harm to children and young people and minimises the incidence of abuse and neglect. The inspections are not a full inspection of safeguarding or of looked after children, described later in this section, but the findings may have an impact on the timing of a full inspection.

371. In this short, focused inspection, inspectors do not make a graded judgement on the overall effectiveness of services. They identify areas in which the requirements of statutory guidance are met, areas of particular strength, areas for development and areas for priority action. A priority action identifies an area of serious weakness that is placing children at risk of inadequate protection and of significant harm. This may result from particular or localised failings to protect children as well as systemic failures or deficits. Identifying an area for priority action may have a significant impact on the annual children's services assessment, reported on pages 123–128.

372. Between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010, 119 inspections of local authorities were completed.⁵⁵ At least one limiting area for priority action was identified in 11 of those inspected during this period. Frequently occurring themes within the priority actions issued include the timeliness and quality of assessments, insufficient rigour in management oversight of child protection practice, staffing difficulties and capacity issues – leading to children being left at significant harm. In all local authorities where a key priority action was identified the full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children has been prioritised. Inspections have now been completed for eight of these local authorities and in three cases confirmed the initial concerns, resulting in the judgement that the local authority was inadequate in terms of its safeguarding. In all others the local authority's overall effectiveness in safeguarding children was judged at the time of this later inspection to be at least adequate because the authority had taken action to address the weaknesses identified.

⁵⁵ The remaining 33 inspections of the 152 local authorities were carried out prior to 1 September 2009.

373. Common areas of strength in local authorities' contact, referral and assessment services include good performance management and auditing, effective provision of out of hours services, strong multi-agency and partnership working, the availability of a range of preventative services and the effective implementation of the Common Assessment Framework. Strong leadership by senior managers and elected members, which includes management oversight of practice and decision-making, adequate levels of staffing and high-quality support for staff, are also identified as making a contribution to better outcomes for children and young people.

374. A critical area for development for local authorities is the need to improve the quality of assessments. Poor quality may be reflected in a lack of appropriate analysis or even a failure actually to see the child. The quality of referrals has a relationship with the quality of assessment. For example, poor referrals from out of hours teams or referrals about domestic violence from the police that do not provide enough detail to allow appropriate risk assessment and prioritisation make good quality assessment more difficult.

375. Staff shortages and high workloads are also a problem in many areas. Some authorities have a high proportion of recently qualified social workers undertaking complex work. Delays in the assessment process are often associated with high caseloads. Local authorities differ considerably in how well they manage these related issues. This is discussed in greater detail as one of the key themes of this report on page 169.

Local authority services for safeguarding and looked after children

376. In June 2009, Ofsted introduced a new framework for the inspection of local authority services for both safeguarding and looked after children. The inspections are conducted on a three-yearly cycle and are carried out jointly with the Care Quality Commission. To date, all the inspections have assessed local authority services for safeguarding and looked after children at the same time. The views of children and young people form a critical element of the evidence for safeguarding and looked after children inspections.

377. Ofsted adopts the definition of safeguarding used in the Children Act 2004, and in the government guidance document *Working together to safeguard children*. This can be summarised as:

- ✘ protecting children and young people from maltreatment
- ✘ preventing impairment of children and young people's health or development
- ✘ ensuring that children and young people are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- ✘ undertaking that role so as to enable those children and young people to have the best life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

378. Looked after children are children or young people whose birth parents are unable to provide continuing care for them, either temporarily or permanently. They are in the care of the local authority, which becomes the corporate parent. They will be looked after in a range of settings, for example, in residential care or with foster carers, depending on their needs. There were 60,900 children looked after in England at 31 March 2009. Over the past year, the number of looked after children has increased considerably and, as at 31 March 2010, 64,400 children were looked after by their local authority.

Safeguarding

Figure 79 Main inspection outcomes for safeguarding inspections between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)

	Overall effectiveness	Capacity for improvement	Children and young people are safe	Children and young people feel safe	Quality of provision	Leadership and management
Outstanding	1	3	1	0	1	3
Good	9	7	10	15	8	7
Satisfactory	9	13	9	13	11	11
Inadequate	10	6	9	1	9	8
Total	29	29	29	29	29	29

379. Of the 29 local authorities inspected this year, the majority provide front-line safeguarding services that at least meet the minimum requirements for keeping children and young people safe. Because of the very high risks and complexities involved in safeguarding and the focus on preventing harm, the minimum standard is a demanding one. One local authority has been judged to be outstanding for its safeguarding service. Around one in three of the local authorities inspected are good, and four of these have outstanding elements in their practice.⁵⁶

380. However, around a third of the authorities inspected are not effective in keeping children and young people safe. The proportion judged inadequate this year is not representative of performance across all local authorities because weaker authorities were prioritised for inspection on the basis of data and concerns raised by the earlier inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements.

Of the 29 local authorities inspected this year, the majority provide front-line safeguarding services that at least meet the minimum requirements for keeping children and young people safe.

381. In the local authorities where safeguarding is most effective, the impact of good leadership is very evident. At the strategic level there is strong political engagement, often cross-party, and safeguarding issues are prioritised and championed by senior officers. The Local Safeguarding Children Boards have developed in their role and are increasingly setting a clear strategic vision for safeguarding across the partnership and providing challenge when it is needed. Furthermore there are clear opportunities for young people to help shape this strategic vision. These services are not complacent. They use robust performance management and evaluation arrangements to identify areas for improvement and take clear and decisive action to deal with weaknesses. At an individual service level, managers in the best authorities are visible and approachable. A positive culture enables social workers to raise concerns in the knowledge that they will be dealt with seriously.

382. Partnership working is critical to the effective delivery of safeguarding services. In the best authorities this is evidenced not only by the strength of high-level partnership arrangements, such as the Local Safeguarding Children Boards and children's trusts, but also the detailed day-to-day interagency working that takes place for the benefit of children and their families. Inspections noted how increasing use of the Common Assessment Framework and the Team around the Child were enabling agencies and third sector organisations to coordinate assessment, therapeutic and support services for children, and ensure that information was shared effectively. In the best services, joint planning between social care, health, education and police services, coupled with discussion and clarification of social care thresholds, was leading to more effective responses to children at risk.

⁵⁶ Two local authorities were inspected for safeguarding before 1 September 2009 but their outcomes were not reported in last year's Annual Report. Both were judged adequate.

383. In the best local authorities, there was clear evidence of effective early intervention with young people and families which helped to keep them safe. In the local authority judged outstanding there has been a clear and deliberate transfer of resources from specialist to targeted or universal services to maintain and build this preventative approach. The most effective local authorities are able to demonstrate very clearly how their deep understanding and analysis of the needs of their community have informed their allocation of resources as part of a joint strategic commissioning strategy. This sharp focus contributes to excellent value for money.

384. An area for improvement frequently identified across many local authorities inspected, even in some of those providing good services overall, is the need for a sharper focus on the perspectives of children, young people and their parents. Inspections noted some outstanding examples of engagement, including the involvement of young people in the recruitment of staff and the monitoring of services. However, local authorities and their partners do not always ensure that children, young people and their parents are helped to understand the system and processes as they affect them, and are given opportunities to engage with them appropriately. Some parents and young people also reported that although they were asked for their views, they were not aware what action had been taken in response.

385. In inadequate authorities, in too many cases, action required to protect or safeguard a young person identified as high risk was not followed through in a timely fashion. In many of these authorities, the capacity of the social work teams is insufficient as a result of both rising demand and poor planning and management of staffing levels. This leads to high caseloads, over-use of agency staff, turbulence in front-line teams, and the exposure of new and inexperienced staff to a volume and complexity of work that they struggle to deal with. The high percentage of vacancies in health visiting teams was also identified as a frequent weakness in capacity.

386. In the least effective authorities, evidence showed persistent failure to manage quality, as a result of weaknesses in performance management, risk assessments, quality assurance, reporting, audit evaluation and monitoring. Local Safeguarding Children Boards were not effective in identifying areas for improvement across the partnership and ensuring that these were followed up. Similarly, the oversight provided by individual managers did not provide the support, guidance or intervention needed to ensure that work of poor quality carried out by social workers was identified and improved. This lack of quality assurance resulted in persistent poor practice, such as referrals where concerns had been raised about the safety of a child that were judged, inappropriately, to need 'no further action' and closed down, or initial assessments that were completed without the child being seen or other agencies being consulted. These shortfalls were compounded by inconsistent and inaccurate recording. There was also evidence that thresholds for social care were inconsistently applied, or set too high, leading to frustration among partner agencies about the variability in responses to referrals.

387. In 2010 Ofsted carried out its first national surveys of social workers and the third sector. The findings from these surveys add to the understanding of safeguarding services across the country. Although social workers generally felt that training and levels of management support were good, they were concerned that they did not have enough time to work as effectively as they would like with children and young people. Furthermore, social workers generally did not feel that they were encouraged to suggest improvements or have a say in running the service.⁵⁷ The positive picture of the quality and availability of training was also reinforced by those who responded to the third sector survey. However, around a third of organisations who had made a referral to social care reported that they were not informed of the outcome and around a fifth said that their local authority did not support them to have a good understanding of local arrangements for safeguarding.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Safeguarding and looked after children: national social work practitioner survey 2010* (100125), Ofsted, 2010.

⁵⁸ *Safeguarding and looked after children: national third sector organisation survey 2010* (100126), Ofsted, 2010.

Looked after children

Figure 80 Main inspection outcomes for looked after children inspections between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 (number of providers)

	Overall effectiveness	Capacity for improvement	Quality of provision	Leadership and management
Outstanding	0	2	0	1
Good	13	15	14	14
Satisfactory	15	11	14	12
Inadequate	1	1	1	2
Total	29	29	29	29

388. Just under half of the local authorities inspected were good overall in their services for looked after children. However, no local authority was judged outstanding. One authority was inadequate.⁵⁹

389. In many cases, children enter care with poor attainment which represents a very low starting point. The attainment of looked after children compared with the attainment of all children remains unacceptably low. However, it is clear from inspection that local authorities are giving a high priority to improving educational outcomes for looked after children. The outcome for looked after children which local authorities were most often judged to be good or better at promoting was 'enjoy and achieve': helping children to enjoy their lives and achieve their potential. There is some evidence of improvement. In a number of areas, for example, inspections note that there has been a decrease in the number of looked after children not in education, employment or training post-16, with many more young people choosing to remain in education. Some areas have had notable success in supporting looked after young people into university, but this remains a very variable picture.

390. In just one local authority inspected support for looked after children to enjoy and achieve was judged outstanding. In this authority excellent joint working between speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and learning mentors supports behaviour and speech and language development in looked after children. Robust monitoring and assessment of the progress made by individual looked after children starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage and contributes to the early identification of need. This generates a strong evidence base about what is working and where improvement is required, which both informs and enthuses staff to achieve further progress.

391. In other local authorities where the enjoyment and achievement of looked after children is judged to be good there is also clear evidence of strong mechanisms in place to track individual achievement, sometimes through the 'virtual' headteacher, a 'virtual' looked after children school improvement team or through school improvement partners working with individual schools. However, the establishment of a virtual headteacher is not, on its own, a guarantee of progress. In some local authorities the impact of the virtual headteacher is limited, for example because monitoring of progress does not take place frequently enough or because the progress of looked after children is not benchmarked against that of all children so that underperformance remains unchallenged.

392. However, despite the work done by authorities to improve outcomes for looked after children, the gap in attainment between looked after children and the broader population is proving stubbornly wide. In 2008/09, 15% of looked after children achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, which is an improvement of one percentage point since 2007/08. By contrast, 70% of all children achieved this benchmark, representing an increase of five percentage points from the previous year. On this crucial measure the gap between looked after children and their peers is getting wider.⁶⁰ Similarly, in 2008/09 10% of looked after children achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics, compared with 50% of all children.

59 Two local authorities were inspected for services for looked after children before 1 September 2009, but their outcomes were not reported in last year's Annual Report. One was judged good and the other adequate.

60 *Outcome indicators for children looked after: 12 months to September 2009 – England*, Statistical First Release (SFR07/2009), Department for Education, 2010.

393. As with safeguarding inspections, an area of strength identified across all local authorities that were judged to be good for their work with looked after children was partnership working. A common theme across these authorities was the commitment, accountability and sense of responsibility for improving outcomes for looked after children across the partnership, as well as strong and visionary leadership, both managerial and political. The needs of looked after children were prioritised; resources and action were agreed and adjusted according to assessments of need. In the most effective authorities there was evidence of excellent multi-agency working with families with complex needs or in crisis, which was having a demonstrable impact on reducing the number of children coming into the care system.

394. Good local authorities listen to the views of looked after children and young people and enable them to shape the services they receive. In these authorities young people feel that their views are listened to and acted on. In one local authority, inspectors were impressed by the high self-esteem and ambitions of children and young people they met during the inspection. However, six of the authorities inspected had weaknesses in aspects of their communication and engagement with children and young people.

395. Last year's annual report emphasised the need for looked after children and young people to develop meaningful and lasting relationships with important adults in their lives. In the better authorities inspected there is good evidence of progress being made in achieving stability of placements for looked after children as a result of good quality assessments, excellent commissioning and support for carers. However, in weaker authorities there is evidence that this important stability for looked after children is at times compromised. In some cases weaknesses in decision-making and drift during the early period of a child's time in care lead to delays in agreeing permanency plans. Young people have also reported to inspectors in some less effective authorities inspected that frequent staff changes undermine their ability to form trusting relationships with their social worker.

396. The engagement and monitoring roles of local councillors as corporate parents are common areas for development. Where corporate parenting works well, monitoring and challenge from councillors can help to raise the quality of provision for these children and sustain improvement. These members are passionate about championing looked after children, meet with them regularly, and actively promote their interests. Where weaknesses in corporate parenting were identified these included a lack of understanding among some elected members about their corporate parenting responsibilities; not enough challenge being exerted by members; insufficient evidence about the views of looked after children to inform the corporate parenting board; and poor action planning to follow up on areas where improvements needed in the service were identified.

397. Other common weaknesses identified related to the ability of local authorities to manage placements effectively for looked after children which support their continued development. Inspections identified poor practice in carrying out core assessments, care planning, permanency planning, and the monitoring of external placements. All these have a significant impact on the quality and stability of the child's experience of care. In some local authorities, there was evidence of important weaknesses in care planning or insufficient communication between professionals which led to a child's health or education needs not being met. For example, better planning was needed in some local authorities to prevent looked after children from being excluded from education.

Serious case reviews

Figure 81 Evaluation of serious case reviews undertaken between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2010 (number of cases)

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Outstanding	0	0	1
Good	20	56	66
Adequate	34	84	62
Inadequate	36	55	8
Total	90	195	137

2007/08 data do not include two serious case reviews which were evaluated prior to September 2007.

2008/09 data differ from that published in the 2008/09 Annual Report due to challenges to judgements.

398. Serious case reviews are local inquiries into the death or serious injury of a child where abuse or neglect is known or suspected to be a factor. They are carried out by Local Safeguarding Children Boards so that lessons can be learned. Ofsted evaluates the quality of serious case reviews against a four-point scale of outstanding, good, adequate and inadequate. It is important to emphasise that this is an evaluation of the quality of the review. It is not an evaluation of the quality of professional practice in the case, the services provided, or the multi-agency working.

399. Ofsted has completed the evaluation of 137 serious case reviews between September 2009 and August 2010. There has been an increase in the complexity of the serious case reviews conducted, including a rise in the number of individual management reviews that have contributed to the process. Ofsted has published two reports this year to disseminate the lessons learned from serious case reviews.⁶¹ It is encouraging that in the three years that Ofsted has been evaluating serious case reviews, there has been a steadily growing proportion of good-quality reviews and a decreasing proportion of inadequate reviews. It is still a concern, however, that eight of the serious case reviews evaluated this year were inadequate.

400. The evaluations reflect the high level of attention that has been given to these reviews, nationally and by most Local Safeguarding Children Boards. It is very positive that this year the first serious case review was evaluated as outstanding. The terms of reference for the review were tightly focused and encapsulated all the case-specific issues. The subsequent depth of learning from it was very high. The recommendations and robust action plan incorporated all the learning from the review and provided a firm basis from which the Local Safeguarding Children Board could ensure timely and effective improvement to services for children and young people.

401. Ofsted's most recent report on serious case reviews analyses 147 serious case reviews evaluated between April 2009 and March 2010.⁶² The lessons highlighted in this report are not new ones. A consistent finding from the review was that there is no need for new procedures; the focus of learning must be on practice. Most of the serious case reviews identified sources of information that could have contributed to a better understanding of the children and their families. They also highlighted concerns about the effectiveness of assessments and shortcomings in multi-agency working.

402. Reviews found that there had been insufficient challenge by those involved. The statements of parents or others in the family should not have been accepted at face value; individual professionals and agencies should have questioned their own and others' views, decisions and actions; and there were shortcomings in the supervision and intervention by managers. In some cases, not enough attention was paid to the views of children and young people. This has been a consistent finding in evaluations of serious case reviews conducted in previous years. However, cases evaluated this year also showed that, at times, too much weight was given to the views of the young person without sufficient consideration of other information to assess their vulnerability.

61 *Learning lessons from serious case reviews: interim report 2009–10* (100033), Ofsted, 2010; *Learning lessons from serious case reviews 2009–2010* (100087), Ofsted, 2010.

62 *Learning lessons from serious case reviews 2009–2010* (100087), Ofsted, 2010.

403. Local Safeguarding Children Boards also identified failures to ensure that the necessary action took place due to: gaps in the services that were available; decisions which, with the benefit of hindsight, were found to be wrong; insufficient consideration of the child's individual needs; and 'professional drift' resulting in a lack of action.

404. Ofsted's previous reports identified concerns about the lack of consideration by Local Safeguarding Children Boards about race, language, culture and religion. An uneven pattern was found in the reviews covered by this year's full report. Many of the reviews did not consider the issues sufficiently or focused on one but not all aspects, such as not giving attention to religion or culture. In the reviews where race, language, culture and religion were dealt with sensitively, there was increased learning from the review. There was evidence of improvement in the involvement of family members in the review process. In the best examples, the views of the family were woven into the final report and had an influence on the findings.

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass)

405. Cafcass has a statutory responsibility in England to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in family proceedings, give advice to the court, ensure that children are represented, and provide information, advice and other support for the children and their families. Cafcass's professionally qualified social work staff, called Family Court Advisers (FCAs), work exclusively in the family courts. Cafcass is a national organisation which, since 2008, has been arranged into 21 service areas across England.⁶³ The process of inspecting all service areas began in 2009. Ofsted has completed 10 inspections, five of which were inspected between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010.

Overall performance

406. Cafcass remains a poorly performing organisation and the pace of improvement remains inadequate. Overall, there is continuing failure to improve outcomes, both where Ofsted has already identified weaknesses and where new concerns are emerging. This has potential repercussions for the children and families that Cafcass serves. However, the capacity to improve was judged satisfactory in all Cafcass areas inspected this year.

407. A particular area of weakness in both 2008/09 and 2009/10 was user engagement. In the Cafcass service areas that were judged to be inadequate for their engagement of users, no more than half of the children and young people who responded to Ofsted through its questionnaires said that things had improved for them as a result of the involvement of Cafcass in their case. All these areas showed some evidence of developments to improve the engagement of users, but these developments were at a very early stage and unsystematic.

408. In 2008/09, case planning, recording and assessment were frequently judged to be inadequate. This year, all the Cafcass service areas inspected were judged to be satisfactory in these aspects. However, new common weaknesses were performance management, evaluation, equality and diversity, and the responsiveness of services. Four out of five of these aspects were judged to be inadequate in all the five Cafcass areas inspected this year.

63 Cafcass is in the process of reducing the number of its service areas.

Quality and standards

Children's social care

Figure 82 Inspection judgements for Cafcass areas, 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010

Service area	Date of inspection	Overall effectiveness	Capacity to improve	Outcomes
Staffordshire and the Marches	October 2009	Inadequate	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Lancashire and Cumbria	November 2009	Inadequate	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Greater London	December 2009	Inadequate	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Greater Manchester	March 2010	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Cheshire and Merseyside	March 2010	Inadequate	Satisfactory	Inadequate

409. Of the five service areas inspected, two were judged inadequate for safeguarding. In one area this was because a small number of children were left at potential risk of significant harm. Inspectors required the service area to take immediate steps to ensure their protection, which included the provision of further information to the court and referral to the local authority. In the other area judged inadequate for safeguarding, children assessed by Cafcass to be at a high level of risk had not been allocated. In some cases there were delays of up to eight months in allocation. High risk cases included those involving domestic violence, concerns about parents' mental health and families seeking to remove children from the country. These risks were not actively managed until the cases were allocated.

410. All the areas inspected were judged to be satisfactory for workforce development. Elements of effective practice include succession planning to meet staffing needs and the quality of training. New management practices that have been introduced also have the potential to drive up standards, although they are at an early stage of implementation. There is some evidence that managers are beginning to use 'Quality for Children' effectively, a national performance management tool. However, inspectors had common concerns about a lack of accuracy and reliability in the quality of data used to underpin performance management.

Figure 83 Post-inspection monitoring visit outcomes for Cafcass areas 2009/10

Service area	Date of first inspection	Overall effectiveness at first inspection	Date of post-inspection monitoring	Overall progress
Birmingham and the Black Country	January 2009	Inadequate	September 2009	Satisfactory
Durham and the Tees Valley	February 2009	Inadequate	October 2009	Satisfactory
Far South West	June 2009	Inadequate	February 2010	Satisfactory
North Yorkshire and Humberside	July 2009	Inadequate	May 2010	Inadequate
Staffordshire and the Marches	October 2009	Inadequate	April 2010	Satisfactory

411. Inspectors identified delays and lengthy waiting lists in all but one of the five areas inspected in 2009/10. Cafcass data show that there has been an unprecedented rise nationally in demand in public law applications during 2009/10, resulting in unallocated cases.⁶⁴ In one area, the service reported that, as a result of rising demand, it had moved from having no delay in public law to a waiting list of 400 care cases. By the time of the inspection, this had reduced to around 200 care cases allocated to a duty family court adviser. Although inspectors raised concerns about the quality of the Cafcass data, this increase in demand indicates considerable additional pressure on the service. However, in all the areas where concerns were raised about delays, recent improvements to tackle them were noted, including work in partnership with the judiciary and better use of resources, such as new teams to focus exclusively on work before the first court hearings.

412. During 2009/10, inspectors monitored the five Cafcass areas that had been judged to be inadequate previously. All but one showed some improvement, as illustrated in Figure 83. One service area had failed to make satisfactory progress nine months after the inspection identified that its service was failing. In this area, arrangements to review unallocated cases were not sufficiently robust to ensure that children were safeguarded.

413. In response to Cafcass performance, the Government has funded a transformation programme designed to ensure that it improves its performance. Ofsted agreed to focus inspection during the remainder of 2009/10 on monitoring progress against the transformation programme.

64 Cafcass care demand latest figures for April–June 2010.
Information available at <http://www.cafcass.gov.uk>.



Quality and standards

Children's services in local authorities



Key findings

- ✘ The 2010 children's services assessments show that the majority of local authorities provide good children's services.⁶⁵ However, even in the best performing councils there are pockets of underperformance. Assessments for nine local authorities have yet to be finalised for 2010.
- ✘ The proportion of authorities that perform excellently has doubled. In these authorities children and young people generally receive a consistently high level of support.
- ✘ Last year the local authorities judged to be performing excellently were mainly small unitary authorities, often in London. This year those judged to be excellent represent all authority types and are spread across the country.
- ✘ Ten authorities are performing poorly, primarily because of inadequacies in their safeguarding arrangements. This is a provisional finding, subject to ongoing inspection activity. In a high proportion of these authorities, there are also weaknesses in secondary schools and in provision for young people over the age of 16.
- ✘ In the weakest authorities, inspection has identified serious weaknesses in the overall quality of safeguarding. Common concerns include poor management of aspects of child protection services and difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff.
- ✘ In almost half the authorities, inspectors identified a need to improve achievement in education at the ages of 16 and 19.
- ✘ Education provision is not consistently of a sufficiently high quality. In a quarter of authorities, inspectors identified a need to improve the quality of early years settings and, in a fifth, to increase the proportion of primary schools that are good or better. In just over a third of authorities, there are too many secondary schools which are no better than satisfactory.
- ✘ A major weakness is that, in over half of authorities, children and young people from low-income families or who have special educational needs are achieving considerably less well than others of the same age; in many instances the gaps in performance are widening.
- ✘ Where authorities work in close collaboration with other agencies, such as health services and the police, they provide strong support to enable children and young people to live healthy lives and to take part in activities of benefit to themselves and their communities.

⁶⁵ These figures are correct at 8 November 2010. Changes to the 2010 children's services assessment for individual local authorities may be made up to the point of publication on 9 December 2010. Data for nine local authorities are not included in this section.

Children’s services in local authorities

Introduction

414. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 charges Ofsted with providing an annual assessment of children’s services for each local authority. These range from universal services, such as schools, which affect all children, to specialist provision for children who need additional support. The latter include disabled children or those who are in the care of local authorities. Although local authorities have the main responsibility for providing services for children, they do so in partnership with a range of public agencies, including the police and the health service. They also work increasingly closely with the voluntary and private sector, for example in providing youth services.

415. In 2009, Ofsted introduced a new approach to assessing children’s services which was further refined for 2010. This places a greater focus on the findings from the inspection and regulation of the full range of services, settings and institutions for which local authorities are responsible, either alone or in partnership with others. The assessment drew on the National Indicator Set, which provided data on outcomes within each authority and compared these with performance in similar areas and across England. By drawing the data together into a performance profile, it is possible to identify trends over several years, rather than simply report on an authority’s performance in a particular year. The annual assessment is based on a four point scale:

Figure 84 Definitions of annual assessment judgements

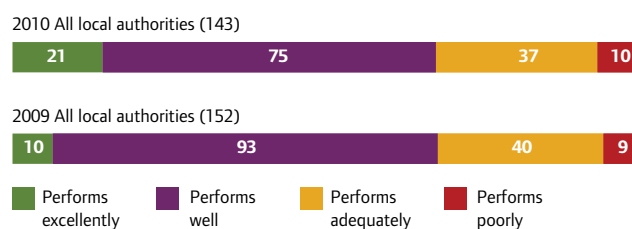
Judgement	Definition
4 Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3 Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2 Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1 Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

For further information on the criteria for assessing local authorities see *Children’s Services Assessment for 2010*, Ofsted, 2010.

416. Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, an assessment of ‘performs excellently’ does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of ‘performs poorly’ does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, both the performance profile and the application of inspectors’ judgements are central to Ofsted’s assessment.

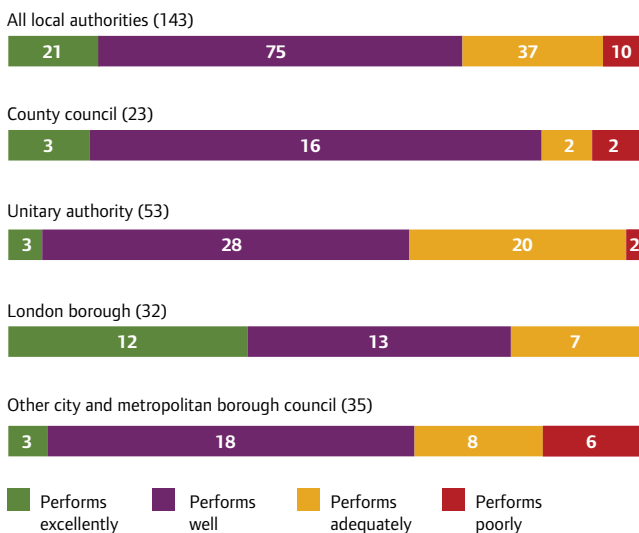
417. The new approach to assessment places a greater emphasis on the findings from inspections of safeguarding arrangements and services for looked after children. Another important contributor to the assessment of children’s services is the quality of an authority’s contact, referral and assessment arrangements and their impact in minimising any child abuse or neglect: these inspections are conducted annually and are unannounced. Where an unannounced inspection has identified an area or areas for priority action, the children’s services assessment will generally judge the authority to be performing poorly overall. If, in the meantime, a full inspection of provision for safeguarding and looked after children finds that services have improved to adequate or better, then the unannounced inspection findings do not apply. The assessment also draws on the findings of other inspectorates, for example Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation.

Figure 85 Annual assessment of local authority children’s services 2009 and 2010 (number of local authorities)



Nine local authorities have been excluded from the 2010 data as outcomes of their annual assessment are subject to further inspection.

Figure 86 Annual assessments of local authority children's services by type of local authority 2010 (number of local authorities)



Nine local authorities have been excluded from this analysis as outcomes of their annual assessment are subject to further inspection.

418. Figures 85 and 86 are based on assessments from 143 of 152 local authorities and may be subject to further change before the full set of 2010 annual assessments are finalised and published in December. These assessments show that in 2010 the majority of authorities perform well or better and the proportion of authorities that perform excellently has doubled since last year. Of these 21 local authorities which are performing excellently, seven were also excellent in 2009. This year, based on provisional data, ten authorities are performing poorly, compared with nine in 2009.

419. Last year, all the local authorities judged to be performing excellently were small unitary authorities and eight of the 10 were London boroughs. In 2010, the authorities judged to be excellent represent all local authority types and are spread across the country, although London continues to have a high proportion of boroughs that perform excellently.

420. There are several reasons for the increased number of excellent authorities. They include: improved inspection outcomes across all types of services and settings, particularly childcare, primary, secondary and post-16 provision; better educational outcomes; and, in some cases, better provision for those children and young people whose circumstances make them most vulnerable. As in 2009, even in those authorities judged to be excellent, there are pockets of underperformance. However, in these cases, the authorities are aware not only of their successes but also of areas for further development and have well planned strategies to tackle underperformance.

421. In the very best authorities, the very large majority of services are good or outstanding. Children and young people generally receive a consistently high level of support from the time they start in nurseries or childcare settings, through each stage of their schooling up until the time that they enter further education, employment or training. The standards in the schools that they attend are, in the main, at least as good as, and often better than, those in similar areas.

422. In authorities which perform excellently, children are mostly well supported at each stage of their development in terms of their health, being kept safe from harm and having the opportunity to take part in a wide range of activities that will be of benefit to themselves and the rest of the community. This includes children whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, such as those who are in care or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and who may need specialist support. Councillors, officers, teachers and other members of the community have high expectations of all children, including those from low-income families, and ensure that they are given opportunities to make best use of their abilities, knowledge and skills to be successful individuals and valued members of society.

Children's services in local authorities

423. Of the ten authorities judged to be performing poorly, all of them were put into this category primarily because of inadequacies identified in recent inspections of their safeguarding arrangements. Another recurring feature of the ten weakest authorities is that their secondary schools are not performing well enough. In only two of them are more than 65% of secondary schools good or better. In five of these authorities, more than half their secondary schools are no better than satisfactory. In seven authorities, the proportions of secondary schools that are good or better are below the averages nationally and for similar areas. Similarly, within the poorest performing authorities, provision for those over the age of 16 is generally weak. In eight of the ten authorities, the proportion of good or better provision for this age group is in the bottom 25% for all authorities. Although three authorities in this group have no inadequate post-16 provision, three have no outstanding providers.

424. Under the arrangements for the comprehensive area assessment, where there were serious concerns about the effectiveness of corporate governance arrangements in a local authority, the different inspectorates joined together to undertake an inspection to diagnose weaknesses and provide recommendations for improvement. In 2009/10 Ofsted joined with the Audit Commission and other inspectorates and carried out an inspection to look at the impact of the leadership of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council on the provision of services, including those for children. Findings showed that a lack of effective corporate leadership and governance from the council had not addressed serious shortcomings in children's services. Inspection led Ministers to intervene in the running of the council so that children's services, although showing more promising prospects for the future because of new leadership, could secure sustained improvement.

The performance of local authorities in key areas

Health

425. Children and young people are often given good support from schools and other services to adopt healthy ways of living. Children and Young People's Plans repeatedly emphasise the crucial contribution that physical and emotional health make to young people's well-being. A third of authorities have worked closely with other agencies to develop effective strategies to tackle the health issues that are a particular concern within their local areas.

426. Many areas have worked hard to raise children's fitness levels. In 44 authorities, more children and young people are now taking part in high-quality sports and physical education activities than previously. In 29 authorities, good progress has been made in reducing the numbers of primary school children who are very overweight. However, in 46 authorities, obesity levels remain high for this age group.

427. In 26 authorities, the percentage of women who breastfeed their babies is low and very few of the other authorities are able to show substantial improvements in this area. High levels of teenage pregnancy are a concern in many areas. In 35 authorities, efforts to improve the situation have had little effect. However, in another 35, where there is close partnership between relevant agencies and sexual health advice is readily available to young people, pregnancy rates have fallen.

Safeguarding

428. As with promoting healthy living, the most common factor underpinning effective local arrangements to keep children and young people safe is strong partnership work. Where this is the case all agencies have a shared understanding of, and consistently implement, common assessment processes. There is also clarity about the criteria to determine access to social care. A high number of initial and core assessments and reviews of child protection plans are carried out within the expected timescales. In the best authorities, the very large majority of schools, settings and services are also effective in their arrangements for keeping children safe.

429. In authorities that perform well, there is a focus on promoting safety in the community. Many have seen reductions in children being hurt or killed in traffic accidents. Most have low or reducing levels of bullying, with young people saying they are positive about the action taken to tackle bullying in their area.

430. In the weakest authorities, inspection has identified serious weaknesses in the overall quality of safeguarding. Common concerns include poor management of aspects of child protection services and difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. Rising numbers of referrals have increased already heavy workloads for some social workers. The thematic section of this report (see page 169) addresses these issues, including how the best local authorities deal with pressure on their social care services, in more detail.

Education

431. One factor that has had a considerable impact on an authority's rating is the overall quality of its schools. In the majority of local authorities, services and settings support learning successfully but in over a third there is a need to improve the quality of provision, particularly for secondary schools and school sixth forms. Furthermore in almost a quarter there are weaknesses in early years and childcare. These recommendations clearly relate to authorities where there are schools which have been judged to be inadequate in their inspections, but not exclusively. For example, there are instances where authorities judged to be performing adequately in 2009 have improved their schools so that none of them is now inadequate. However, because the majority of schools are still no better than satisfactory, the overall grading remains unchanged.

432. In some authorities, long-standing issues with standards at all ages remain but others have made steady improvement from a very low base. The achievement of five-year-olds has shown improvement in some authorities but remains too low in others. This is also the case for 11-year-olds because too many primary schools are only satisfactory. Secondary schools show a similar picture. In almost a half of authorities, higher grade GCSE results for 16-year-olds have improved. In more than a half, behaviour in secondary schools is at least good and rates of persistent absence have reduced. However, too many are no better than satisfactory because achievement is not good enough and too many pupils are persistently absent. In a minority of authorities, too few young people, particularly from low-income backgrounds, are gaining qualifications at the age of 19.

433. A recurring weakness in authorities is the gap in educational performance between young people whose circumstances potentially make them vulnerable and others of the same age. Gaps are closing consistently in only a small number of authorities and show little sign of narrowing in about half. This is identified as a key area for further development in over a quarter of authorities, including those that are performing excellently. In some authorities, where test and examination results are above average, the relative underperformance of particular groups has not been sufficiently well monitored. Inspectors identified examples of good practice where local authorities, alone or in collaboration with others, were putting a particular emphasis on closing gaps in performance, but these had not always led to the necessary improvements.

Other issues

434. The majority of authorities have well established and effective arrangements to give children and young people a strong say in decision-making. These arrangements range from one-off consultation events to regular meetings of democratically elected bodies in schools and in the community. Their common aim is to make provision more responsive to the needs of service users and to put children and young people at the heart of local affairs. For many local authorities, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and extending the range and quality of leisure activities for young people, both in and outside school, are key priorities.

Children's services in local authorities

435. Strong partnerships, for example between the police, schools and youth support services, are helping to reduce the number of children and young people convicted of offences and to increase the number of young people who have offended but are nonetheless in education, training or work and have somewhere suitable to live. However the picture across the country is mixed. In over a quarter of local authorities, offending by children and young people remains too high and there has been little improvement in recent years.

436. Local authorities are very aware of the impact of the economic downturn on youth unemployment. They often give high priority to reducing the number of 16–18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training. Just over a third of local authorities have been successful in reducing the number of young people in this group. This is discussed in greater detail in the thematic section of this report (see page 152). However, in a minority of authorities, the proportion of disengaged young people remains high or is rising. In a number of these authorities, too many young people who continue with their education beyond the age of 16 then drop out before they are 17. In about four out of 10 authorities, the number of 19-year-olds obtaining qualifications is high or improving at a faster than average rate.

Prospects for improvement

437. In authorities that perform excellently and well, priorities for improvement are well chosen, challenging and based on in-depth understanding of local needs, often enhanced through close consultation with children, young people and parents from a range of different backgrounds. There is a strong commitment to improving outcomes for groups whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Leadership and management are effective, providing clear vision and an unrelenting focus on improvement. Good use is made of data to monitor and evaluate progress and to set challenging targets for further improvement. Self-assessment is robust and demonstrates thorough analysis and a realistic and open understanding of issues. Services and outcomes for children and young people are improving and local authorities provide effective support to schools in order to raise overall effectiveness. Partnership working is well-established and collaboration between services is effective. There

is a strong focus on ensuring value for money and investing in services that have proved to have the greatest impact on outcomes.

438. Many of these characteristics are shared in authorities that perform less well. Outcomes are improving overall and many have been successful in raising educational standards, but many areas have some longstanding challenging issues where too little progress has been made. They provide at least adequate and mostly good support to help schools judged to be inadequate to improve. However, in too many cases, they fail to intervene early enough.

439. Authorities have seen an increase in demand for safeguarding services. In the better authorities, services have remained responsive and staffing shortages have been well-managed. Weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements have been the predominant reasons for authorities being judged as performing poorly. While plans indicate that senior leaders have a clear overview of performance and priorities, managers often fail to take timely and robust action to remedy weakness.





Key themes

Schools causing concern – the journey from failure to success



Introduction

440. In the last school year, Ofsted judged that 260 schools, providing for well over 100,000 children and young people, had improved to the extent that they no longer required special measures or a notice to improve. This section focuses on how this came about and the roles and actions of the schools, Ofsted and other stakeholders.

441. A small, intractable proportion of schools in England continue to cause concern. The identity of these schools changes. While many improve, others face unusual challenges or have simply lost their drive and focus. They slide into this category, having previously been judged to be satisfactory or better than this.

442. Ofsted allocates more resources to monitoring and supporting the progress of these schools, from the time when they are placed in a category of concern to when they receive a clean bill of educational health, than it does to the inspections that found them to be inadequate. The role of inspectors in working with these schools as they strive to improve can be likened to that of a ship's pilot as the vessel leaves port. They latch onto the school while it is in a difficult and challenging place and both monitor its course and keep it pointing in the right direction until it reaches clear water and is on a safe passage. Then they disengage, but the school's continuing progress is charted and risks to the school assessed periodically since Ofsted maintains an overview of its performance.

443. Inspectors can be catalysts for improving schools and the education system more widely. They make expert assessments of schools' quality, performance, needs and progress as well as being sources of encouragement and helpful counsel. But it is the people on the bridge and in the engine room who make the ship move. Turning around schools that cause concern can be done only by those who are actually doing the job, helped where necessary by others who know what works and how to make it work. We see evidence of an increasingly sophisticated approach to monitoring, supporting and improving schools. This includes a key role for successful schools in partnering those that are less effective. Ofsted reports show what types of support and intervention are the most effective and inspection demonstrates the varied capacity of local authorities and governing bodies in planning, commissioning and brokering the most appropriate forms of intervention.

444. This section on the improvement of schools causing concern is based on an analysis of the progress of all 260 schools that emerged from a category of concern in 2009/10, a detailed school by school review of 40% of schools which emerged from special measures and a smaller sample (20%) of those which no longer required a notice to improve.

Schools causing concern – the journey from failure to success

Which schools cause concern and what happens to them?

445. Schools are judged overall to be outstanding (grade 1), good (grade 2), satisfactory (grade 3) or inadequate (grade 4). All inspectors and inspection teams base their judgements on the school inspection framework, which defines the grading scale quoted above.⁶⁶ Many schools emerge from their inspections with credit. If inspectors judge, however, that a school's overall effectiveness is inadequate, they have to decide whether the school requires special measures or significant improvement (that is, a notice to improve). The Education Act 2005 defines the two categories of schools causing concern as follows:⁶⁷

Judgement: special measures

The school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Judgement: notice to improve

The school requires significant improvement, because either:

- ✘ it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, but is demonstrating the capacity to improve, or
- ✘ it is not failing to provide an acceptable standard of education but is performing significantly less well than it might, in all the circumstances, reasonably be expected to perform.

446. If Her Majesty's Chief Inspector confirms that a school requires special measures, periodic monitoring visits will focus on the progress it is making in implementing the recommendations of the inspection.⁶⁸ The findings of these monitoring visits are published. If inspectors judge that the school has progressed sufficiently by building capacity to improve and is providing a satisfactory standard of

education, it will no longer be deemed to require special measures. When this happens, the monitoring inspection under section 8 of the Act is considered to be a section 5 (or 'normal') inspection, resulting in an inspection report which states that the school no longer requires special measures.

447. A school given a notice to improve will usually receive a monitoring visit between six and eight months after its last section 5 inspection before being re-inspected under section 5 a further six to eight months after that.⁶⁹ The exact timing of that inspection may be influenced by the outcome of the monitoring inspection. Monitoring by Ofsted plays a very significant part in driving improvement.

Characteristics of the schools leaving Ofsted categories in 2009/10

448. The maintained schools section of this report provides a picture of the quality of schools inspected this year compared with previous years. The improving trend in inspection outcomes which continued until 2008/09 has been interrupted by the introduction of the new framework in September 2009. This has had the effect of providing a new baseline for inspection judgements. This does not mean that schools have got worse. Indeed, the 2010 GCSE results show further improvement in the proportions of 16-year-olds attaining higher grades.⁷⁰ But national expectations of schools have also increased and the more proportionate approach to the new framework introduced in 2009 means fewer previously good and outstanding schools were inspected this year compared with last year. The sample inspected was therefore skewed. This is discussed in more detail on page 33. Successive policies have not only set schools higher targets but given them more tools and greater flexibility and resources to carry out their work. Schools, therefore, cannot sustain peak performance by standing still.

66 *The framework for school inspection* (090019), Ofsted, 2010.

67 The Education Act 2005; available from www.opsi.gov.uk.

68 *Monitoring inspections of schools that are subject to special measures* (090272), Ofsted, 2010.

69 *Monitoring inspections of schools with a notice to improve* (090277), Ofsted, 2010.

70 Overall, performance in maintained schools improved by over five percentage points at grades A* to C (from 69.8% to 75.6%). Source – DfE: GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2009/10 (provisional).

449. The 260 schools which came out of a category of concern in 2009/10 did so under the new and more demanding inspection framework. Although some school characteristics are more likely to be associated with being judged inadequate, the key determining factors for going into special measures, as for coming out, are operational rather than contextual. A small proportion of those in special measures excelled by emerging as good schools, rather than satisfactory. To become a good or outstanding school after being in an Ofsted category in the previous full inspection shows a singularity of purpose that comes from highly capable leadership. Ten of the 12 primary schools and two of the three secondary schools that were found to be good schools, having previously been in special measures, had benefited from a change of headteacher.

450. The following 12 primary schools, three secondary schools and one special school emerged from special measures having been judged to be good schools.

Primary schools

Arthur Dye Primary School, Gloucestershire

Aslacton Primary School, Norfolk

Bridgerule Church of England Primary School, Devon

Cragside Church of England Controlled Primary School, Northumberland

Deepcar St John's Church of England Junior School, Sheffield

Grazebrook Primary School, Hackney

Hylton Red House Primary School, Sunderland

Jervoise Junior and Infant School, Birmingham

Morton Trentside Primary School, Lincolnshire

St Simon and Jude Church of England Primary School, Bolton

Stafford Junior School, East Sussex

Vauxhall Primary School, Lambeth

Secondary schools

Epsom and Ewell High School, Surrey

Scalby School, North Yorkshire

The Radcliffe School, Milton Keynes

Special school

Landgate School, Wigan

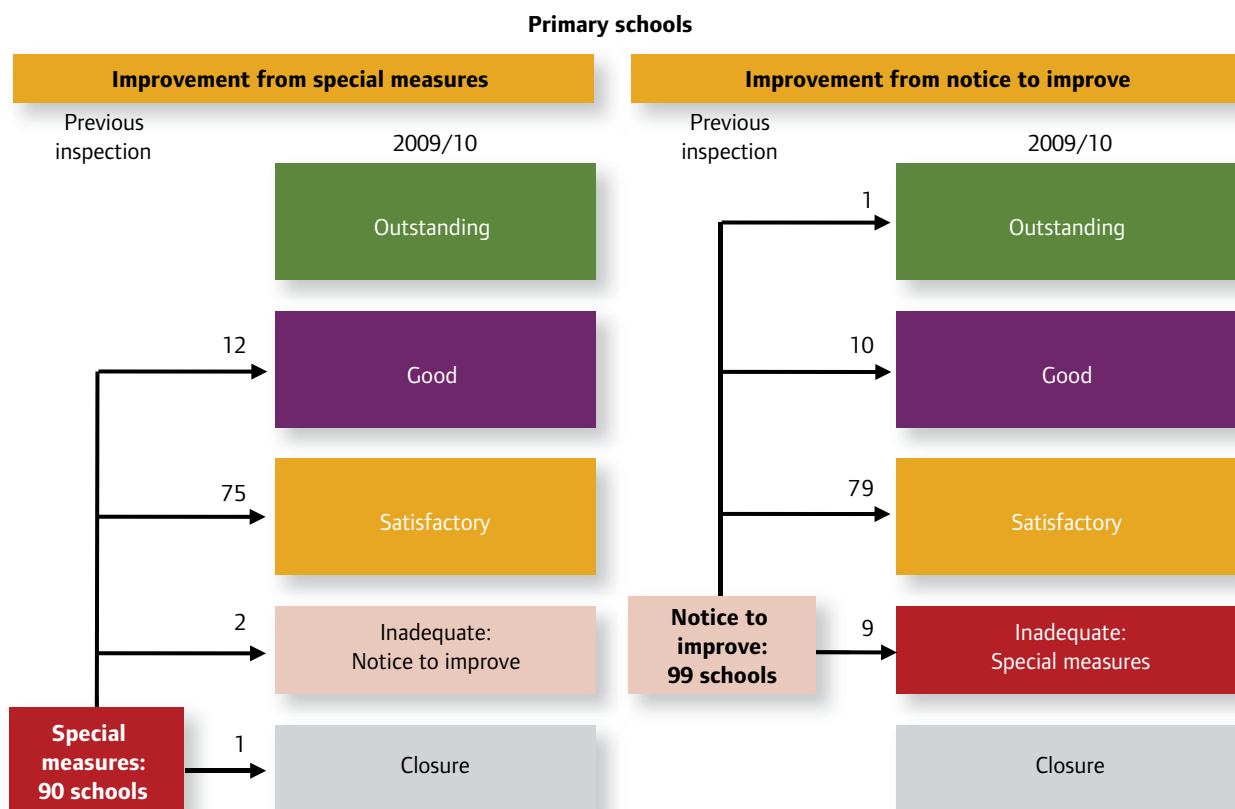
451. Eighteen schools that had notices to improve were also judged as good when re-inspected and one, Tollerton Primary School in Nottingham, was judged to be outstanding.

Primary schools

452. Figure 87 shows the improvement journeys undertaken by the 189 primary schools judged to be inadequate in their previous inspections. The schools represent a range of sizes and contexts, from small rural primary schools serving village communities with little evident social and economic disadvantage to large urban schools in very challenging areas. The schools that came out of categories of concern had an average of 269 pupils on roll (compared with the national average of 241) and ranged in size from 19 to 799 pupils.

Schools causing concern – the journey from failure to success

Figure 87 The improvement of primary schools since being judged to require special measures or a notice to improve when inspected previously



453. For primary schools that came out of categories of concern during 2009/10 there was a wide distribution of schools in terms of both size and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Schools coming out of both categories of concern were very similar in this respect. However, schools that have come out of special measures represent, on average, slightly more disadvantaged communities. Eligibility for free school meals ranged from none to just over 67%. For schools coming out of a category of concern the average was 28%. This is higher than the 2010 national average of 19%, although just over one third of the primary schools had below-average proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals. The proportions of pupils learning English as an additional language varied from none in some schools to over 95%. Evidence about the effect of English as an additional language on educational progress and attainment is mixed, but research finds the effect size generally to be small. Few of the schools' recent inspection reports identified the need for more specialist provision for such pupils among the recommendations.

454. The primary schools that came out of Ofsted categories tended to be slightly larger and their pupils from more disadvantaged circumstances than the national average, although 17% had little socio-economic disadvantage. The findings suggest that operational factors such as inconsistent teaching stemming from factors such as inadequate leadership and governance, staff shortages and mobility in schools in particular areas, and lax monitoring by the local authority, are associated with schools causing concern. The evidence indicates that the time it takes to emerge from special measures is not strongly associated with the size or social context of a school. On average, the 89 primary schools took around 20 months to emerge from special measures, requiring three or four monitoring visits after going into the category. The range was from 266 to 843 days, representing the need for only one monitoring visit in the first instance but five at the other extreme. Both these schools were in city areas.

455. In a primary school which was removed from special measures after just one monitoring visit, progress since the inspection was satisfactory in almost all aspects. The school had formed a soft (temporary or informal) federation with a nearby primary school whose headteacher had become the executive headteacher of both schools. He exerted very purposeful leadership, had stabilised staffing and established rigorous monitoring of teaching with the result that pupils were making faster progress. The school improvement plan focused acutely on the key issues from the inspection and governors were taking their responsibilities seriously. There was more to be done in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but the school had gained sufficient momentum to be judged satisfactory at its next monitoring visit, which was therefore deemed a section 5 inspection. The monitoring inspector identified six of the levers for such rapid improvement, all of which have wider import.

i. The local authority acted swiftly and decisively when serious concerns were raised about the school before the inspection that placed it in special measures. The authority had removed delegated powers, suspended the headteacher and begun to set up an interim executive board. The school would not have been ready to come out of special measures on the second visit had all of this taken place after the special measures judgement.

ii. The local authority arranged for the headteacher of a successful primary school to take over as executive headteacher, with the deputy headteacher from the support school becoming the acting headteacher. A federation was established between the two schools, intended to last for at least three years.

iii. The executive headteacher took swift steps to break the culture of learned helplessness and low expectations that existed at the school in special measures and to shift the emphasis away from the adults (the school very much operated to serve their needs) to the pupils. This included a radical restructuring of the staffing. Over 20 learning support assistants had been employed and, judging by the school's results, they were having little impact on attainment and progress. All but two were made redundant. Several teachers were unable to meet the new demands and left too.

iv. Experienced, successful teachers were seconded to the school from the support school and experienced new teachers were recruited. Teachers were deployed into year or phase teams, each with one teacher more than the number of classes. This 'extra' teacher's role was to mentor, coach and provide a model of good practice for the others in the team, to work alongside them in the classroom and to provide highly skilled support for groups of pupils.

v. The year and phase teams were made accountable for pupils' progress. The teams were also responsible for devising the strategies that they would use to help 'close the gap'.

vi. The bursar from the support school was deployed for three days a week to help to 'disentangle the financial mess'.

456. The inspector said: 'I had not expected the school to have moved so far forward on my second visit, so I went single-handed. On arrival, I was greeted by the acting headteacher (the executive headteacher had withdrawn and the school was being led from within) and the deputy headteacher who said that they thought the school was ready to be removed from special measures. I challenged them to provide me with the evidence that supported their evaluation of the school's position. We conducted a series of lesson observations jointly and scrutinised pupils' books and paperwork together. It was clear that the rate of improvement was remarkable. The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher knew the school very well. Staff were keen, bright and enthused by their success. The pupils were flying. I judged that the school no longer required special measures.'

457. The primary school that took longest to emerge from special measures was in a challenging urban situation and in unrelenting decline at the time of its previous inspection in March 2008. Since this had gone on for some time under the nose of the local authority, it must be questionable whether any improvement would have happened without Ofsted's inspection and monitoring. The lead inspector reported:

Schools causing concern – the journey from failure to success

Standards have declined year-on-year since the previous inspection. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, standards in English and mathematics are exceptionally low. The quality of teaching is inadequate; there are too many weaknesses and inconsistencies to enable pupils to learn as well as they should. There is too much acceptance of incorrect spelling and poor presentation so pupils have no incentive to improve their work. Many pupils do not attend regularly. As a result, their learning is interrupted and their achievement is suppressed. Leadership and management are inadequate and lack permanence...

458. Successive monitoring reports chart this school's slow progress. This started with 'further instability' as the headteacher departed after a few months in post, to be replaced by an executive headteacher and deputy headteacher from a partner school. Two more teachers left and an interim executive board was established to govern the school. There were further teacher absences and difficulties in recruitment before the second monitoring visit, which nevertheless found satisfactory improvement since the previous visit. By the third monitoring inspection, the quality of teaching had been strengthened as a result of considerable support and guidance, particularly from consultants in English and mathematics, and the school's capacity to drive its own progress had improved. By the fourth visit, achievement showed steady improvement, the executive deputy headteacher had become acting headteacher and a new governing body began shadowing the work of the interim executive board. But attendance remained very low and progress on improving this was judged inadequate. However, by March 2010, HMI could identify good progress in the school since it was made subject to special measures, including successful action to combat absence. When inspected in July 2010, the school was found to be satisfactory and was deemed no longer to require special measures.

459. In this school, there was improvement on all fronts since it went into special measures, but with high levels of intervention and support. It has entered the 2010/11 academic year with its full complement of staff, an established leadership team, effective governance and productive partnerships. Parents and pupils have confidence in it. Yet there is much more to be done to raise attainment and attendance closer to the national average and to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good. The school has not yet demonstrated good capacity for sustained improvement; it has all the hallmarks of remaining a fragile school. The challenge for the governors and local authority is to be alert to possible risk and have strategies for managing it. It is worth noting that there are a small number of schools that, having emerged from a category of concern, are not able to sustain their improved performance and are judged to be inadequate again. There were 58 such schools this year, as reported on page 56.

Staff instability: a threat to some schools

460. Challenging primary and secondary schools in urban environments and small schools in rural areas are often particularly vulnerable to staff turbulence. The temporary loss of a member of staff who may be responsible for or even teach a whole key stage can set back pupils' education unless a capable replacement can be found. Staff illness, leave of absence or departure, or an ineffective or sick headteacher all have a price and if several of these misfortunes coincide the result is likely to be a school in difficulties. For example, a small village primary school was judged to be good when inspected in 2005 and again in June 2010. But the intervening years were challenging for the school for reasons that are hinted at in the earlier inspection report. It referred to 'significant interruptions to pupils' learning caused by staffing difficulties'; one of the reasons why, perhaps, 'after completing several years in the school a number of pupils leave to attend private schools.' An inspection in November 2008 found the school, which now had a different headteacher and chair of governors, required special measures. The report described the difficult years since the 2005 inspection owing to staff illness and turnover which disrupted the day-to-day running of the school and the pupils'

educational progress. What happened next amounts to a characteristic success story of how a school improved from special measures to become a good school, captured in monitoring reports.

The headteacher left after the special measures judgement. The local authority took prompt action and provided the school with a consultant headteacher early in 2009. When HMI monitored the school's progress in May, she found the school was steadily addressing all the weaknesses found at the previous inspection. A new 'partnership headteacher' took over responsibility for the school in September 2009 and an inspection visit in November found that teaching and leadership were continuing to improve. When monitored next, in March 2010, the benefits of being partnered by another school were increasingly apparent. The partner school shared its staff expertise to ensure continuity and continued improvement, for example when teachers in the special measures school were on sick leave. The partner headteacher provided outstanding leadership and the school was making progress in raising standards in writing and mathematics, with support from strategy advisers, raising teachers' expectations and developing an effective leadership team. With the school now firing on all cylinders, there was little surprise when it emerged from special measures in June 2010 as a good and improving school with capable middle management, active and engaged governors and excellent leadership.

461. The involvement of Ofsted was and is crucial in keeping all the school improvement interventions and processes in the spotlight. In the case above, the inspector was able to tell the local authority and governors, in no uncertain terms, that they needed to appoint a substantive headteacher as a matter of urgency or the capacity to improve would be likely to continue to be judged inadequate. Special measures also put the local authority under scrutiny in terms of how it supported its schools. In this case, the authority had a number of schools in a category of concern and responded markedly to this by improving its own practice. It has many fewer such schools now.

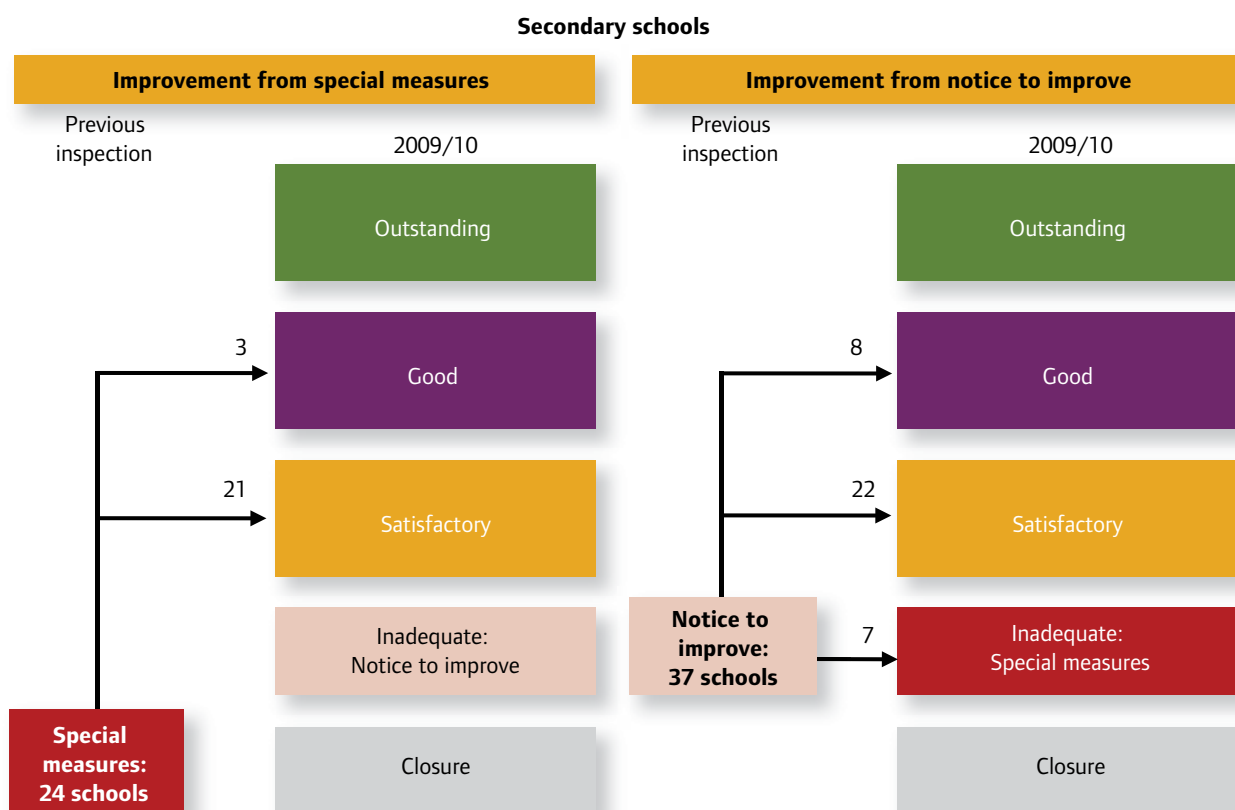
Secondary schools

462. Figure 88 shows the secondary schools that came out of Ofsted categories of concern. They ranged in size from 183 (a middle deemed secondary school) to 2,323 students on roll, averaging 887, below the national average of 984 in 2010. Eligibility for free school meals averaged 21%, higher than the national average of 15% and ranged from 6% to 73%. On average, it took secondary schools about a month longer than primary schools to emerge from special measures (648 days compared with 615). This probably reflects their greater complexity. Time in special measures correlates only very weakly with social disadvantage and special educational needs. It does not correlate with the number of minority ethnic children and the number learning English as an additional language. As in primary schools, the main determining factors for going into special measures, as for coming out, are operational rather than contextual.

Challenging primary and secondary schools in urban environments and small schools in rural areas are often particularly vulnerable to staff turbulence. The temporary loss of a member of staff who may be responsible for or even teach a whole key stage can set back pupils' education unless a capable replacement can be found.

Schools causing concern – the journey from failure to success

Figure 88 The improvement of secondary schools since being judged to require special measures or a notice to improve when inspected previously



463. Three secondary schools were judged to be satisfactory at their second monitoring visit, just over a year after requiring special measures. One was Stretford Grammar School, a smaller than average selective foundation school, where staff absences were having a negative impact at the time of the inspection. A falling roll, pressure on the budget, staff redundancies and inadequate leadership and governance all had an effect. The rapid secondment to the school of the headteacher and deputy headteacher of Sale Grammar School introduced capable leadership. Support from Greater Manchester Challenge and the local authority together stabilised the staffing and the budget and ensured rapid improvement through rigorous monitoring and development of teaching and learning.

464. A second fast-improving school was Hillcrest in Hastings, where monitoring of a previously satisfactory school found that it required special measures in October 2008. In this case, the local authority had been aware of the school's inadequacies and six months earlier had contracted a partner school, Ninestiles in Birmingham, and its executive leader, to be accountable for the improvement of Hillcrest and two neighbouring schools. After two monitoring visits, the school came out of special measures in November 2009. The report noted that:

Strong leadership from the headteacher and the executive leader has dramatically raised the school's expectations of itself by providing a challenging vision of what the students should be achieving. After significant changes in staffing and restructuring of leadership, their vision is now shared by other staff. Working as part of the federation has been of considerable benefit to the school by helping to share good practice and expertise. The impact on students is clear...

465. Where monitoring extends for five visits, it is likely that the improvement got off to a slow start, the local authority was unprepared, remedial action was too little or too late and the improvement strategy was not sufficiently robust and focused from the start. One middle school, for example, took 847 days to emerge from special measures for just such reasons. The monitoring inspector reports that the school's slow start on the journey out of special measures owed much to the lack of rigorous intervention by the local authority before the school went into special measures and a sense of complacency that was still evident at the first monitoring visit. There was little understanding of the urgency and depth of the school's problems.

466. Could anything more have been done to accelerate progress? The inspector's view of lessons to be learned is as follows.

- ✘ There was insufficient challenge and intervention by the local authority before the inspection and these contributed to the school's sense of complacency.
- ✘ Placing the deputy headteacher as the acting headteacher for one term, before the appointment of a new headteacher, was the wrong move. The authority did not have sufficient knowledge of the deputy headteacher's competence. It was an easy solution but one which set back the school's progress.
- ✘ The appointment of a new headteacher was not a success; relationships with staff deteriorated to the point where the headteacher had to leave.
- ✘ Arrangements for the headteacher of the neighbouring secondary school to take over the school in a soft federation led to more rapid progress.
- ✘ Carrying out two monitoring visits in the same term proved to be a real catalyst for shifting the school forward, really emphasising to the governors and authority that the school was in a very fragile state.

467. The key message, apart from anticipating and preventing school failure in the first instance, is to take the bold step of installing credible and capable leadership from the beginning. Once the local authority really understood what faced the school, it moved swiftly to remove the headteacher. The deployment of the executive headteacher was key to the more rapid progress made. The inspector's role was important in:

- ✘ giving a very clear steer that the school must tackle the most significant weaknesses and not be distracted by other issues
- ✘ identifying key staff who could support the agenda for improvement and ensuring that they were given support for and endorsement of their work
- ✘ giving oral feedback which, with continuing conversations about improvement at all levels, made a significant difference to the pace of improvement.

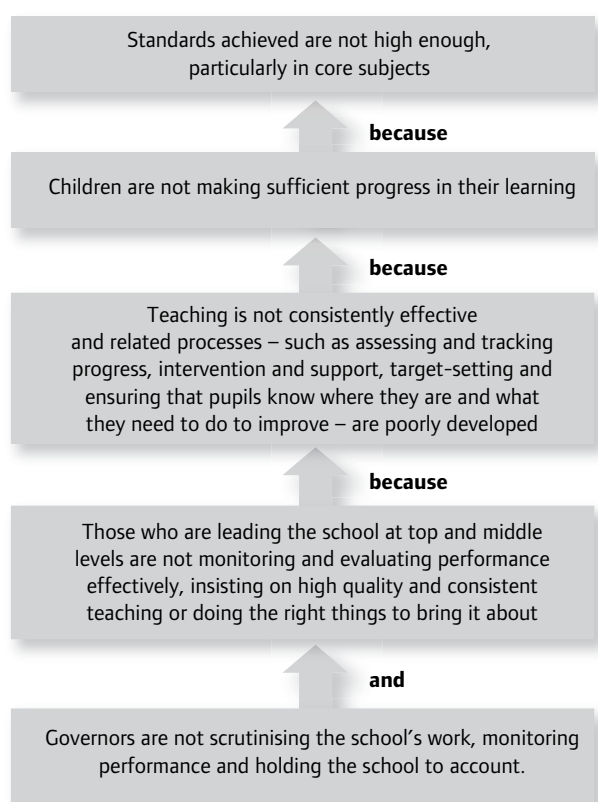
468. Inspectors consider that time spent with key staff is crucial to developing their understanding and empowering them to move forward boldly – for example eliminating weaknesses in teaching, tackling issues of competency head on, and instilling a real sense of urgency.

The key message, apart from anticipating and preventing school failure in the first instance, is to take the bold step of installing credible and capable leadership from the beginning.

Schools causing concern – the journey from failure to success

What are the challenges for schools causing concern?

469. Analysis of the shortcomings of the secondary schools that were in special measures shows a prominent pattern of issues which are related through a strong causal chain. In these schools, the most likely inadequacies are:



470. Recommendations that relate to some or all of the processes listed above are found in the monitoring reports of virtually all secondary schools in special measures. The result of this chain of inadequacy is that not only do standards slip, but the behaviour, attendance and punctuality of pupils are also likely to be poor; staff morale may be low and turnover high; finances are awry, with budgets that frequently are in deficit, and pupils and parents get a raw deal. It has long been understood that a good curriculum, well taught, in a school with an ethos of learning and engagement will do much to reduce pupils' disaffection. Other specific recommendations in such reports include reference to provision in the sixth form, aspects of the curriculum, pupil support and intervention, and the need to take action to promote community cohesion.

471. The main issues are similar in primary schools, where standards in writing and mathematics are most often found wanting, followed by English and science. Teachers are often not sufficiently knowledgeable about the levels at which pupils are working and achieving, or practised in matching work to their abilities and using varied methods to promote learning. Their expectations of what pupils could achieve are often too low. Specific weaknesses may be identified, such as in the Early Years Foundation Stage, progress in Key Stage 2, opportunities for outdoor learning, assessment and marking of work, strategies for tackling weaknesses and helping those who find learning a challenge.

472. The benefits of addressing the chain of factors shown above are illustrated in the inspection report which removed Morton Trentside Primary School from special measures.

Attainment has risen sharply, driven by rigorous monitoring and analysis of pupils' progress, used effectively to target pupils at risk of underachievement and to set priorities for curriculum development. Improvements in English and mathematics have been particularly strong. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and use assessment information effectively to set work at different levels to suit the abilities in their classes. Self-evaluation is effective. The senior leadership team has secure systems for checking the school's performance through analysing assessment data and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

473. The areas for improvement in schools given a notice to improve are generally similar to those in special measures schools, for example raising standards, improving the quality of teaching and developing assessment.

What works? Three principal ingredients for success in schools of all types

474. The best recipe for turning around inadequate schools is clear in Ofsted's evidence from monitoring school improvement. There are three principal ingredients:

- i. Instil or install effective leadership
- ii. Provide high-quality technical guidance, particularly in teaching and assessment
- iii. Ensure effective governance.

475. Progress then needs to be monitored and evaluated so as to provide useful feedback and a mechanism for accountability.

Effective leadership

476. In almost all the sample of secondary schools and many of the primary schools that emerged from special measures, the key factor was the appointment or attachment of an external headteacher, full- or part-time, to strengthen the leadership of the school.⁷¹ This 'executive', 'partner' or 'consultant' headteacher may come from a neighbouring school that can federate with the school causing concern or be drawn from the cadre of experienced headteachers that have been identified by the National College as a 'national leader of education' (NLE),⁷² together with their school as a 'national support school'. In a few cases, the replacement acting headteacher was a local authority adviser or advisory headteacher. Of the schools that came out of special measures in 2009/10, 24% had been assisted by a national leader of education.⁷³ Any delay in securing effective leadership, such as appointing an executive headteacher, inhibits the school in coming to terms with the inspection findings and its capacity to make progress in dealing with the recommendations. This has the effect of extending the monitoring period and the duration of special measures.

71 This is based on a detailed analysis of a sample of half the secondary schools and one third of the primary schools that came out of special measures this year.

72 Headteachers can also be accredited as 'local leaders of education' for which the criteria are less demanding.

73 Data provided by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services.

477. In the case of Epsom and Ewell High School, a national leader of education was identified quickly to act as executive headteacher. The first HMI monitoring visit found good improvement six months after the school went into special measures and the improvement in the ensuing six months was judged to be outstanding. A few months later, with a new substantive headteacher in post, the school emerged from special measures as 'a good school with outstanding capacity to improve'. Two other secondary schools emerged during the year as 'good' rather than 'satisfactory' schools. One also had a change of leadership.

When Scalby High School in Scarborough went into special measures, North Yorkshire Local Authority contracted Outwood Grange College to turn the school around. This outstanding school already had a track record of supporting schools causing concern and had built additional staff capacity to undertake outreach work of the most challenging kind. A vice principal from the College became acting headteacher at Scalby, working to the interim executive board and the executive principal of the Outwood Grange family of schools. Other staff from the family of schools injected expertise and support where necessary. After three monitoring visits the school was reinspected and judged to be a good school, to which a new substantive headteacher was appointed.

478. Frequently, inadequate primary schools become linked in a 'soft' (temporary or informal) or 'hard' (formal) federation with one or more other more effective primary schools and an executive headteacher is drawn from one of these. Where an executive headteacher has responsibility for more than one school, there is normally a capable deputy or 'head of school' in each school in the partnership who leads the day-to-day work. In a different example, two schools shared two co-headteachers, one of which was the executive headteacher. Ofsted found that 'the inspirational leadership and management of the two co-headteachers have maintained high staff morale and ensured that the wider community has a strong sense of trust in the school. Frequent observations of lessons, followed up by the effective identification of strengths and areas for development, have ensured that the quality of teaching has improved rapidly.'

Schools causing concern – the journey from failure to success

479. In the case of Aslacton Primary School, special measures triggered a very effective response through:

- ✘ injecting leadership; first, a consultant headteacher and then a partnership headteacher
- ✘ using the partnership to provide other expertise and staff cover, coaching and development
- ✘ involving advisers from the Primary National Strategy, as well as other experts, to help raise standards in mathematics and writing
- ✘ re-constituting the governance arrangements.

480. The local authority brokered these arrangements and provided effective support. Monitoring visits endorsed what the school was achieving under its new and dynamic leadership and helped the school to stay focused on the key priorities for becoming an effective school.

High-quality technical guidance

481. Schools causing concern usually have insufficient expertise within their own resources to turn themselves around and therefore little capacity to improve. As well as effective leadership, they need technical expertise of different kinds, closely related to the areas identified for improvement. In both primary and secondary schools, the main needs are for experts in:

- ✘ instructional leadership, to demonstrate, monitor and communicate good practice in teaching, learning, assessment and evaluation, particularly in English and mathematics, followed by science and modern foreign languages
- ✘ leadership development, to show middle and senior leaders what it means to be responsible and accountable for the quality of work and standards achieved in their areas, and to enhance their contribution to promoting a new ethos for learning
- ✘ the management, interpretation and educational use of assessment data in order to embed its intelligent use by all teachers for tracking progress, setting attainment targets and raising performance expectations, as well as to embed effective procedures for intervention and support for pupils who begin to slip behind
- ✘ curriculum, to help the school to provide a curriculum that meets all needs

- ✘ finance, to provide solutions to budget mismanagement and the recovery of deficits

- ✘ personnel, to advise on complex staffing issues.

482. The example below shows what a difference can be made to the teaching in a school that was taken out of special measures through effective leadership and focused professional development.

Teaching when the school went into special measures (April 2008)

Teaching fails to engage pupils because it lacks variety and dynamism. Lessons are conducted at too leisurely a pace. Tasks are poorly matched, either too easy or impossibly difficult. Teachers concentrate too heavily on teaching rather than on the quality of pupils' learning. As a result they tend to talk for too long and expect pupils to be attentive way after their concentration span has been exhausted. Teachers mark written work regularly and conscientiously but their comments are not consistently useful in helping pupils know what they need to do to improve.

Teaching when judged a good school (November 2009)

A key to the successful teaching is the very effective direction from senior leaders and the strong relationships which underpin learning. Good subject knowledge means that questioning is very effective and requires pupils to think about the subject matter. Pupils are given many opportunities to be involved in paired and group work and to act as a learning resource for each other. They thrive on practical activities because they like to tease out problems and work together. The use of assessment and marking is good and time is set aside for pupils to respond to the written comments they receive.

483. Improvements in teaching and learning are invariably required in schools causing concern – primary and secondary, special schools and pupil referral units alike. Teaching has undoubtedly become more technical in recent years because of greater professional understanding about the most effective techniques to help every child and young person progress in their learning. The monitoring reports and most recent inspection reports refer frequently to the theory and practice of teaching. All the following aspects need to be secure to ensure consistently effective provision.

- i. *Knowledge and expectations.* Successful schools repeatedly show that both pupils and staff thrive and raise their level of performance once sights for pupils' attainment are raised. Aspirational targets, it has been said, have a high floor and no ceiling. School cultures in which pupils say, 'We want to be the best that we can be' or the motto is 'Students first' are possible only if the staff also sign up to these ambitions. High expectations, however, rely on teachers knowing what is possible and really understanding their subjects, what progression in the subject means and how the subjects are best taught. Subject knowledge and an understanding of the curriculum are prerequisites for effective planning, teaching and assessment. In too many cases of weak schools, teachers' knowledge is insecure and little has been done to improve it.
- ii. *Planning.* Effective planning starts with being clear about what is to be learned and the strategies most likely to be successful for introducing and developing subject matter. It makes the curriculum relevant and brings it to life. Good planning identifies a range of activities to meet pupils' individual needs. It is enriched when done collaboratively, drawing on the ideas and skills of colleagues. Schools causing concern often show great variation in their curriculum planning and a lack of rigour, continuity and progression, particularly across key stages. This means that momentum is lost when pupils move to a new teacher.
- iii. *Instruction.* Learning objectives are a helpful foundation for effective lessons and easily established where they are lacking. In schools causing concern, teaching may lack professional skill. For example, clear instruction is often marred by the teacher talking too much and for too long, so that pupils switch off. This should be detected and lead to feedback and coaching. Schools that come out of special measures have established standards for consistently effective lessons of the sort that are commonly present in successful schools.
- iv. *Questioning and discussion.* Dialogue and questioning across the class are both central to learning and a key indicator of effective teaching. More than testing recall, questioning needs to encourage thinking and should extend beyond a single exchange so that a range of ideas, hypotheses, explanations and predictions are put forward, considered and analysed. Effective questioning is also important in gauging pupils' understanding in order to tailor explanations and activities where needed. All too often in lessons that are mediocre or inadequate, questioning lacks challenge and is limited to seeking factual answers.
- v. *Assessment, feedback and the tracking of progress.* Inadequate schools often lack effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and for using the information to guide and accelerate their learning. Good-quality, thoughtful marking of work and effective feedback are essential to helping pupils know how well they are performing and what they must do to improve.
- vi. *Differentiation, challenge and support.* Information from systematic assessment is key both to matching teaching to pupils' current understanding and to giving individuals either the support they need when their progress slows or the challenge to enable them to make the most of their talents. In effective primary and secondary schools, pupils have a sense of purpose and direction and know their own targets. In the better schools, pupils of all ages are increasingly engaged in evaluating their own learning and progress.

Schools causing concern – the journey from failure to success

- vii. *Monitoring, evaluation and professional development.* Many recommendations concern improvements in using monitoring and self-evaluation to identify strengths and weaknesses and bring about improvement. The drive to identify what works best, assessing the impact of programmes, lessons and other experiences, should be relentless. Effective schools have mechanisms for sharing good practice as part of in-school professional development focused on improving the quality of teaching.
- viii. *Effective leadership of teaching and learning.* Middle leaders need to be good practitioners, able to recognise and demonstrate effective practice. Their role in monitoring, quality assuring and improving standards of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility is paramount. Senior managers need to have high expectations of middle leaders, train them in their responsibilities and hold them to account for performance in their team.
- ix. *Consistency.* Students and staff need to be clear about the standards expected and their part in setting and working to these standards. These start with conduct and behaviour, where clear requirements are applied consistently and sanctions are understood.
- x. *Involvement of pupils and students.* Pupils readily value the efforts of schools to improve and are key partners in helping this to happen. They and their aspirations are central to the process. Their views, feedback and ideas are as important to the healthy school as those of its staff. Crucially, they have an important role in contributing to the learning of each other, in whatever pairs and groups they are working.

484. The next example of a school taken out of special measures shows the result of curriculum innovation being poorly thought-out, planned and executed. Capitalising on freedom to innovate without jeopardising standards means having the organisational capacity to do so.

Curriculum when the school went into special measures (January 2009)

The key reason for pupils' limited progress is an inadequate curriculum. An emphasis has been placed on teaching all themes in a fully integrated manner, Although this approach makes learning enjoyable, it neglects the requirements of the National Curriculum. The curriculum is not planned carefully enough and many staff are inexperienced in assessing the standards attained by pupils. Expectations are not high enough and pupils do not make sufficient progress.

Curriculum when judged a good school (July 2010)

The curriculum combines the full range of National Curriculum requirements with the flexibility and imagination needed to meet individual needs and different learning styles. Pupils are taught in ability groups in mathematics, which they find most helpful. The most able can work at a higher level with older pupils. A focus on raising numeracy and literacy levels across the curriculum is proving effective. Pupils are encouraged to apply learning and skills from one area of their learning to another. There is well-targeted support for those with specific learning needs and disabilities.

485. Whatever the type of school, there is now a strong body of evidence, not least from Ofsted monitoring reports, that the most effective expertise for improving teaching and learning often comes from successful practitioners – leaders, teachers and other staff – in partner schools. Where there is an executive or partner headteacher, drawn from a high-performing school, she or he can tap into a range of other expertise in the school. This not only helps to turn around the inadequate school but has the reciprocal benefit of broadening the experience and capacity of key staff in the supporting school, as this example shows:

The executive headteacher stepped in and stabilised the school very quickly, particularly addressing very poor behaviour. By the time of the first monitoring visit, students were demanding a better deal in the classroom. Senior leaders began to visit classrooms and see all teachers each day. This gave senior managers a clear picture of the state of teaching, and the students saw that they were working hard for them. Concerns about the quality of teaching of a number of teachers were identified. These were tackled relatively quickly but systematically. The executive headteacher brought in a number of colleagues from her school that gave a critical mass to the senior team, focused on change.

A new headteacher then took up post a year after the school went into special measures. Children were the main focus, and teaching and learning the core responsibility of all. The school was relentless in the pursuit of effective teaching and learning.

486. In many primary schools also, associating or informally federating the school causing concern with a high-capacity partner or support school provides a direct source of expertise and a model of good practice. Primary schools have also benefited from the technical contribution of local authority lead teachers or teaching and learning consultants and other specialist support. Both primary and secondary schools have used advanced skills teachers where those with the required specialist expertise were available. School improvement partners have also been valued in some cases but can be too close to the school to provide the main lever for improvement. If they do not undertake classroom observation, the effectiveness of school improvement partners in steering schools away from inadequacy can be too constrained.

Effective governance

487. Governors should be in the best position to monitor the health and performance of their school. They have access to the school; contact with parents and pupils; statutory powers over the budget, appointments and a range of other functions; access to training; and professional advisers in the form of the local authority and its school improvement partners, whose function is to challenge as well as support the school. Schools that require special measures do not reflect well on their governance, nor does the governing body recognise the school's inadequacy and take action to ensure that the problems are tackled. Ofsted does not underestimate the challenge of being a governor in a school where the professional leadership may not be coping well and may be disguising the fact. In the large majority of secondary and primary schools that emerged from special measures in 2009/10, the headteacher had changed since the earlier inspection, and so in the majority had the chair of governors.⁷⁴

488. Powers to replace an ineffective governing body by an interim executive board have been used in the case of nearly half the secondary schools and around a third of the primary schools that came out of special measures in 2009/10.⁷⁵ In other cases, local authorities have strengthened governing bodies by nominating additional members with appropriate expertise. Interim executive boards can provide a model for good governance when the governing body is re-established. This example is from Hylton Red House Primary School:

Members of the interim executive board and of the new governing body are rigorous in their monitoring of the school and the challenge they provide for the headteacher. They bring considerable expertise as well as determination to the service of the school. They have accepted their responsibilities fully and have acted with exceptional resolution in dealing with long term staffing issues. They ensure that safeguarding procedures are well met and fully implemented by staff.

⁷⁴ This is based on a detailed analysis of a sample of half the secondary schools and one third of the primary schools that came out of special measures this year.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Schools causing concern – the journey from failure to success

489. A similar picture was evident at Arthur Dye Primary School, Gloucestershire, where the interim executive board 'dealt rigorously with any barriers to learning such as staff absences and pupils' behaviour. The members of the board engage extremely effectively with parents, pupils, staff and the local community. Their exceptional strategic skills are illustrated very well through their insightful plans for a new governing body.' To achieve rapid improvement, the efforts of all parties need to be cohesive and aligned well, as demonstrated in Henry Fawcett Primary School, which emerged swiftly from special measures in just over eight months when partnered by another school.

The school's leaders and members of the interim executive board have achieved a great deal in a short space of time. Their determination to improve outcomes for the pupils is strong. It is backed up by a perceptive analysis of what needs to be done next and a clear understanding of the main priorities. The impressive impact of the partnership working between the school's leaders, the interim executive board, staff of both schools in the federation and the local authority demonstrates clearly how much can be achieved when all work towards the same end. Strong teamwork is a feature across the school. Middle leaders have had a good impact on improving teaching and learning and year and phase teams work well together.

490. Interim executive boards need not be large.⁷⁶ One example comprised only three members. They all had experience of some type in education or educational administration. Membership was kept small for ease of communication and to facilitate speedy action. They invested a good deal of time in the school, meeting at least once a week over the first few months, mainly in the school but sometimes by telephone.

491. The board had a clear strategy for moving forward. Its main function was to deal with the pressing personnel and financial matters, in close liaison with the local authority, so freeing the school's leaders to get on with improving teaching and learning. There was a clear separation between the personnel matters and the acting headteacher's responsibilities. The interim executive board and the headteacher worked together to begin to rebuild trust with the parent group. But an interim executive board should have a limited lifespan. In the case above, as soon as it became clear that the personnel issues were being resolved and a strategy for repaying the deficit was agreed, the interim executive board began to look to widen its membership and draw up a strategy for a return to a full governing body.

The pace and levers of improvement

492. When a school is judged to require special measures, it is often an unwelcome shock to the school and its parents. Whereas some schools see the judgement as the basis for a fresh start, many others are reluctant to accept the judgement. They cannot accept that they are not providing an adequate education and are reluctant to start on the journey of improvement, at least until they have received the report or, in some cases, their first monitoring visit many months later. Meanwhile, the local authority is required to produce a statement of action which sets out what it will do to improve the school.

Many schools do not start their improvement arrangements quickly enough. They wait until the first monitoring visit and so three to six months are lost.

⁷⁶ The statutory requirement is for a minimum of two members.

Local authorities

493. Local authorities are responsible for producing statements of action within 10 days of the inspection report being published. These plans must be submitted to Ofsted for approval. HMI scrutinise all the statements. In 2009/10, only 287 of the 476 (60%) scrutinised were fit for purpose.⁷⁷ The rest required improvement in order to meet requirements by the time of the first monitoring visit. The quality of the plan reflects the coherence of the local strategy for turning the school around but is not necessarily a guarantee of its impact. The best plans are written in discussion with the school. It is recognised, too, that some authorities broker effective provision for intervention and support despite their plans not being compliant or of a high standard. This was the case, for example, in one secondary school. At the first monitoring visit, the inspector recorded:

The high school has received good support from the local authority. The amendments required to improve the local authority's statement of action have been made. The plan is clear and focused, with a challenging time scale. Decisive action was taken in strengthening the senior leadership team early in the process as well as in providing a wide range of appropriate consultancy support for departments and an interim executive board.

494. The contribution of the school improvement partners is very variable. In some cases inspectors report that the school improvement partner's contribution has been very supportive of the school. However, there is some concern about their effectiveness in alerting the local authority and governors to incipient weaknesses before the school goes into a category and, unless they are capable practising headteachers, the effectiveness of their contribution to school improvement in schools facing serious challenges.

School improvement seminars

495. Ofsted takes the initiative in energising the improvement process by inviting the headteacher, chair of governors and a local authority representative for the school causing concern to a school improvement seminar. It explains how Ofsted monitors and reports on a school's progress, illustrating the sort of evidence of improvement expected at each visit. Monitoring of schools in special measures on the areas for improvement, specified in the inspection report, continue at a frequency of up to three visits a year until special measures are no longer required. Schools having a notice to improve are also monitored. The seminars are important in helping those schools that are in denial about their shortcomings to face the task ahead and take the necessary steps to move forward. Often they must come to terms with the tough decisions that may be needed if the school is to progress. Almost all the schools invited take up the invitation to a seminar. The participants comment that the most valuable parts of the seminars are the help they provide in coming to terms with the issues and the opportunity to discuss with HMI the agenda for their own schools.

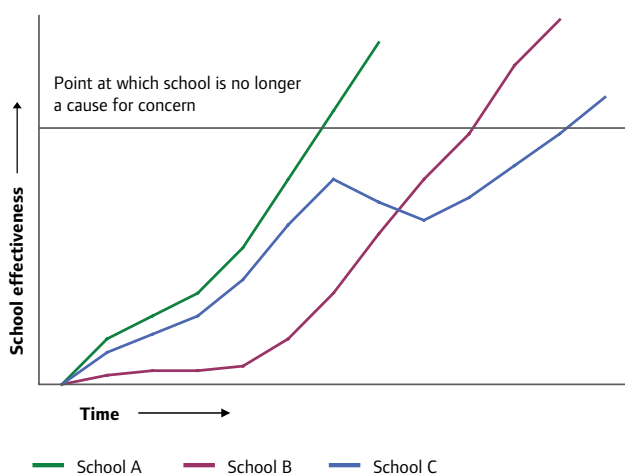
The pace of change

496. We have seen that some schools get to grips with the recommendations much more quickly than others. Schematic examples are shown in Figure 5. School A makes satisfactory progress from the time of the inspection and even better progress after the first monitoring visit. This is the type of trajectory of a school that emerges from special measures in around a year.

⁷⁷ One statement of action is currently being evaluated.

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Figure 89 Illustrative improvement trajectories of three schools in special measures



497. School B takes an unduly long time to engage effectively with the need to improve, but responds to drastic measures, such as replacing the headteacher with an executive headteacher, after which the school makes accelerated progress. This presents the system with a serious challenge. In 2009/10, six of the 16 schools that emerged from special measures as good schools had made inadequate progress since their inspection at the time of the first monitoring visit. Of the 189 schools that received a first monitoring visit during 2009/10, 71 (38%) had made inadequate progress since being placed in special measures.

498. Many schools do not start their improvement arrangements quickly enough. They wait until the first monitoring visit and so three to six months are lost. The local authority and governors need to deal with weaknesses in leadership and management immediately. A critical, and proven, form of leadership support is to identify a highly effective interim or executive headteacher for the school and create the conditions in which she or he can work.

499. School C shows considerable fragility. It progresses in a satisfactory way for a time before staff changes or other turbulence have an effect and the rate of improvement slows. When the situation is resolved, the school continues to improve, but has lost a lot of time. This type of pattern lends strength to the notion of federation, with a successful school offering a solution.

500. Ofsted supports schools to work in the context of professional expectations about quality that are set out in the inspection frameworks. These are now as central to schools' evaluation and development as they are to the conduct of inspections.

Monitoring by inspectors

501. Ofsted's work in monitoring up to 40% of schools judged satisfactory at their last inspection provides schools and their appropriate authorities with early warning of areas of concern, particularly if they are slow to act on the recommendations of the previous inspection. There can be little excuse for not acting on the diagnosis provided by this monitoring, yet some schools appear not to, with the inevitable consequence.

502. The monitoring of schools having notices to improve or requiring special measures acts at several levels to fuel improvement. The school improvement seminars set the scene and help schools and local authorities to plan for improvement. The first monitoring visit may find impressive progress, disarray or something in between. Monitoring inspectors do what they can, on the first and subsequent visits, to add value to the process wherever the opportunity arises. Examples, reflected in the experience of inspectors and endorsed through the comments from headteachers, governors and local authority staff, include the following:

- ✘ Inspectors give a very clear steer that the school must tackle the most significant weaknesses and not be distracted by other issues. This can be critical in ensuring that the senior leadership team remains focused on the main weaknesses.
- ✘ They ensure that staff who are key to the improvement agenda are given support and endorsement of their work.
- ✘ Feeding back judgements and having continuing conversations about improvement at all levels make a significant difference and are the principal ways inspectors help schools get better faster. Time spent with key staff is crucial to developing their understanding and empowering them to move forward boldly, for example by eliminating weaknesses in teaching, tackling incompetency head on and instilling a sense of real urgency.

- ✘ Bringing good practice elsewhere to the attention of the school.

503. Inspectors have appropriate freedom to use their professional judgement in steering the weakest schools to improvement and need to understand the distinct nature of school monitoring visits and the difference between section 8 and section 5 inspections. It is desirable to maintain a flexible approach to the timing of visits within the overall tariff of inspector days for each school.

504. A small-scale survey of headteachers of schools removed from special measures in 2006/07, carried out by Ofsted for development purposes, found that headteachers considered monitoring visits to have had a major impact because they helped the school to focus on identified areas; they kept the school on track, imbued rapid pace and gave a strong steer for improvement. One headteacher reported that the visits ‘go right to the heart of the issues for children’. Around three quarters of the headteachers reported that their schools would not have made the same progress at the same rate without the monitoring visits; about one in six responded that they would have made the same progress but not at the same rate. The monitoring visits unequivocally help drive improvement.

Sustaining effectiveness

505. ‘Prevention is better than cure’ applies no less to the potential ills of schools as to other walks of life. Ofsted’s tracking of the quality and standards of schools for over 15 years provides some insight into the degree to which schools at risk can be identified before they become inadequate. Under the arrangements of the new inspection framework Ofsted uses data about pupils’ achievement and attendance, qualifying complaints and other important local information such as warning notices issued by the local authority, to assess whether a school which has previously been judged outstanding or good has deteriorated since its last inspection. Where performance and quality are assessed as secure the inspection is deferred. Conversely, schools previously judged to be satisfactory are assessed against similar criteria to determine whether or not they should receive a monitoring visit. In this way performance indicators and other information which suggest that a school may be underachieving can be triggers for early inspection.

Early warning

506. Most schools in categories of concern were no better than satisfactory overall when they were inspected previously. Ofsted undertakes a monitoring inspection of up to 40% of satisfactory schools in the interval before they are next inspected. The letters which report the findings of these visits to schools provide welcome and informative assessments of progress since the previous inspection. In effect they provide the school’s management with an expert consultancy report. It is too early to analyse the impact this monitoring has on their subsequent inspections but judgements made in monitoring visits to schools judged to be satisfactory show that the majority of these schools are making satisfactory progress in tackling the areas for improvement. Where they are not, it is likely to be for one of the following reasons:

- ✘ complacent or ineffective leadership that regards ‘satisfactory’ progress since the inspection as good enough when there are still clear weaknesses
- ✘ complacent or ineffective governance that is not holding the school sufficiently to account
- ✘ a local authority that is unable or unwilling to challenge a coasting school and take action if necessary
- ✘ unpredictable and disruptive events at the school, such as the illness or the departure of key staff.

Scenarios that subvert sustainability

507. Inspectors have identified a number of factors that may cause previously effective schools to slip into a category of concern:

- ✘ staffing discontinuities: for example, difficulty in appointing good staff in some more challenging or geographically remote areas; change of headteacher or key staff; hastily made appointments that are not right for the school
- ✘ leadership and management: the dangers of becoming introspective and complacent
- ✘ initiative overload: lack of focus and direction; staff and leaders feeling under pressure
- ✘ inattention to decline in the standards achieved by pupils’, their behaviour and attendance

Schools causing concern – the journey from failure to success

✘ poor systems for monitoring and developing teaching and assessing pupils' progress.

508. Local authorities have powers to issue warning notices but use them very infrequently, possibly not wanting to damage their close relationship with schools. By the time warning notices are used, the situation may be irretrievable and it is too late to prevent the school going into a category of concern.

School partnerships

509. In the case of primary schools especially, creating partnerships of schools has the potential to provide the capacity to sustain individual schools in challenging times, such as during the loss of key teachers. This capacity has been illustrated by examples of national support and federated schools working successfully with schools causing concern, as well as in partnerships where there are fewer differences between the schools. The following case studies illustrate this. The first is an extract from an inspection report; the second is the reflection of an HMI who monitored a primary school.

The recent and highly successful federation with another local primary school is evidence of the determination of leaders to secure the future success of the school. As a result, morale is high and belief in the school's future runs through all levels of staff.

Bridgerule Church of England Primary School, Devon

It is absolutely clear that Henry Fawcett School would not have made the progress it did without the support and drive from Hillmead. I would not say that this is the solution for all schools that are struggling, but in this case the federation arrangements were a powerful force for change. It is mainly because the people involved had the right attitude to the federation and put pupils, not individual schools, at the heart of it. There was never any sense of imposition on the one hand or of resistance on the other. Hillmead invested a great deal in the partnership and stood to lose out if things were not carefully managed. Seconding a number of experienced and successful teachers to Henry Fawcett left Hillmead in a potentially vulnerable position. However, the executive headteacher made it clear to Hillmead's staff that they would also benefit from the arrangement as he saw it as a development opportunity for them and part of succession planning. As the federation became more firmly established, some Henry Fawcett staff began to share their expertise with Hillmead staff and also across the local authority and this was a great boost to their confidence and self-esteem.

Henry Fawcett Primary School

Lessons learned

510. An effective school system must have means of assuring high levels of quality of provision in its schools. This inevitably raises the tension between central monitoring and control and local autonomy. A systemic school improvement strategy has four components: setting the standard, which is done through inspection frameworks and local and national targets; avoiding any school becoming inadequate, which depends on effective monitoring and accountability; quick turnaround of any school that becomes inadequate; and sustaining good and outstanding practice.

511. At present, local arrangements for monitoring and intervening in schools are not consistent in their quality. School improvement partners are not always sufficiently forensic and challenging, nor do they necessarily see teaching and learning in action. Ofsted’s approach to risk assessment, which underpins its proportionate inspection arrangements, indicates how performance data can be used to inform an early warning system. Schools are at greatest risk when their leadership is interrupted or becomes unable to meet the demands, responsibilities and expectations of the role. The change or absence of a headteacher has the potential to trigger a short monitoring inspection.

512. There is a strong case for partnering an existing, highly effective headteacher with any school that goes into special measures. If the school concerned has had a recent change of headship, an executive headteacher, for example, could play a coaching and mentoring role to the new headteacher. If the headteacher is absent or ineffective, then the executive headteacher and partner school should be contracted to lead the school out of the category of concern. There is now a cadre of trained and experienced headteachers willing and able to step into this role.⁷⁸

513. The governance of a school that goes into special measures is often ineffective. The appointment of interim executive boards or strengthening of governing bodies is another essential step. Speed is the essence in all the measures suggested here.

514. Ofsted is currently reviewing its own role. The high proportion of schools in special measures that have made little or no real progress by the time of inspectors’ first monitoring visit suggests that the initiative for improvement may need to be started at an earlier stage. There may be advantage in the first monitoring visit being much sooner and perhaps subsuming the school improvement seminar, serving to help the school (and the local authority) set its course and move forward at an early stage. Inspectors can do this with integrity, independence and impartiality.



⁷⁸ National leaders of education are identified, trained and accredited by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services. Each has to be headteacher of a school judged good or outstanding by Ofsted. Further information on eligibility criteria can be found at www.nationalcollege.org.uk.

Key themes

Vocational education and training for young people



Introduction

515. Ensuring that young people have access to high quality vocational education and training is an objective as important to the new Government as it was to the last. Skills development is central to the growth and rebalancing of the nation's economy. Yet there are concerns that vocational qualifications can be over-complex and that vocational education in this country is not afforded the status it deserves. Furthermore, recently published comparative analysis by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates that our system of vocational training for young people is not performing as well as that of some of our economic competitors.⁷⁹

516. In a time of financial constraint, cost-effective solutions are required that will raise participation and ensure better outcomes which will see more young people successfully making the transition to the world of work. New ways must be found to support and give direction to those young people who become disengaged. Progression routes to further training and higher skills development need clarifying and priority should be given to commissioning provision that is responsive to a rapidly changing labour market.

517. The purpose of this section is to identify the key characteristics of outstanding vocational education as well as the challenges that must be tackled, both now and as the system evolves, in response to the Government's developing policy objectives. These will be informed by the major independent review of vocational learning for young people currently underway.⁸⁰

The challenge

518. Vocational education is not just an essential building block for economic recovery; the quality of vocational provision offered today has an immediate impact on the future prospects of young people. The sober reality is that in the period June to August 2010 177,000 young people aged 16 to 17 and 724,000 young people aged 18 to 24 were unemployed.⁸¹ Not only is it now more difficult for young people to get a job, but the number of low-skilled jobs has reduced faster than opportunities for higher-skilled employment have expanded.

⁷⁹ *Education at a glance 2010: OECD indicators* (ISBN: 9789264055988), OECD, 2010; and *OECD reviews of vocational education and training – Learning for jobs* (ISBN: 9789264087460), OECD, 2010.

⁸⁰ In September 2010 Professor Alison Wolf was invited by the Coalition Government to conduct an independent review into vocational education for 14–19-year-olds.

⁸¹ Statistical Bulletin: Labour market statistics – October 2010, Office for National Statistics.

519. The minimum standard of attainment required to compete in the current labour market is generally regarded as level 2. This is broadly equivalent to five grade A* to C GCSEs including functional English and mathematics or a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or Diploma at level 2. As the number of jobs requiring still higher levels of qualification increases, this will place further demands on providers of education and training to ensure that more young people gain level 3 qualifications, broadly equivalent to A level. There will also be a major challenge to ensure that young people with attainment below level 1 (broadly, five GCSE passes above grade G) have meaningful, useful education or training opportunities in the future. Raising the age for participation will further intensify this challenge.

520. The latest data on the standards achieved by young people aged 19 show that 78.7% reached level 2 in 2008/09 and 51.4% reached level 3. This represents a picture of steady improvement since 2004.⁸² It is also encouraging that the percentage of 16–18-year-olds staying on in education or work-based learning increased from 80% in 2008 to 83% in 2009. However, the proportion of young people aged 16–18 not in education, employment or training has fallen very little over the past decade, principally because the employment rate has fallen for this group, and at the end of 2009 stood at 9.2%. It is also the case that participation in education and training falls quite sharply between the ages of 16 and 18: 95% of young people aged 16 are in education or work-based learning compared with 65% of young people aged 18.⁸³ Around a fifth of 19-year-olds are now starting adult life without the level of skills and qualifications that is generally regarded as the platform for success.

521. Although the number of people overall starting apprenticeships rose in 2008/09, the number of young people choosing this option actually fell slightly. The number of 16–18-year-olds starting apprenticeships dropped by 7.5% in 2008/09 to 99,000. However, during the same period success rates for young people on apprenticeship programmes increased from 63% to 70%.⁸⁴

522. There is a strong relationship between the range and quality of curriculum options in a local area and the level of young people's participation. In areas where the number of young people in education is declining, this is often because they are offered a narrow and uninspiring range of provision. For young people who are already disengaged or on the verge of disengagement, highly flexible approaches to the curriculum are often a key factor in re-engaging them or enabling them to continue in education. Local authorities that have reduced the number of young people not in education, employment or training have worked with schools, colleges and other providers to introduce courses, programmes, qualifications and teaching approaches that engage the young people and give them a sense of achievement.⁸⁵

Context

523. The last three years have seen considerable changes in the vocational education and training offered to young people over the age of 14. Schools and colleges are expected to work with partners to give young people access to a wider range of provision. The objectives of these 14 to 19 partnerships are to increase success rates, improve participation in post-16 learning and support transition to employment by offering a curriculum that meets the needs of young people. In order to do this, schools, colleges and other partners need to establish better progression routes and stronger connections with the world of work.

82 *Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people in England measured by using matched administrative data: attainment by age 19 in 2009 (provisional)*, Statistical First Release (SFR06/2010), Department for Education, 2010.

83 *Participation in education, training and employment by 16–18-year-olds in England*, Statistical First Release (SFR18/2010), Department for Education, 2010.

84 *Post-16 education & skills: learner participation, outcomes and level of highest qualification held*, Statistical First Release (DS/SFR7), The Data Service, September 2010.

85 *Reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training: what works and why (090236)*, Ofsted, 2010.

Vocational education and training for young people

524. The introduction of Diplomas, on which 36,000 young people in 2009/10 enrolled, has expanded the range of options available to those aged 14 to 19; the drive to increase apprenticeship places is creating more opportunities to develop relevant workplace skills; and the commitment to raising the participation age is placing an even stronger emphasis on ensuring that all young people learn through to the age of 18.⁸⁶ The education of young people aged 14 to 16 in colleges and work-based learning settings is also becoming an increasingly common feature of provision. Currently 31% of young people aged 16 to 18 are educated, either full-time or part-time, in general further education, tertiary or specialist colleges compared with 20% in maintained schools.⁸⁷

525. Although the numbers of inspections are relatively small, the inspections of provision for 14–16-year-olds in colleges and work-based learning carried out this year present a very positive view of this predominantly vocational provision. In the 55 colleges inspected this year that had provision for 14–16-year-olds, it was judged outstanding in seven of them and good in 32. No provision was inadequate. Provision in work-based learning was not judged quite as positively as it was in colleges, but nonetheless performance was secure. Out of 31 providers inspected, provision for 14–16-year-olds was outstanding in three, good in 14 and inadequate in one. Outcomes for young people were judged outstanding in six work-based learning providers, a high proportion. In both sectors, the provision for young people was judged more positively than provision overall.

526. In identifying the characteristics of good and outstanding vocational provision, this section examines how young people are guided to make the right choices to maximise their chances of success, the features that contribute to successful teaching and learning in vocational subjects, and the process that the most successful providers go through to identify the right vocational offer. It also highlights some of the shortfalls which too often lead to wasted potential.

Supporting young people into vocational learning

Information, advice and guidance

527. High-quality information, advice and guidance are required to help learners understand their future options and make the right choices. The range and complexity of courses, programmes and qualifications can be bewildering. Good-quality guidance enthuses and motivates learners, including those at risk of disengagement, and encourages participation.

528. Ofsted evidence from outstanding work-based learning, including apprenticeship providers, underlines the importance of both the clarity with which learning and assessment requirements are communicated and the expertise in industry of those providing the information and advice. The best providers focus on explaining in detail what is required in order to complete the programme or course and providing a clear overview of working in particular industries and related career paths.⁸⁸ Similarly, in the most effective consortia delivering Diplomas, clear and detailed protocols and plans enable all institutions to provide diploma-related advice and guidance which is coordinated and consistent across the consortium. This is often through an extensive programme of events that includes taster days and trade shows. These attract potential learners, allowing them to sample learning programmes, and enabling their parents or carers to understand more about the options available.⁸⁹

86 See Glossary for further information on Diplomas and apprenticeships.

87 *Participation in education, training and employment by 16–18-year-olds in England*, Statistical First Release (SFR18/2010), Department for Education, 2010.

88 *Learning from the best: examples of best practice from providers of apprenticeships in underperforming vocational areas* (090225), Ofsted, 2010; *Twelve outstanding providers of work-based learning* (100112), Ofsted, 2010.

89 *Diplomas: the second year* (090240), Ofsted, 2010.

529. The quality of information, advice and guidance for young people can be enhanced by well-established partnerships between schools and businesses. In a small sample of schools where Ofsted found excellent relationships with employers, business partners often gave talks to students about their companies and about recruitment. They also arranged mock selection procedures for young people, which included completing an application form, attending an interview and receiving detailed feedback. Some also acted as business mentors to young people with low motivation. These mentoring relationships were most successful when the business partners had a good understanding of the school's systems, maintained contact over a period of time, got to know the abilities, qualities and aspirations of the young people, and included parents in their discussions about their daughter's or son's options.

530. For young people most at risk of dropping out of education, the quality of information and guidance is even more critical. In those local authorities that have successfully reduced the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training, the Connexions service has played an important role. Vulnerable young people in these local authorities identified the importance of having a key person they can trust and talk to and, most importantly, who believes in them and sees their potential. This support is most effective when it is highly personalised and when the same key person remains with the young person throughout their education. Transition points, for example from secondary school to college, are the times at which these young people are most at risk of dropping out. Maintaining as much continuity as possible across these periods of transition is therefore critical.⁹⁰

531. Some very effective strategies to prevent young people disengaging from employment or training start early, when children are in primary school. Identifying those potentially vulnerable children at a young age and supporting their transition from primary school to secondary school can pay dividends in terms of preventing them from disengaging from education, training or employment in the future. Good quality information, advice and guidance can begin in the primary years too. For example, one effective local authority organised a series of talks in primary schools to raise the pupils' awareness of the world of work and options for the future, so that the pupils could see a clear purpose to their work in school. This led to more positive attitudes to learning and study, particularly from young people who were potentially more vulnerable.

532. However, the quality of information, advice and guidance is still too variable. For example, in around half the secondary schools visited as part of Ofsted's recent survey on the quality of information, advice and guidance, inspectors were concerned about the completeness and impartiality of the advice offered. In too many cases, young people are not always aware of their full range of options, nor do they understand the expectations and demands of different education, training and employment routes in enough detail. Weak practice is often characterised by the following:

- ✘ Staff do not always have sufficient knowledge to provide accurate information about career paths or to challenge stereotypical career or subject choices.
- ✘ Information is not always impartial. For example, in some secondary schools with sixth forms, guidance focuses on transfer to the sixth form and does not fully embrace the wider opportunities beyond the school.
- ✘ Guidance for sixth formers sometimes focuses solely on higher education and excludes other possibilities.⁹¹

90 *Reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training: what works and why* (090236), Ofsted, 2010.

91 *Moving through the system – information, advice and guidance* (080273), Ofsted, 2010.

Vocational education and training for young people

533. Similar challenges are apparent for advice and guidance on Diploma courses, with the added difficulty of ensuring consistent practice between consortium partners. As a result, not all students in schools within a consortium are aware of the different components of the Diploma or the progression routes available when they make their choices post-14. Inconsistent information across the schools also means that young people from different schools on the same Diploma courses receive different information, advice and guidance. This sometimes manifests itself in learners having unrealistic expectations about the content of courses, leading to disappointment and a loss of motivation once the course has started.⁹²

Recruitment and selection of learners

534. Having strong systems to recruit and select learners to the most appropriate vocational programmes has a positive impact on retention, progression and success rates. Outstanding providers of work-based learning frequently have considerable strengths in matching learners to the right programmes. This is often achieved through a combination of factors:

- ✘ ensuring that applicants are interviewed by staff with experience of working in the relevant vocational areas who can provide up-to-date information
- ✘ giving greater priority to recruiting learners on the basis of their interest and motivation, not solely on prior qualifications
- ✘ offering trial periods, work tasters or pre-entry training programmes (such as young apprenticeships and NVQ level 1) to enable potential learners to experience work in the particular area and to assess whether it is suitable for them, while also developing their self-confidence.⁹³

Warwickshire College had a well-planned approach to marketing and providing qualifications in construction that had a positive impact on improving overall and timely success rates. Learners were first attracted to the college at the age of 14 through local community school liaison events. They were encouraged to attend an introductory certificate in basic construction skills course as an industry taster. Those who showed an aptitude and desire to progress at the age of 16 were introduced to employers for work experience before they signed up for a full-time level 1 programme. Learners at level 1 benefited from achieving their apprenticeship key skills before progressing to level 2. This gave them more time to concentrate on their specific craft skills and knowledge when they became apprentices. Some advanced apprentices who had first come to the college when they were 14 spoke very warmly about their progression in learning skills over several years and the difference it had made to their lives.

535. Success on apprenticeship programmes is often greater when learners have progressed from link courses for 14–16-year-olds in schools. This underlines again the importance of a good curriculum and planning for progression in partnerships and across institutional boundaries. Similarly, progression from young apprenticeship programmes on to full apprenticeships within the same industry or company increases the chances of success, not least because the work experience improves young people's understanding of the industry and they become known by their future employers.⁹⁴

92 *Diplomas: the second year* (090240), Ofsted, 2010.

93 *Twelve outstanding providers of work-based learning* (100112), Ofsted, 2010.

94 *Learning from the best: examples of best practice from providers of apprenticeships in underperforming vocational areas* (090225), Ofsted, 2010.

536. Outstanding providers often give prominence to recruiting learners from groups traditionally under-represented in training. Routine collection and effective use of participation data greatly enhance providers' abilities to focus their recruitment strategies.⁹⁵ In contrast, recruitment to Diploma courses and apprenticeships still tends to reflect gender-stereotypical choices. For example, in a recent survey carried out by Ofsted, Diploma lines in engineering, information technology, and the built environment and construction often had fewer female learners than the industry averages for employees overall. In contrast, Diploma lines on hair and beauty, and society, health and development often had fewer male learners.⁹⁶

Induction of learners

537. Effective induction on vocational learning programmes boosts learners' confidence, gives them a sense of shared identity and purpose and allows them to understand the requirements of the course. Combined with good initial assessments, it also allows early targeting of additional support for learners where this might be necessary.

538. Initial assessments in apprenticeships are most effective when the results are shared with learners, training staff and employers at the earliest opportunity, and result in planning for training and support. The best initial assessments take note of relevant previous experience, qualifications and learning especially of key skills in literacy and numeracy. Some providers, for example in construction or the motor industry, now use manual dexterity and occupational aptitude testing to plan skills development.⁹⁷

JTL Training, a national construction provider, had a useful and informative website that provided information, advice and guidance to prospective learners. The online application process was clearly explained and included an initial assessment of literacy and numeracy, together with an assessment of aptitude. Data showed a close correlation between high scores for numeracy in the initial assessment and subsequent overall success rates. Learners who required additional support were identified early, informed by the online assessment, allowing effective support arrangements to be put in place. Success rates had improved since the process had been introduced. It also allowed for improved monitoring of applicants by gender and ethnicity. This helped in evaluating initiatives that were designed to encourage the participation of under-represented groups in construction.

539. Larger employers often extend inductions for apprenticeships over several weeks. For example, by offering induction in the workplace through a 'champion' for new starters, the champion helped to enthuse new learners about the way they would be trained and the benefits of training for future employment within the company. Smaller employers, who worked with providers to deliver their training, tended to have less-structured inductions but routinely involved another employee, often a previous apprentice, to act as a mentor who provided guidance about work and training. Similarly, successful work-based learning providers ensure that learners undergo rigorous induction processes and receive advice from specialist staff about opportunities for further learning and career progression.

Effective induction on vocational learning programmes boosts learners' confidence, gives them a sense of shared identity and purpose and allows them to understand the requirements of the course.

95 *Twelve outstanding providers of work-based learning* (100112), Ofsted, 2010.

96 *Diplomas: the second year* (090240), Ofsted, 2010.

97 *Learning from the best: examples of best practice from providers of apprenticeships in underperforming vocational areas* (090225), Ofsted, 2010.

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At Phones 4u Limited, a national mobile phone retailer, learning was planned effectively from the start of each apprentice's employment. Particularly good use was made of a five-day company induction. This provided a stimulating introduction to both the employer and the apprenticeship programme. Training completed during induction gave learners a good grounding for the work they undertook with managers and assessors on joining their stores. Induction included a key skills development day during which they learnt skills that were directly relevant to their work roles. For example, numeracy skills were developed while calculating mobile phone tariffs.

540. In weaker provision, employers are less involved in the recruitment and induction of learners or the initial assessment of their needs, for example in the early stages of learners' participation to plan individual training programmes or identify learners' aptitudes and the skills they need.⁹⁸

Teaching and learning in vocational education

541. The most important determinant of whether young people achieve and progress through vocational education is the quality of teaching and learning they receive. Inspections of colleges and work-based learning providers assess the quality of provision in vocational subject areas. These sector subject inspections show that vocational provision is mainly of good quality – 60% was judged good or outstanding overall. However, at 36% the high proportion of satisfactory vocational provision remains a concern. Furthermore, these figures belie considerable differences between subject areas. For example, the large majority of engineering and manufacturing provision inspected this year was good or outstanding, whereas less than half the business, administration and law provision was good or outstanding.

542. Inspection provides a very clear picture of what highly effective teaching and learning in a vocational context looks like. As a basis, the key aspects of good teaching must be in place, as in any learning environment. These include:

- ✘ the passion, enthusiasm and subject expertise of teachers and trainers, used well to inspire learners
- ✘ well-planned classes with dynamic and demanding activities that promote active and independent learning
- ✘ learning tasks differentiated to meet the varied needs, abilities and interests of learners, informed by good assessment
- ✘ regular and continuing checking of learners' progress by teaching staff, followed by feedback to learners
- ✘ routine opportunities for individuals and the whole group to review and reflect on learning and progress.

543. But excellent vocational education requires more than this. Vocational education is a form of learning that should ultimately prepare and inspire a young person to pursue a chosen career. It therefore requires the teacher or trainer to bring the worlds of work and learning together in a realistic and challenging way. It also requires a strong fusion of the practical and the theoretical aspects of a particular vocational subject. There are, therefore, elements of outstanding teaching and learning that are more prominent in vocational education. Again, these are evident from inspection and include:

- ✘ the clear application of learning to commercial, industrial, professional and work-related contexts
- ✘ a wide range of teaching methods which balance theoretical and practical learning, including practical tasks that motivate and engage learners
- ✘ planned and well-constructed opportunities to experience off-site visits, fieldwork, learning in the workplace and direct contact with employers, which complement and add to the learning
- ✘ planned opportunities for learners to practise and apply functional skills within the context of their vocational specialism

⁹⁸ *Good practice in involving employers in work-related education and training* (090227), Ofsted, 2010.

- ✘ encouragement to learners to think and work as practitioners
- ✘ good development of specialist/technical vocabulary and terminology
- ✘ the strong application of information and learning technology to realistic work-related challenges.

544. This section explores some of these characteristics in greater detail by focusing on three key elements of an effective vocational experience for young people: ensuring that young people achieve a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy; bringing the curriculum to life by providing practical contexts for work and relevant resources; and engaging employers.

Strong foundations in literacy and numeracy

545. The importance of learners developing strong foundations in literacy and numeracy as part of their vocational studies is critical to the successful achievement of qualifications and to their progression to further or higher education, directly into skilled employment, or further within their chosen career. Literacy and numeracy skills are currently tested in different ways by different qualifications. Those studying Diplomas are required to sit functional skills tests; those studying for apprenticeships or other vocational qualifications, historically, have taken key skills tests. But there are some common lessons in the weaknesses seen and what providers need to do to address them.

546. The teaching and coordination of functional skills within Diplomas have been highly problematic. In too many consortia, links between the functional skills taught in stand-alone lessons and the principal learning in the Diploma are insufficient. This leaves learners unclear about the relevance and application of functional skills. Furthermore, in too many consortia, the teaching of functional skills in isolation means they are not related to the vocational context, but simply focus on preparing young people to complete generic functional skills tests.⁹⁹

547. In Ofsted's recent survey on the implementation of Diplomas, only three of the 21 consortia visited showed good integration between the principal learning and functional skills. Where this worked well, learners were able to practise and develop their functional skills effectively within the context of the vocational subject area (their principal learning). Moreover, there was good communication and joint working between teachers responsible for functional skills and principal learning. This integration is easier to achieve when only one Diploma line is linked with the functional skills programme. It is much harder for teachers and trainers to teach discrete lessons in functional skills which attempt to incorporate tasks relevant to several Diploma lines. Keeping the learning specific and focused is important. The example illustrates how learners developed a range of communication skills effectively in an English lesson in support of the creative and media Diploma.

In the Stockport consortium, learners worked enthusiastically on tasks linked closely to the creative and media Diploma. The learners had previously made a sales pitch in the style of a popular television programme, preparing promotional T-shirts and publicity materials to advertise their plans for an event. The English teacher responsible for the functional skills was part of a panel of judges that evaluated the learners' proposals. The learners also analysed their own performance and agreed actions for improvements in discussion with the teachers/trainers. In the English lesson, the learners worked to improve their presentational skills and learned about selling techniques. The learners practised making a pitch to sell their T-shirts, worked in pairs to rehearse the pitch and commented on each other's performance. The learners reflected on their skills, coached each other and identified areas for improvement, using ideas cards provided by the teacher which helped their assessment. The learners improved their skills and knowledge and the teacher continually drew links with the type of work that learners would undertake in the future.

99 *Diplomas: the second year* (090240), Ofsted, 2010.

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548. Reflecting the experience of Diplomas, one of the main factors that has contributed to poor overall and timely success rates in apprenticeships in recent years has been the failure to get to grips with training for and assessing key skills. These are often planned to be completed once the NVQ has finished, or 'got out of the way' early in the programme, rather than being well-planned as a core element of the learning.

549. There are important lessons from some of the most successful providers of apprenticeships about what it takes to deliver key skills effectively. These providers ensure good, timely key skills training. They introduce these skills at induction and make them interesting and relevant to the areas of learning by placing the NVQ and key skills training together. This avoids unnecessary duplication. Learners on these apprenticeship programmes tend to be positive about their key skills training and, importantly, can see the benefits for their future education and employment. Several of the large employers delivering successful apprenticeship programmes subcontract the provision of key skills training to carefully chosen providers who work with the employers to ensure that the skills are taught in a relevant way.¹⁰⁰

550. A common feature of the most effective key skills teaching in apprenticeships is its vocational relevance. The experience of successful colleges shows that by establishing team teaching between vocational and key skills staff, or transferring responsibility for teaching key skills to vocational staff, they successfully altered the views of learners about key skills and improved their pass rates. The following example illustrates how this was made to work in practice.

Bromley College of Further and Higher Education had integrated key skills particularly well into motor vehicle theory training. The learners understood, appreciated and enjoyed the contextualisation. They also understood the importance of key skills both in achieving their apprenticeship frameworks and in their working lives. Very good use was made of a video showing complex work on car engine cylinder heads. Staff checked various free video-hosting websites to find video clips that learners enjoyed seeing and built lesson plans around them.

The example seen involved the learners in measuring a real cylinder head in their theory room, replicating instructions shown on an American video and applying their findings to their own situations. They converted American imperial measurements to metric and checked calculations using feeler gauges. The learners were confident in performing the tasks and gave a commentary as they did so in front of their class. One of the learners said: 'I could never have stood up and made those kinds of intricate measurements in front of people a year ago but I know what I am doing and enjoy showing that I'm getting it right.'

551. The common underlying factor is the need to ensure that the teaching of literacy and numeracy (whether through functional skills or key skills) is embedded within the broader vocational subject and curriculum, so young people see the relevance of these skills to what they are studying and want to learn and achieve them. Those providers that have managed to achieve this have often seen the biggest increases in their overall success rates and, as a result, have improved learners' chances of successful progression.

Practical contexts for work and use of industry-quality resources

552. Young people are motivated by practical and active learning, the opportunities to apply their learning to work-related contexts or at work, and by the use of industry-quality resources.

¹⁰⁰ *Learning from the best: examples of best practice from providers of apprenticeships in underperforming vocational areas* (090225), Ofsted, 2010.

553. Diplomas are made up of different elements which combine theoretical study with practical learning. The largest element is principal learning, which covers the specialist vocational subject content such as creative and media studies or society, health and development. Ofsted's evidence shows that, whilst the qualification as a whole is proving complex and challenging for providers and learners, principal learning is an early success story. Young people's enthusiasm and motivation for this strongly vocational element of their studies is often high. They respond well to opportunities for active and practical learning and their enthusiasm tends to be greater in lessons where they are given the opportunity to use and show their competence with industry-standard resources. In general, the principal learning on a range of Diploma lines is staffed well by teachers with good subject knowledge and appropriate experience of the vocational area. However, teachers' industrial or commercial experience is not always up to date.¹⁰¹

554. In the best Diploma lessons, teaching staff use high-quality specialist equipment and facilities effectively and these resources are supplemented by off-site visits to employers' premises and fieldwork. The following example illustrates well-planned independent learning which took place in a high-technology environment.

Schools in the Wirral consortium used the 'F1 in schools challenge' and a well-equipped city learning centre to support the teaching of how to apply manufacturing techniques.¹⁰² High-quality training materials simulated a complete manufacturing process using the latest computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing technology. Individual timetables representing a production plan ensured that each learner had the opportunity to supervise and operate the equipment.

There are important lessons from some of the most successful providers of apprenticeships about what it takes to deliver key skills effectively. These providers ensure good, timely key skills training. They introduce these skills at induction and make them interesting and relevant to the areas of learning.

555. The experience of Diplomas demonstrates just how critical it is to relate vocational learning directly to the world of work through practical contexts and use of good-quality resources. Although this was generally a strength, where it did not happen consistently it had a detrimental effect on the quality of teaching and young people's understanding of and engagement with the subject. Weaker lessons were also characterised by a narrow range of teaching strategies, dominated by teachers talking and learners writing. Learners on such courses, far from being inspired and motivated, expressed their disappointment with the Diploma, had low levels of motivation, were bored by too much theory and too little practice and failed to understand how their learning related to the world of work.

101 *Diplomas: the second year* (090240), Ofsted, 2010.

102 'F1 in schools' challenges teams of students from the ages of nine to 19 to use computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing to collaborate on designing, making and testing gas-powered Formula 1 cars made of balsa wood and then racing them in miniature. For further information, see: www.f1inschools.co.uk.

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556. Colleges have a long history of offering successful vocational learning. The features of effective teaching on National Diplomas, and other vocational programmes reinforce the important interface between practical and theoretical learning. In the best lessons, teachers use their industry expertise to set activities and assignments that are vocationally relevant, link well to students' work placements, and enable students to make good links between the theory they have been taught and their practical experience. For example, in one college students studying hospitality were set an assignment to produce a themed restaurant evening. The brief was detailed and well explained, and required learners to consider budgetary control and sustainability, the latter being emphasised through the use of local produce to reduce the carbon footprint of menus.

557. In some of the best examples of vocational provision in colleges, the world of work is brought dramatically and immediately to life by providing young people with direct experience of working in a commercial enterprise in their chosen field, established as part of the college. This is a feature, for example, of outstanding provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy, in which commercially run salons on college premises are frequently at the heart of developing young people's skills. These are not just a vehicle to help learners develop their technical skills, but also provide valuable experience in how to care for customers and how to grow and manage a commercial enterprise.¹⁰³

558. The best apprenticeship providers are set apart by their ability to link practical and theory training at work to the requirements of the NVQ, key skills and technical certificates. This brings coherence to the programme and takes full advantage of experience that learners have gained in the workplace.

Engineering apprentices at British Gas follow a carefully planned programme that consists of blocks of time within an academy followed by 'field experience weeks'. These involve working alongside qualified engineers and undertaking the same sort of activities as those completed in the academy. This model is replicated for each training module that an apprentice completes. It is designed to enable apprentices to gain the required knowledge, understanding and practical skills within the academy before developing these skills outside by working alongside qualified engineers. Apprentices are extremely well supported and make rapid progress.

559. Work-based learning providers in which apprenticeship success rates are high put a lot of effort into recruiting trainers who are skilled and experienced with strong industrial backgrounds. This helps to ensure their credibility with learners and employers. They also provide practical and theory training in teams to make the best use of specialist practical skills and the knowledge of staff, and they develop materials at a suitable level for learners so that they are used outside taught sessions in the workplace.¹⁰⁴

560. Outstanding providers enhance work-based learning with activities that enrich the learning experience. Frequently, as well as enabling learners to gain the industry relevant qualifications valued by employers, additional activities help learners develop the full set of skills needed to establish a career. There are often opportunities to experience the 'top end' of their chosen industries: for example, in hospitality, a five star hotel; a Grand Prix race in automotive engineering; or a flagship store in retail.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ *Identifying good practice: a survey of college provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy* (070247), Ofsted, 2009.

¹⁰⁴ *Learning from the best: examples of best practice from providers or apprenticeships in underperforming vocational areas* (090225), Ofsted, 2010.

¹⁰⁵ *Twelve outstanding providers of work-based learning* (100112), Ofsted, 2010.

Engagement of employers in teaching and learning

561. Six years ago, Ofsted reviewed the implementation of the first vocational GCSE lines of learning. At that stage, one of the key findings was that links between schools and business were very underdeveloped and this had a detrimental effect on young people's vocational learning.¹⁰⁶ Today, partnerships between businesses and schools are becoming more established and can have a direct and positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Ofsted has found that in the strongest examples of school and business partnerships:

- ✘ the focus that businesses place on enterprise, problem-solving and investigation encourages pupils to become self-reliant and develop work-related skills
- ✘ when managed well, the extended work placements offered by businesses help to re-engage disaffected students and increase the number continuing into post-16 education, employment or training
- ✘ business partnerships can contribute to improvements in examination pass rates and the proportion of students gaining higher grades, particularly in business studies, information and communication technology, design and technology, and modern foreign languages.

562. Similarly, in the schools currently offering Diplomas, there is clear evidence that employers enhance learning through providing specific learning activities, as well as hosting visits to their premises, offering work experience and visiting providers to meet learners. In the best examples, learners work on challenging, industry-led tasks and projects.¹⁰⁷

In the Wirral consortium, an engineering Diploma unit on applying maintenance techniques was taught through six one-day visits to the training centre of a large local employer. Experienced technical staff provided learners with real maintenance tasks on bicycles, along with a range of other, carefully prepared activities. The activities and training materials were prepared by the technical staff and trainers working together. By working together, the staff ensured that the materials and activities were appropriate to the ages of the learners and their levels of study. As an added incentive, the learner producing the best work was allowed to keep the bicycle on which she or he had worked.

563. For providers of apprenticeships, engaging employers successfully in both training and assessing learners has been a vital factor in improving success rates. This has traditionally been one of the more challenging aspects of work-based learning provision. Indeed, inspection reports have often cited lack of work-based assessment as the main cause of poor success rates in historically underperforming subject areas. The most successful providers work productively with employers to adapt assessment requirements to the particular industry circumstances.¹⁰⁸

Prospects College in South Essex facilitated the networking of their small construction employers through 'builders' breakfast' meetings. Construction staff were aware that these types of meetings were used successfully by builders' merchants to promote the sales of products. The breakfasts were well attended and used to tell employers about the training available and the part that they could play in it. In a time of recession, many small builders were taking any work available, often with the result that the range of assessment opportunities for their learners had narrowed. The breakfasts helped to create opportunities for learners with other employers who had work coming up with the right assessment opportunities. Typically, a learner spent a day or two with another employer when there was less work with his or her own employer.

¹⁰⁶ *Developing new vocational pathways: final report on the introduction of new GCSEs* (HMI 2051), Ofsted, 2004.

¹⁰⁷ *Diplomas: the second year* (090240), Ofsted, 2010.

¹⁰⁸ *Learning from the best: examples of best practice from providers or apprenticeships in underperforming vocational areas* (090225), Ofsted, 2010.

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564. The best work-based learning providers also work closely with employers to ensure that they feel part of the training process and contribute meaningfully to its planning and management at all stages. These providers ensure that learners experience current practices at work and during off-the-job training by keeping their staff updated and working closely with employers in developing learning materials.¹⁰⁹

The construction section of South Devon College had engaged its employers in improving training. Employer members of the college's 'Sector Advisory Group' came in on training days and observed teaching and learning in practice. Six employers had completed observations of theory and practical lessons in the last year. Using the college's system, they recorded their views on the context of the activity, the environment and equipment, and whether learners were being taught to current industry standards and developing skills relevant to industry needs and requirements. Employers had improved their understanding of the technical certificate, the training for which the college provided and then assessed. A typical comment from the employers who observed training was: 'The college is delivering training that matches the standards we expect to see in industry'.

565. The value of engaging employers in vocational education is clear. Ofsted's evidence provides an invaluable perspective for schools, colleges and providers of work-based learning on how best to build partnerships with employers to support vocational learning. The best partnerships occur where providers:

- ✘ recognise that they will usually have to take the lead in establishing productive working relationships with employers
- ✘ ensure that communication with employers is systematic, sustained and well documented
- ✘ share good practice routinely across departments and across vocational sectors within their organisations

- ✘ involve employers effectively in the initial assessment of learners and in their progress reviews, in evaluating courses, in designing and offering real work assignments, and in improving the quality of provision.¹¹⁰

Establishing a strong vocational offer

566. A flexible and broad curriculum is a hallmark of the schools, colleges and work-based learning providers which have been most successful in raising participation and achievement. Effective providers review the curriculum regularly and subject it to well-researched and planned changes, so that new courses are introduced to meet learners' changing needs and job opportunities available in local areas; there is a strong focus on the needs of potentially vulnerable learners, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities; and progression routes from foundation to advanced level are well planned.

567. Inspection evidence shows that curriculum planning is an aspect of provision which is a relative strength in secondary schools, colleges and providers of work-based learning. This year's evidence shows that, in around three quarters of the secondary schools, colleges and work-based learning providers inspected, the curriculum was good or outstanding at meeting the needs of learners.

568. Secondary schools, often working collaboratively with other providers, have made largely successful attempts to design and implement curricula that meet the needs of groups and individual students with different abilities and aptitudes. Successful strategies in the Key Stage 4 curriculum include providing a choice of vocationally based courses, such as BTEC courses, young apprenticeships and, increasingly, Diplomas, and designing foundation learning programmes to engage young people who struggle with an academic subject-based curriculum.

¹⁰⁹ *Twelve outstanding providers of work-based learning* (100112), Ofsted, 2010.

¹¹⁰ *Good practice in involving employers in work-related education and training* (090227), Ofsted, 2010.

Working with employers to develop the curriculum

569. Working with employers clearly increases the relevance and quality of the vocational offer for schools, colleges and work-based learning providers. This is an aspect of curriculum development that is really taking off in some of the most successful providers. Where it is most effective, it involves a deep understanding of conditions in local and regional labour markets, combined with strong relationships with individual employers to help shape the design and content of courses. The benefits for young people are clear. They have opportunities to gain skills in industries that are growing and in which employment prospects are good. This is described in the example below.¹¹¹

Zenos, a national provider of ICT training, identified a deficit in the numbers of 'job ready' young people in information technology (IT) and developed its academy and work-based learning provision, in conjunction with large employers, to provide programme-led advanced apprenticeships in IT and associated qualifications. One large IT company reported that the average age of its IT engineers was 55; this pattern is not unusual, and yet young people find it very difficult to secure employment within the industry. Most major IT companies prefer to recruit older, more experienced staff and few have set up basic training schemes to include young people. The work-based learning provider helped to change the perceptions of many IT employers about employing this age group. Employers' feedback indicated that qualified learners 'hit the ground running' when they came to take up their job roles. Large companies such as EDS and Fujitsu repeatedly returned to the provider to employ learners when they had completed their training.

570. There are also more unexpected benefits for the providers themselves. For example, a number of very successful work-based learning providers who developed bespoke vocational education for important niche employers found that it led to improved delivery and uptake of provision that already existed and expansion into related areas to meet a much wider set of employment needs, as illustrated below.¹¹²

A manufacturer of luxury leather goods noticed that its skilled and experienced staff were getting older and, at the same time, it was becoming more difficult to find suitably skilled new recruits. The company turned to Bridgewater College for help in training new staff in the specialist skills it required. Although the college offered courses in textiles to a small number of students, it had little experience of manufacturing leather goods. However, the employer recognised that the college had experience and skills in teaching, learning and assessment; in working with government funding; and in providing nationally recognised and accredited awards. The college, company and sector skills council worked successfully together to recruit suitable teaching staff and to develop a flourishing and successful apprenticeship training programme at the employer's premises. Since then, the college has also enhanced its provision for full-time students on textiles courses, increased recruitment to these courses and expanded provision into the laundry and dry-cleaning industry.

571. It is not just in work-based learning providers and colleges that collaboration with employers is enlivening the vocational curriculum. In schools where partnerships with business are well established, the impact can be considerable. For example, some schools are developing a more flexible approach to their curriculum by organising days when young people work on cross-curricular themes. Business partners make a unique contribution to these by creating briefs and tasks that are highly relevant to the world of work. The following example illustrates how a school and a local business worked effectively together.

111 *Twelve outstanding providers of work-based learning* (100112), Ofsted, 2010.

112 *Good practice in involving employers in work-related education and training* (090227), Ofsted, 2010.

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A partnership forged between a manufacturer of computers and Hugh Christie Technology College in Kent helped to enrich students' learning in a variety of ways. Students studying business and information, communication technology (ICT) courses were given opportunities to shadow employees of the business and undertake work experience. This gave them a valuable insight into the demands of the industry and helped them to improve their examination coursework. One student did so well that he was offered an apprenticeship by the business and is looking forward to a career as an ICT technician. In addition, the business gets involved in planning and delivering the school's regular cross-curricular days that aim to develop students' work-related skills and ability to learn independently. On one of these days, Year 8 students were challenged to design a robot to a precise specification. The activity improved students' teamwork and motivated them to use a range of subject skills to solve complex problems.

Developing vocational provision across a local area

572. Although it is critical, good curriculum planning within a single institution is not enough. Ensuring that young people have a good range of vocational options open to them, which support progress in learning and facilitate the transition into employment, requires more. Working in partnership at a strategic level is essential to ensure that, across a geographical area, the vocational offer meets the needs of young people. Few single institutions can hope to provide the full variety of different vocational subjects from foundation to advanced level. A much richer learning experience and many more options for young people can be offered through working across institutional boundaries and with employers.

573. The range of vocational education on offer for a young person will be determined to a great extent by where they live. Local authorities that have successfully reduced the number of young people not in education, employment or training take a strategic overview of the range of learning pathways available and how these are matched both to the needs and interests of young people and local labour market conditions. In these authorities, young people are regularly consulted and are closely involved in making decisions about the shape and content of programmes.¹¹³

574. These authorities and their partners together make exceptional use of data to identify particular localities in which there is a history of worklessness and non-participation in education. This analysis allows resources and initiatives to be targeted at specific 'hot-spots' and enables local targets for improvement to be set. These inform the work of multi-agency teams. Effective authorities also identify and track specific groups of young people at risk, for example those who do not attend school, who have been excluded or who have little understanding of the world of work from their families or their communities. This enables them to build up a detailed picture, over a number of years, of trends in participation.

575. This information is used to design and shape the range of qualifications and learning pathways offered. In those areas which have successfully reduced the number of young people not in education, employment or training, partners have worked together effectively to audit local curricular provision, fill gaps and reduce duplication. Yet even in these effective authorities, the poor range of post-16 vocational opportunities to meet the needs of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a major weakness. This is a systemic issue which must be addressed.

¹¹³ *Reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training: what works and why* (090236), Ofsted, 2010.

576. A number of large colleges have placed themselves at the heart of local partnerships to contribute to, develop and respond to local economic and employment priorities. Working with employers and other partners, these colleges are able to have a considerable impact on local regeneration. However, the opportunities for smaller providers to have this sort of reach or influence at present remains more limited.¹¹⁴ A strong example of a college taking the lead in strategies to develop local regeneration through its vocational provision is described below.

Newham College played a pivotal role in supporting its local borough's regeneration strategy. It focused on developing foundation and intermediate level skills for learners and employers. The college had developed some outstanding partnership work, notably with its local borough council, and with other local strategic and business groups. This ensured a consistent and coordinated approach to regeneration in the borough. In 1997, the college established a centre for innovation and partnerships. This centre was key in encouraging local entrepreneurship, support and training for employers and for employment. The college met the diverse learning and employment-related needs of its local area very successfully through open access and arrangements for flexible learning. Around 80% of its students were from the local area and 80% were adults taking a very wide range of short and long courses. College staff strongly supported and were wholly involved in achieving the college and borough's regeneration objectives.

577. Partnership is essential to a broad and balanced vocational curriculum that leads to positive outcomes for learners. Yet the evidence suggests that it can be difficult to achieve and by no means universally in place. Although it is generally judged to be good, partnership working differs in quality and impact between different providers. It was no better than satisfactory in 30% of work-based learning providers compared with 17% of secondary schools and 10% of colleges inspected this year. It remains rare for employers to instigate involvement in vocational learning, or to try to influence education and training provision, without being first approached by a college or work-based learning provider. Furthermore, even in local authorities which have been successful in reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training, Ofsted found that there was not enough involvement by employers to enable disengaged young people to develop a good understanding of the world of work and to challenge stereotypical views young people might hold about particular careers.

578. The experience of Diplomas, too, highlights some of the difficulties inherent in partnership working across a local area. In general, consortia have developed good strategic plans that set out a vision for young people in their area. But the essential mechanisms that translate this vision into good quality vocational learning are too often missing. Joint mechanisms for quality assurance and lesson observations, detailed sharing of information about young people's progress, and opportunities for staff to learn from each other and develop their practice together, form the glue that makes partnerships work. Too often these are not strong enough.

¹¹⁴ *Good practice in involving employers in work-related education and training* (090227), Ofsted, 2010.

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Conclusion

579. The vocational education and training sector is complex, reflecting the variety and range of needs of young people and employers. Providing a flexible and broad curriculum that is seen as relevant and found to be engaging by young people is an essential prerequisite for raising participation and achievement. Increasingly, young people's needs will be met most effectively by more than one provider of education and training; in addition the providers, typically schools, further education colleges, and work-based learning providers, will be unable to meet effectively all the needs of their learners in isolation. Planning and providing an effective curriculum no longer happens without collaboration and partnership.

580. But the need for strong partnerships goes beyond just planning a good vocational curriculum. Ofsted's evidence clearly shows that, in the vocational sector, effective information, advice and guidance, good recruitment and induction and high-quality teaching and learning all depend on bringing industry expertise and relevant workplace contexts for learning to the fore. The interface between employment, business and learning is a theme which runs throughout this section.

581. Young people are motivated and engaged by teaching which brings the practical and theoretical aspects of vocational learning together. The opportunity to apply learning in a realistic work environment, either through well-structured assignments or through employment, brings vocational learning to life. This also applies to teaching the key skills of literacy and numeracy. Historically, these have been isolated from work-related aspects of learning and have suffered as a result. Young people have been disengaged and failed to see why these skills are important or how they can be applied. The most successful providers have broken down this false distinction and, by integrating key skills provision fully within a vocational context, are gaining better engagement and higher achievement.

582. In a world in which the labour market and the economy are changing rapidly, there is a real premium for schools, colleges and work-based learning providers in maintaining the currency of their vocational offer. This means refreshing the curriculum, updating the industry expertise of staff and renewing the resources and opportunities on offer. Again, partnership working, particularly with employers, potentially provides the key to success.

Young people are motivated and engaged by teaching which brings the practical and theoretical aspects of vocational learning together.

Key themes

Children's social care – a system under pressure



583. Working together to protect children from avoidable harm and maltreatment is one of the most important and difficult responsibilities that public agencies carry. It is not, of course, solely the responsibility of public agencies. Voluntary, independent sector and community-based organisations play a very significant role in many areas, although Ofsted's first annual survey of third sector organisations shows that local authorities vary greatly in the effectiveness with which they draw on this contribution.¹¹⁵ However, the very clear statutory responsibility for this work is placed on public agencies: local authorities, health agencies, the police, schools, probation services, housing commissioners and providers, and many others. Within that, the local authority has the unequivocal lead responsibility for safeguarding children in local areas.

584. The effectiveness, or lack of it, with which partnerships work together to protect children has continued to be subject to intense scrutiny and debate since the last Annual Report was published. Tragically, a series of high-profile cases have continued to focus attention on child protection. The children concerned have been subjected to treatment or, indeed, have treated others, in ways which many people find almost impossible to contemplate.

585. In June 2010, the Secretary of State for Education asked Professor Eileen Munro to conduct an independent, fundamental and wide-ranging review into the system of child protection. In his letter to Professor Munro, the Secretary of State, while paying tribute to the immense dedication and hard work of front-line professionals, said that 'the system of child protection in our country is not working as well as it should'.

586. It is, however, working much better in some places than in others. In this context of continuing public concern and debate, two things stand out from Ofsted's inspection evidence. The first is that the system of social care for children is under very considerable pressure. This pressure is felt more or less throughout the system and in every part of the country. The second is that there is very great variation in the effectiveness with which local authorities and local partnerships manage that pressure. Faced with very similar circumstances, some local authorities are able to deliver good or even outstanding services to safeguard children and young people in their area, and in particular to protect the most vulnerable. Other local authorities are failing to meet minimum standards, and are not at the moment protecting children adequately from avoidable harm and maltreatment.

587. The really important question is: what makes the difference? More precisely:

- ✘ What makes the difference between a local authority and partnership which is struggling with and at risk of being overwhelmed by demand, insufficient resources, workforce capacity and many other pressures; and a partnership which is leading, managing and responding in a way that enables staff, faced with many of the same pressures, to deliver high-quality services?
- ✘ Are the differences related to the scale of the pressures or to the size or nature of the local authority?
- ✘ Are there differences related to leadership, management and culture?
- ✘ What needs to be in place to support and enable outstanding practice?

¹¹⁵ *Safeguarding and looked after children: national third sector organisation survey 2010* (100126), Ofsted, 2010.

Children's social care – a system under pressure

588. Ofsted has a unique body of evidence to draw on in proposing answers to those questions. Since July 2009, Ofsted has conducted an unannounced inspection of front-line contact, referral and assessment arrangements in every local authority in England with children's services responsibilities. At the same time, Ofsted began a three-year programme of full inspections of safeguarding and services for looked after children in every local authority in England (see pages 113–117 in the children's social care section of this report). By the end of August 2010, 31 reports of these inspections had been published.¹¹⁶ Although a number of the inspections were scheduled following serious concerns raised by the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements, the contrasts, nevertheless, between the inadequate authorities and the good or outstanding ones are instructive.

589. Ofsted also draws on its evaluations of serious case reviews. Between April 2007 and March 2010, Ofsted evaluated over 360 reviews, and has published four reports on the lessons to be learned. The most recent of these was published in October 2010.¹¹⁷ Evidence can also be drawn from the national surveys of the views of social workers and third sector organisations on safeguarding services in their local area, which Ofsted published in July 2010. Over 4,100 social workers and over 1,600 third sector organisations responded to the surveys conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Ofsted.¹¹⁸

A system under pressure

590. Both Ofsted's evidence and that from external sources show that child protection services are under great pressure. The most obvious driver is the very steep rise in both demand and social care activity. Between March 2009 and March 2010, referrals to children's social care services increased by 11%. Over the same time period, the number of initial assessments undertaken increased by 12%, the number of core assessments by 17%, and the number of children subject to child protection plans by 4.7%.¹¹⁹ Local authorities also reported a marked increase in the complexity as well as the volume of referrals. The number of cases going to court has also increased steeply. Cafcass statistics show a 33.7% increase in the number of public law care cases received in 2009/10 compared with 2008/09. The rise appears to have slowed, but the number of cases in the first quarter of 2010/11 was still 1.7% higher than in the same quarter the previous year.¹²⁰

591. Partnerships should define and agree thresholds for referral to social care – the level of concern which would make such a referral appropriate. Nevertheless many referrals, once received, are not judged to require even an initial assessment; and most do not go on to receive a full or core assessment. Nationally, only 7% of referrals lead to a decision that a child protection plan is needed. A low rate of 'conversion' may be an indication that thresholds are unclear or not agreed. Unannounced inspections have found that where there is a lack of clarity among partner agencies in relation to the threshold for referrals to social work teams, this can lead to a high percentage of referrals resulting in 'no further action'. In turn, this has an adverse impact on the ability of social work teams to complete assessments in a timely fashion. Inconsistent application of thresholds by managers across the referral and assessment teams also has an impact on the timeliness of assessments and on the rate of unnecessary re-referrals.

116 Twenty-nine of these fell within the Annual Report year, from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010.

117 *Learning lessons from serious case reviews 2009–10* (100087), Ofsted, 2010.

118 *Safeguarding and looked after children: national social work practitioner survey 2010* (100125), Ofsted, 2010; *Safeguarding and looked after children: national third sector organisation survey 2010* (100126), Ofsted, 2010.

119 *Referrals, assessments and children who were the subject of a child protection plan (2009–10 Children in Need census, Provisional)*, OSR24/2010, Statistical Release, Department for Education.

120 *Cafcass care demand – latest figures for April–June 2010*, Cafcass, 2010; available from the Cafcass website: www.cafcass.gov.uk.

592. The data show that the pressures are real and, when they are not effectively managed, they have a major impact on the quality of the services that staff are able to provide. In the national social work survey, 64% of social workers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, 'I feel I have sufficient time to work effectively with the children and young people who are on my workload'.¹²¹ Delays in responding appropriately to referrals, an accumulation of unallocated cases, and assessments that are rushed and of poor quality are some of the consequences noted in inspection reports and evaluation letters sent by Ofsted following unannounced inspections.

Managing demand effectively

593. There is no apparent link between increased demand and the quality of the service that a local authority is able to maintain. Pressures of increased demand are noted as frequently in authorities that are performing well as they are in authorities that are performing poorly. For example, in the unannounced inspection of Enfield, which was subsequently judged to be performing well, inspectors found that although demand had increased significantly, senior and middle managers had responded effectively to the increased workload pressures and provided additional front-line resources. Experienced team managers continued to provide effective oversight of case work and good levels of support to staff; arrangements for file audit and quality assurance continued to drive improvements in practice; and staff continued to be supervised effectively. A risk management panel enabled senior officers and members to provide effective oversight of challenging and complex cases. This was likely to have been a significant factor in ensuring that staff continued to feel well supported.

594. All but one of the inspection reports of authorities judged to be good or outstanding for safeguarding refer to what are commonly described as 'significant' increases in demand. In the unannounced inspection of Lincolnshire, subsequently judged in a full inspection to be outstanding, inspectors referred particularly to the 'steady rise in referrals and the increasingly complex cases referred to social care' which had led to higher caseloads and staff working to capacity. They commented, however, that the increased demand was being managed effectively in relation to children at significant risk and other higher priority cases, although it contributed to delays in completing lower priority casework and in maintaining up-to-date records.

595. Neither size of population nor the social context of the authority appear to have a strong bearing on the assessed quality of services. The child population of those authorities whose safeguarding services have been judged to be good or outstanding ranges from 23,000 to 151,000. That of inadequate authorities varies between 43,000 and 288,000. Deprivation is not an excuse for inadequate services. Caution must be applied to the interpretation of small numbers, but the relationship between the quality of services and deprivation is weak. For example, four out of the 10 local authorities judged to be good for safeguarding services had above average deprivation, as did the one local authority judged outstanding. Conversely five out of the 10 local authorities judged inadequate for safeguarding had below average deprivation.¹²²

Maintaining a high-quality workforce

596. Most authorities face pressures in their workforce. A survey carried out by the Association of Directors of Children's Services reported that, in December 2009, 10.5% of manager, deputy manager and social work posts were being covered by agency staff, and 12.5% of posts were vacant.¹²³ Inspections show that good or outstanding authorities tend to have a more stable workforce, fewer vacancies and fewer agency staff. However, inspection evidence suggests that this is accounted for by good

121 *Safeguarding and looked after children: national social work practitioner survey 2010* (100125), Ofsted, 2010.

122 Deprivation measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

123 *Safeguarding pressures project: Results of data collection*, Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd, 2010.

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management practice rather than by differences in local labour markets. Good authorities achieve this through:

- ✘ good or outstanding workforce planning, at its best on a multi-agency basis
- ✘ a range of initiatives to support recruitment and retention: career development schemes, sponsorship of unqualified staff to obtain a social work qualification, active support of practice placements and participation in the newly qualified social worker scheme
- ✘ creative approaches to recruitment and recruitment markets and 'growing your own' staff policies
- ✘ giving priority to the support and nurturing of staff once they are in post
- ✘ the continuing development of skills. In Hounslow, for example, the partnership invested significantly in offering staff the opportunity to develop therapeutic skills.

597. In some poorly performing authorities, staff morale was low. However, in others, staff reported that morale was good, and that they felt supported by managers. High staff morale does not, of itself, distinguish well-performing authorities from poorly performing ones. This echoes the findings of the national social work survey. Social workers generally feel positive about the organisations they work for. Of those responding, 78% felt well supported by their line manager in managing the risks associated with their casework.

598. The extent to which staff feel engaged with improving and developing services may be more significant than how well supported they feel in their day-to-day work. In the authorities where leadership and management were judged to be outstanding, staff told inspectors that senior managers were highly visible and approachable and that there was a culture of openness and engagement. They felt able to raise concerns about the delivery of services at all levels and considered that their concerns were taken seriously and acted upon. Such perceptions and experiences on the part of front-line staff are relatively rare. In the national social work survey, only 38% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the local authority for which they worked was open to new ideas about

improving ways of working. It may be that this is an aspect of organisational culture to which authorities need to give some sustained attention as part of raising standards.

599. Many inspections of contact, referral and assessment services found they were staffed by a high proportion of newly qualified social workers or staff with limited post-qualification experience. But what makes the difference is how newly qualified staff are supported and how their professional development and resilience are nurtured. Good authorities ensure that newly qualified workers have protected caseloads and will support professional development through, for example, mentoring and co-working on cases. These authorities offer more frequent supervision to new staff and focus the support from managers.

600. Many, but not all, authorities support newly qualified workers effectively in this way. In the national social work survey 55% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'My caseload has been protected sufficiently to allow me to undertake my responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children and young people.' However, 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In some inadequate authorities, inexperienced staff are carrying inappropriate responsibilities as the following inspection report extracts show:

'Some staff, including recently qualified social workers and community support workers, continue to carry large and complex caseloads which are beyond their capacity to manage effectively.'

'The Newly Qualified Social Workers Scheme has been introduced but this is not providing newly qualified staff with the phased induction they need. They are acquiring heavy caseloads, including child protection and court work, too quickly.'

Record-keeping and information technology systems

601. Almost all the authorities inspected were struggling with difficulties with developing and implementing functional information technology (IT) systems. These needed to meet both the requirements of the authority and those of central government policy at the time. The difficulties are vividly reported in many inspection reports and letters:

'The electronic recording and retrieval system does not effectively support staff in undertaking their work. The system is slow and insufficiently robust which leads to time-consuming recording and in some instances work being lost. The combination of no single record for a child and not all files having chronologies makes it difficult to ensure that all historical information is taken into account in assessment and decision-making.'

'The recent transfer of information to a new IT system has caused difficulties for staff in accessing historical records and recording assessments. Staff report that the forms produced by the system, although compliant with the integrated children's system, are not user-friendly for staff or families. Staff believe that this acts as a barrier to involving children and their parents in assessments and decisions. Managers do not have access to adequate electronic systems to record the progress of individual referrals and assessments and to aggregate performance information. Managers are therefore unable to track work effectively and, as a result, cannot ensure that risks faced by children and young people are managed effectively.'

602. In the national social work survey, 55% of those who felt that they had insufficient time to work effectively with the children and young people on their caseload identified 'the time spent recording information electronically' as one of the contributory factors. This affects authorities which are performing well as much as those which are performing poorly. The impact of difficulties in implementing new IT systems is commented on explicitly in a greater percentage of inspection reports on authorities which are good or outstanding than reports on authorities judged to be inadequate. The picture is also not entirely uniform. For example in two authorities, Cumbria and Trafford, inspectors found evidence that new IT systems had been introduced successfully and were working well:

'The new electronic children's system has been introduced successfully, with staff generally feeling engaged and positive about it.'

'The electronic recording system is used effectively by staff and provides a coherent structure for case recording and data collection. Chronologies and case histories are particularly strong features.'

603. The difficulties which many authorities have faced in implementing new IT systems have not been universal, so they are not inevitable. Although it is a relatively rare finding, there are areas in which they have been effectively managed.

Assessment and care planning

604. To deliver the best outcomes for children at risk, both the assessment of families' needs and the longer-term work that flows from the assessment should be of consistently high quality. However, even in more effective authorities, the quality of assessment is often better than the long-term work with children and families that follows on from assessment. This long-term work, which includes case planning, reviewing interventions and recording the outcomes of those processes was judged to be good in only four out of 10 authorities judged to be good overall, and was outstanding in none. In the remainder it was assessed as adequate. Plans were not always specific, measurable and supported with clear outcome-based targets.

605. Generally, weaker practice in this area may be linked with the well-evidenced difficulties that many social work staff have with electronic recording systems. However, it is also a reminder that the necessary focus on the importance of the quality of assessment must not lead to neglecting the ongoing importance of the longer-term work of planning, intervention and review, and the difference these make to outcomes for children.

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The keys to success

606. The differences between high-performing and inadequate authorities cannot be explained readily by differences in the pressures and the challenges that they face or by differences in size, type of authority or levels of deprivation. Ultimately, the quality of safeguarding services depends on the quality of assessment, the quality of care planning and review, and on how well staff build and use relationships with children and with their families. These require systematic support to be effective. Inspection evidence indicates what is needed to provide and support high-quality practice:

- ✘ effective leadership and management, including strong performance management and effective quality assurance
- ✘ strong partnership working at all levels, including the ownership of safeguarding as an issue for the whole system
- ✘ effective commissioning to secure an appropriate and accessible range of services to support children and their families at an early stage, anticipating and often avoiding the need for higher-level intervention.

607. These are not clichés. Inspection highlights some very concrete and not always expected evidence of what these things mean in practice, and the difference that they make. Nor do these things appear in isolation. Strong, visible leadership enables strategic and operational partnerships to be effective. Strong partnerships support effective needs analysis and effective commissioning, enabling authorities to target services appropriately and to plan. Strong management challenges poor practice, supports high-quality practice and enables front-line managers to make good decisions.

Effective leadership and management

608. In good and outstanding authorities, leaders are ambitious, visible and focused. For example, as noted in one inspection report:

'In Trafford the strong and effective senior leadership team of the children and young people's service and the Chief Executive of the council are providing visible, accessible and good quality leadership and management for the service, driving forward development, improving quality and engaging staff at all levels. The leadership team of the children and young people's service has created a clear and strong vision for the future of the organisation and this has been clearly communicated to staff at all levels.'

609. Providing a recipe for a successful culture is difficult; but culture is key, and it is something that has to be created. It does not grow spontaneously. This emerges strongly from inspection reports on good or outstanding authorities as illustrated in the following case study:

In Lincolnshire there was a clear steer from the top to introduce an accountable and performance driven culture with good management at all levels. Time and resources were invested into developing quality leadership; all managers were trained and coached in leadership and open communication was encouraged and developed. Initially there was a clear focus on improving performance, followed by work aimed at improving quality. Everyone was made aware of what was expected which enabled staff to engage; good practice was rewarded, supported and expected and is now accepted as the norm. Underperforming individuals are supported to overcome barriers, solve problems and encouraged to improve. All managers, including the director, recognise and reward good performance and there is a clear 'coaching' culture, enabling staff to improve, develop and enhance their skills.

610. The strongest feature of such leadership, in authorities that are performing well, is that it is exercised and consolidated across agency boundaries rather than focused solely within single organisations, as this excerpt from Swindon's inspection report shows:

'Leadership and management of safeguarding services for children and young people are outstanding with competent and determined leadership from the council corporately, the Primary Care Trust, the Children's Trust board and the Safeguarding Children Board.'

611. The leadership provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is central to this. The following example of a good authority describes what this looks like in practice:

In Knowsley the LSCB provides strong and visible leadership across all services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across the partnership. This is evidenced through the LSCB taking a lead role in contributing to the development of services, by strengthening the domestic abuse strategy to improve its impact on children affected by domestic abuse, effectively developing child death overview work and driving safer workforce developments. The LSCB ensures that audits for agencies, including all schools, are carried out on an annual basis, so that agencies can demonstrate they are meeting all safeguarding requirements and take any appropriate action to address shortcomings. This audit process is also applied consistently to all commissioned services. The LSCB is active in identifying any weaknesses in procedures or processes to safeguard children and has a good record of action.

612. One of the strongest tests of effective leadership in this area is the clarity, consistency and degree to which thresholds are known, agreed and applied across the partnership. This determines how safe and supported staff themselves feel in managing pressures and influences the degree to which they are enabled to provide safe and supportive practice. In the great majority of inadequate authorities, inspectors identify significant weaknesses in the shared understanding of thresholds and the consistency with which they are applied, leading to children not receiving the services and support that they need. Thresholds may be set too high in an attempt to manage demand, but this is not consistent with safe practice, as set out in the following inspection report:

'The referral and assessment team has been under considerable staffing pressures and several posts have been filled by a succession of short-term agency staff. As a result, thresholds for intervention remain too high and assessments are not routinely completed and lack detailed analyses of need and risk.'

613. Concerns about thresholds also arise in serious case reviews. A review evaluated by Ofsted in 2009/10 in which the parents had a history of substance misuse found:

'The Local Safeguarding Children Board concluded that more immediate referrals to children's services and, in this particular case, to the community drug team would have enabled information-sharing, assessment and planning to be more effective. The Local Safeguarding Children Board identified differing views within the services about thresholds for referral. The review highlighted the need for work to ensure clarity about thresholds, including a shared understanding about the boundaries of family support and child protection, and the nature of the roles and responsibilities of key staff in the relevant services.'

614. Good authorities have succeeded in ensuring that thresholds for access to services are clear, understood, consistently applied and, most importantly, owned across the partnership. This is closely linked to ensuring effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), as the following inspection report extract shows:

'In Hounslow there are clear and agreed thresholds for access to safeguarding services and, as a result of concerted action, they are widely understood across the partnership. Referrals are more clearly related to need and increased use is being made of the CAF, which has become central to early intervention and prevention services.'

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615. In one unannounced inspection, it was noted that 'inter-agency thresholds for children in need are not agreed, which leads to an inconsistent response to children and their families by the advice and assessment service.' By the time of the full inspection of safeguarding services carried out six months later, inspectors were able to report that thresholds were better understood by all agencies and more appropriate referrals were being made to children's social care. This illustrates another characteristic that strongly distinguishes good and outstanding authorities from those that are inadequate. In the former, inspectors consistently reported actions taken and lessons learned from previous inspections, serious case reviews and other often challenging experiences. Too often, in the inadequate authorities, little learning had taken place or been translated into action.

616. Thresholds are sometimes treated or experienced as barriers to services. If a family is above the threshold, they are able to receive a service. If they are below it, services are not offered. This was not the case in well-performing authorities inspected. In three good authorities, referral and assessment teams offered a consultative service. This made negotiating thresholds less adversarial and helped to ensure that children and young people's needs were met at different levels by the appropriate agency. In one authority, the coordinator for the Common Assessment Framework was co-located with the duty service.

Within Swindon the 'consultative' role of duty workers is well established. This allows other professionals to talk to a social worker, prior to making a referral, to assess whether thresholds are met or to signpost to preventative services or the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process. The role is valued by other professionals who use the system frequently, and feel their understanding of social care thresholds, and their knowledge of preventative services have improved. In addition, the duty team visit other organisations to guide them through the CAF process, discussing resources and evaluating plans and the quality of assessments. Other professionals are encouraged to spend time with the duty team improving their understanding of how the team operates, what the pressures are, and how thresholds are applied. This has had a noticeable impact on the quality of information received from those organisations and the understanding of thresholds across organisations continues to improve.

617. Good and outstanding authorities are also characterised by strong and effective systems for performance management and quality assurance. Virtually every local authority inspected is able to demonstrate that it has a performance management and quality assurance system in place. Inadequate authorities, however, are generally (but not uniformly) unable to demonstrate the impact of their systems in focusing attention on areas of poor performance and informing action to improve it. These authorities tend to rely too much on national performance indicators, with little challenge to and scrutiny of the quality of work that underpins them; data can be unreliable and depend too much on self-reporting by managers and staff. Conversely, in good and outstanding authorities, performance management is actually used to improve performance, as shown in the following case study.

Lincolnshire Children's Services Directorate has a strong performance management and quality assurance culture, which has been developed and led by senior managers. Quality practice is assured through robust support, supervision and direction and poor performance is challenged. There is a culture of rewarding good practice. Data are made available to staff at all levels and are used to continually raise performance. Team managers can access data about team members and can also compare their team's performance with other teams, encouraging a cycle of improvement. Data are also used to identify and explore themes such as the importance of maintaining links with family and friends for looked after children. Good practice workshops are then organised to develop stronger practice. All these elements work together to drive continuous improvement. This approach has successfully reduced numbers of children looked after out of county from 84 three years ago to 38.

618. The quality and regularity of audit and of management oversight, and support and challenge of front-line practice, are among the main factors which distinguish the 'good' from the 'adequate' authorities inspected. The other striking characteristic of performance management and quality assurance in good and outstanding authorities which differentiates them sharply from weaker authorities is the degree to which they are applied across the partnership rather than within the boundaries of individual agencies.

In Hounslow a performance management culture is firmly established across the partnership, enabling the priorities of the revised Children and Young People's Plan to be evaluated for effectiveness. In addition, a wide range of relevant data about most aspects of children's services is collected and analysed. Data are increasingly used to identify and measure outcomes.

619. Generally, in less well performing authorities, performance management is contained within agency boundaries and each agency collects and reviews its own performance data.

Strong partnership working at all levels

620. Effective leadership and effective partnership are highly correlated. The range of organisations within the partnership needs to reflect local circumstances. For example, in one good authority inspected, the local naval welfare service is a key partner; in another, partnership with local academic institutions has brought great benefits in terms of the availability of up-to-date advice, guidance on best practice and research. A local university has funded a project to raise the profile of domestic abuse as a safeguarding issue through specific training to 20 general practitioner practices in the authority's area.

621. Effective links with adult services are particularly important. Serious case reviews have emphasised the dangers of an exclusive focus on the often acute needs of vulnerable adults and failure to consider their role as parents. In Hounslow, assessments are undertaken in the local hospital accident and emergency department of all children of patients deemed to be vulnerable adults. In Swindon, a 'See the Adult, See the Child' protocol focuses workers' attention on the need to ensure the effective safeguarding of children when working with adults with mental health difficulties.

622. The difficulties and benefits of partnership working are well illustrated by the spectrum of arrangements between the police and the local children's services department to deal with referrals relating to domestic violence. Ofsted has consistently highlighted domestic violence in its evaluations of serious case reviews as a major factor in many of the incidents that give rise to a review. It reinforces the importance of a good flow of information about incidents to children's social care, enabling risks and patterns of risk to be identified. However, a large number of inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements have identified major difficulties with this flow of information and the capacity of children's social care services to absorb and use it.

623. The lack of screening of information before referral and the practice of processing referrals in batches make it difficult or impossible for social workers to prioritise the order in which they respond. Some authorities appear at risk of being overwhelmed by the volume of undifferentiated information they receive. Others, however, have negotiated and

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established effective solutions through partnership working. These include the creation of a designated post to work directly with the police on domestic violence referrals, ensuring that they are screened and appropriately responded to in a timely manner; joint assessment of referrals with the police; and daily partnership meetings which effectively consider and assess risk. Even in some local authorities judged to be inadequate overall in their safeguarding services, examples of some very effective joint work were seen.

624. Inspectors have seen excellent examples of a high degree of integration between services. In Trafford, which was judged to be good, an integrated children and young people's service brought together, in a single service, approximately 540 council staff and 250 National Health Service staff. The multi-agency referral and assessment team included: social care staff; a police officer with access to the Police National Computer; a health visitor; a specialist officer for housing and domestic violence; input from a consultant paediatrician; and close links to the child and adolescent mental health and education services. These all worked together to provide an integrated assessment service to children and their families. The unannounced inspection of these innovative arrangements found that they provided effective sharing of information and robust multi-agency working in both child protection and children in need cases. Generally, assessments were of good quality and timely, decision-making was robust, and the majority of the recording examined was up-to-date and of a high standard.

625. In Swindon, 200 primary care trust staff were seconded into the local authority to provide an integrated service. In the unannounced inspection, inspectors found that excellent partnership working was contributing well to safeguarding children. Arrangements for assessing children's needs through the Common Assessment Framework were well developed and the assessments reviewed during the inspection were good. Good integrated working ensured effective support for children and families who did not meet the criteria for social care services. Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) arrangements ensured good information-sharing and effective intervention for families where children were affected by domestic violence.

Good commissioning to secure an appropriate and accessible range of services

626. The effectiveness of commissioning is strongly associated with the ability of authorities and staff to provide good safeguarding services. This is not simply about commissioning and planning safeguarding services in isolation. There is a real connection between the quality of safeguarding services delivered in a locality and the range of support available through preventative and universal services in the locality.

In Swindon the development of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team around the Child (TAC) approaches has enabled strong preventative work to take place and supports the message that safeguarding is everyone's business. The authority has worked hard to overcome the reluctance of practitioners to take on the CAF, or the role of the lead professional, and has encouraged the process to be seen as an integral part of any role. The framework for the CAF is clear for both professionals and families and, because of its focus on strengths and finding solutions, is seen as less threatening than other interventions. Parents are an integral part of the TAC meeting so feel a part of the solution-focused process. There is a small budget available for lead professionals which has enabled quick solutions to be found to a range of issues, for example purchasing equipment and days out. The CAF has clearly been the foundation for a cultural shift to a whole-system approach, underpinning the overall vision for Swindon.

627. Nearly all the authorities inspected for safeguarding were found to have a range of preventative services, including those authorities that inspectors judged to be delivering inadequate services. Many of the services were provided by the voluntary sector. However, in the inadequate authorities, the capacity of the voluntary sector was not always fully developed or used. In several of these authorities, because clear and agreed thresholds were lacking, preventative work was poorly aligned with the delivery of social care, and inspectors judged that there was a risk that children and young people would fall through the net. In one inspection in a very large authority, inspectors judged that:

'The range of services for children in need and their families who require more intensive multi-agency support but are not in need of child protection is too limited. This contributes to high referral rates to children's social care and unmet needs as some serious cases are not diverted to relevant family support provision.'

628. The contribution of the voluntary and community sector to delivering preventative services is vital in almost every local authority area. The contribution is most effective when it is developed within a strategic and integrated approach, which ensures that children and young people receive support at the right time, at the right level, and without unnecessary higher levels of intervention through inappropriate referrals to children's social care. The following case study illustrates a holistic approach to delivering preventative services:

In Knowsley the youth crime prevention plan is the key strategy to prevent young people engaging in risk-taking behaviour. Its focus is broader preventative work, not just youth crime. The youth work is targeted and time-limited, with clear exit strategies for the young people. They are able to access the services over a period of 12 weeks, and the services are carefully targeted at the geographical areas where young people congregate and are likely to become involved in risk-taking behaviour such as gang-related activity. During the time-limited, 12-week interventions, the involvement of the third sector is built up to enhance the capacity of the community, supported by the youth service. As a result of the work which flows from the youth crime prevention plan, there has been a 10% year-on-year reduction in anti-social behaviour.

629. The experience of third sector organisations as partners varies widely. Ofsted's survey on the third sector's views and experiences of safeguarding and looked after children services in their local area showed that 45% of the organisations had been commissioned by local authorities to provide services in the last five years.¹²⁴ Of those, 50% agreed or strongly agreed that the commissioning process was clear; 44% agreed that it was fair; and only 38% agreed that it was efficient. Overall, 48% of the organisations responding felt that partnership working with the third sector in their area was effective. Experiences of being treated as partners at the level of the individual case also varied. Of the organisations responding, 35% of them had made what they regarded as child protection referrals to the local authority in the previous two years. Of those 565 organisations, 39% agreed or strongly agreed that the process following on from the referral was dealt with effectively by the local authority (41% neither agreed nor disagreed or did not know); and only 37% said that they were kept informed about the outcome.

630. The factor that distinguished the poorly performing authorities most clearly from the good or outstanding ones was not the presence or absence of preventative services. Rather, it was whether the services operated and were supported within a clear commissioning framework, based on an effective analysis of needs, and situated within a coherent system of provision. Generally (although not uniformly), strategic commissioning is weak in inadequate authorities. Inspectors note a

'failure to ensure that an integrated strategy is in place to improve joint planning and commissioning arrangements'

and

'although data are collected it is unclear how these are used strategically to influence improving outcomes for children and young people or how well these are used to influence local commissioning to meet identified need.'

In a number of reports, however, inspectors also noted that improvements were beginning to be made in strengthening commissioning.

¹²⁴ *Safeguarding and looked after children: national third sector organisation survey 2010 (100126)*, Ofsted, 2010.

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631. In contrast, in the good or outstanding authorities, strategic commissioning was well established. The authorities had undertaken a comprehensive needs analysis, giving them a clear picture of the needs of the area and allowing them to identify priority areas and target services appropriately. This enabled them to commission preventative services which have a measurable impact and which positively influence outcomes. This is illustrated by the following case study from Lincolnshire, the one authority so far judged to be outstanding for safeguarding:

The partnership's strategic commitment to providing early support to families has resulted in a transfer of resources from specialist to universal services and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership is making significant progress. The use of the Common Assessment Framework and the Team around the Child are ensuring that children and their families receive the right services at the right time. The commissioning framework has been in place since 2008, and is now under review. Commissioners and members of the third sector reported that the framework enabled creative and innovative ways of securing services to ensure equitable provision across the county. The third sector is particularly effective in providing early intervention and prevention services which are sharply focused on the needs of individual children and families.

632. Commissioning is particularly effective when it makes good use of local data and intelligence to focus activity. This is also essential if commissioning is to be flexible, adaptive and quick to respond. The following case study is taken from a 'good' authority:

To ensure that they were able to meet the needs of the population, the partnership in Knowsley took a new approach to identifying need. They adopted an approach based on identifying risks and strengths and focused on harnessing the capacity of communities. Data and intelligence were pooled from a variety of sources to understand why outcomes for some children were better than others and to understand the impact of both neighbourhoods and families on outcomes. It was clear that deprivation was only one of several influencing factors. Geographic, demographic and lifestyle information was gathered as well as perception data to build up a picture of the people living in the borough. Workshops and seminars were held to present the baseline data to practitioners in a meaningful way. This information was fed into the overall development plan to improve services, standards and outcomes for children and young people. It has enabled Knowsley to target preventative work, change services when required and enable planning to meet the future needs of a developing population.

Conclusions: preventing harm and protecting children from harm

633. It is not possible to provide high-quality safeguarding services without high-quality leadership and management. This goes across the whole of a local partnership and actively creates a culture that encourages, motivates and challenges staff to deliver high-quality practice and effective services. Strong leadership drives strong partnership working. In the authorities which have been judged to be outstanding for their partnership working, the ownership of safeguarding across the partnership is the unifying characteristic. Without it, a lack of clarity about responsibilities, expectations and thresholds diverts staff from their core task of providing high-quality services.

634. Although the phrase ‘strategic commissioning’ sounds far removed from front-line practice, effective strategic commissioning is in fact a precondition of high-quality service delivery. It helps to ensure that a range of services are available, based on local need; that children get the support they need, when they need it; that families can be directed to appropriate services at an early stage; that referrals to children’s social care are appropriate; and that children who need support and intervention are identified at an early point when they can be most effective. There is a risk that ‘child protection’ and ‘preventative services’ could become polarised terms, as if it is a choice between prioritising one or the other. Often this is expressed as a distinction between ‘statutory’ and ‘non-statutory’ work, but this is misleading. The duties of local authorities, under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, to provide a range and level of services appropriate to the children in need in their area are as firmly set in legislation as their duties under Part V of the Act in relation to child protection.

635. Of course, difficult choices have to be made about priorities and resources, about investment, disinvestment, commissioning and decommissioning. But if preventative services are limited or difficult to access, or if they operate in a disconnected way and the focus is only on safeguarding as a discrete and ‘heavy end’ activity, then safeguarding services will find it difficult to escape a crisis-driven mindset. If keeping children safe sits within a clear network and agreed ways of working, which support children and identify risk earlier, then inspection evidence suggests that front-line safeguarding services are enabled to operate more effectively. Effective safeguarding and early intervention services need to be seen as part of a single system or a single continuum, not polarised as alternative choices. Neither should we polarise high-quality practice and high-quality systems. The one requires the other.

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Annexes



Annex 1: Definitions

Table 1 Inspection frameworks

Type of inspection	Framework	Effective since	Legislation
Provision on the Early Years Register	Inspection of the Early Years Foundation Stage in registered provision	September 2008	Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006
Compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register	Inspection of compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register	April 2007 for providers on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register September 2008 for providers on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register	Sections 60, 61 and 77 (2) (b) of the Childcare Act 2006
Maintained schools	The framework for school inspection	September 2009	Section 5 of the Education Act 2005
Independent schools	The framework for inspecting education in non-association independent schools	September 2005	Section 162A of the Education Act as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005
Post-16 education and training (further education colleges, sixth form colleges, independent specialist colleges, work-based learning, adult and community learning, nextstep, Department for Work and Pensions contracted employment provision, offender learning)	Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills 2009	September 2009	Section 133 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
Initial teacher education	Framework for the inspection of initial teacher education 2008–11	September 2008	The Education and Inspections Act 2006
Children's social care	<i>Are you ready for your inspection?</i> A guide to inspection of children's services conducted by Ofsted.	April 2007	Sections 80 and 87 of the Children Act 1989 Sections 31, 45 and 105 of the Care Standards Act 2000 Sections 146, 147 and 148 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
Children's centres	Inspection of children's centres	30 April 2010	Sections 98A(1), 98B(3) and (4) and 104(2) of the Childcare Act 2006
Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass)	Framework for inspection of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) 2009	April 2009	Sections 143–145 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
Children's services annual assessment	Every Child Matters: framework for the inspection of children's services	September 2005	Sections 20–24 of the Children Act 2004
Safeguarding and looked after children services	Inspection of safeguarding and looked after services and unannounced inspection of contact referral and assessment	May 2009	Section 136 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006

Table 2 Children's social care: frequency of Ofsted inspection

Type of provision	Ofsted's role	Frequency of inspection
Children's homes	Regulates and inspects ¹	At least twice a year
Local authority fostering services	Inspects	At least once every three years
Independent fostering agencies	Regulates and inspects	At least once every three years
Private fostering arrangements ²	Inspects	At least once every three years
Local authority adoption services	Inspects	At least once every three years
Voluntary adoption agencies	Regulates and inspects	At least once every three years
Adoption support agencies	Regulates and inspects	At least once every three years
Boarding schools	Inspects	At least once every three years
Residential special schools	Inspects	At least once a year
Residential family centres	Regulates and inspects	At least once every three years
Further education colleges that provide or arrange accommodation for one or more students under 18	Inspects	At least once every three years for welfare provision

1. For further information about the distinction between inspection and regulation, see the Glossary.

2. The three-year cycle of inspections ended on 31 March 2009.

Annex 1: Definitions

Inspection judgements

Inspectors make judgements using a four-point scale:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Use of proportions in this report

In this report proportions are described in different ways. If sample sizes are small – generally fewer than 100 – scale is usually expressed using actual numbers of institutions to which particular judgements apply.

Proportions, which are used when sample sizes are large, are expressed in a number of ways: percentages, common fractions and general descriptions such as ‘majority’, ‘minority’ or ‘most’. Where general descriptions are used, they relate broadly to percentages as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Expressions of proportions in words

Proportion	Description
97–100%	Vast/overwhelming majority or almost all
80–96%	Very large majority, most
65–79%	Large majority
51–64%	Majority
35–49%	Minority
20–34%	Small minority
4–19%	Very small minority, few
0–3%	Almost none, very few

Ofsted’s powers to investigate complaints about schools

The Education Act 2005, as amended, gives Ofsted powers to consider whether to investigate certain complaints made by any person. To qualify, a complaint must give rise to wider concerns about the school (rather than a solely individual issue) relating to:

- ✘ the quality of the education provided in the school
- ✘ how far the education provided in the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school
- ✘ the educational standards achieved in the school
- ✘ the quality of the leadership in and management of the school, including whether the financial resources made available to the school are managed effectively
- ✘ the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils at the school
- ✘ the contribution made by the school to the well-being of those pupils
- ✘ the contribution made by the school to community cohesion.

Ofsted’s remit does not include complaints about:

- ✘ admissions policy
- ✘ exclusions of individual pupils
- ✘ individual special educational needs
- ✘ temporary exceptions to the curriculum
- ✘ religious education or the religious character of the school.

Ofsted is not in a position to:

- ✘ investigate incidents that are alleged to have taken place, except where they are part of a pattern that give rise to concerns about a school
- ✘ judge how well a school investigated or responded to a complaint
- ✘ mediate between a parent or carer and a school to resolve a dispute.

More detailed information for anyone who wishes to make a complaint about a school can be found on Ofsted’s website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Table 4 Number of complaints received and handled by Ofsted between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010

Description	Number of complaints
Total number of written complaints received	1,958
Total number of complaints the handling of which has been completed by Ofsted ¹	1,702
Number of complaints considered and which Ofsted referred the complaint to another agency to consider ²	47
Number of complaints considered and which Ofsted provided details of more appropriate sources of help or advice to the complainant	1,573
Number of complaints that qualified for further investigation under Ofsted's powers	77
Total number of qualifying complaints the handling of which has been completed by Ofsted	54
Total number of investigations conducted in response to a qualified complaint	35
Number of qualifying complaints that raised concerns significant enough to bring forward a section 5 inspection of the school	8
Number of qualifying complaints that raised concerns significant enough to warrant an immediate inspection of the school	1
Number of complaints about schools retained as part of the evidence base for their next scheduled inspections	51

1 Written complaints received and 'closed' between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010.

2 One of the first steps that Ofsted takes with a complaint is to analyse it to see whether it raises an issue that falls within the qualifying conditions, and whether it appears to affect the school as a whole. Where this is not the case Ofsted tries to refer the complainant to more appropriate sources of help and advice.

Annex 2: Inspection evidence

Annex 2: Inspection evidence

Table 5. Number of inspections between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010

	Number of inspections 2009/10
Early years registered provision¹	
Childminders	12,928
Childcare on non-domestic premises	6,809
Childcare on domestic premises	39
Total	19,776
Maintained schools and pupil referral units	
Nursery school	158
Primary schools ²	4,620
Secondary schools without sixth forms	435
Secondary schools with sixth forms	410
Academies	43
Special schools	370
Pupil referral units	136
Total	6,172
Non-association independent schools	
Section 162A inspections ³	319
School registration visits	127
Material change visits	27
Emergency visits and follow up visits ⁴	167
Total	640
Colleges of further education	
General further education, tertiary and specialist further education colleges	59
Sixth form colleges	20
Further education provision in higher education institutions	2
Independent specialist colleges	13
Total	94
Adult learning	
Work-based learning (including Train to Gain)	209
Adult and community learning providers	43
DWP commissioned (Prime Contractors, ESF, PLP, NDDP)	34
nextstep	10
Workstep	20
Total	316
Children's social care⁵	
Adoption support agencies	10
Boarding schools (care only)	179
Children's homes excluding secure children's homes ⁶	3,500

	Number of inspections 2009/10
Further education colleges (care only)	16
Independent fostering agencies	51
Local authority adoption services	34
Local authority fostering services	28
Residential family centres	10
Residential special schools ⁷	197
Voluntary adoption agencies	15
Inspection of service provision by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) to children and families	5
Total	4,045
Care for children and young people in secure settings⁸	
Secure children's homes	33
Secure training centres	8
Total	41
Education and training for children and young people in secure settings	
Secure children's homes	6
Secure training centres	4
Total	10
Offender learning and skills	
Prisons (adult and young offender)	27
Probation offender management	13
Immigration removal centres	7
Total	47
Other inspections	
Annual performance assessment of children's services in local authorities	152
Contact, referral and assessment inspections	119
Safeguarding and looked after children	29
Serious case reviews	137
Initial teacher education	151
Armed forces training	9
Sure Start children's centres	39
Total	636
Total inspection activity	31,777

1. Early years registered inspections include inspections of providers active at 31 August 2010, multiple inspections of the same provider, and inspections for providers who have since resigned from the register or who Ofsted have cancelled or suspended; excludes inspections of providers on the childcare register only and inspections where no children were on roll.
2. Data include two primary schools whose inspection reports have been withheld from publication.
3. These are full or light touch inspections of independent schools carried out under the section 162A framework.
4. Emergency visits cover announced and unannounced visits.
5. Data include all social care inspections undertaken in the year, including inspections of providers no longer active at the end of the year.
6. Children's homes are inspected twice in a year.
7. Data include residential special schools reinspected in the year.
8. Secure children's homes and secure training centres are inspected twice in a year.

Annex 3. Other analyses

Annex 3. Other analyses

Table 6 The quality of childcare (all childcare providers)

Aspects of childcare	Total number of providers inspected ^{1, 2}	Percentage of providers			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	18,827	10	58	29	3
Leadership and management	18,827	10	58	29	3
Quality of provision on the Early Years Foundation Stage	18,827	10	59	29	3
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	18,827	11	60	27	2
Feeling safe	18,827	13	61	24	2
Adopting a healthy lifestyle	18,827	14	63	22	1
Enjoying and achieving	18,827	14	59	26	2
Making a positive contribution	18,827	14	60	25	1
Skills for the future	18,827	12	59	28	2

1. Data include 37 providers of childcare on domestic premises.
2. Data relate to the most recent inspection of providers active at 31 August 2010.

Table 7 The quality of childminding

Aspects of childcare	Total number of providers inspected	Percentage of providers			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	12,342	9	57	31	3
Leadership and management	12,342	9	57	32	3
Quality of provision on the Early Years Foundation Stage	12,342	9	58	30	3
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	12,342	10	59	29	2
Feeling safe	12,342	12	60	26	2
Adopting a healthy lifestyle	12,342	13	62	24	1
Enjoying and achieving	12,342	12	58	27	2
Making a positive contribution	12,342	12	60	28	1
Skills for the future	12,342	10	58	30	2

Table 8 The quality of childcare on non-domestic premises

Aspects of childcare	Total number of providers inspected	Percentage of providers			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	6,448	12	60	25	3
Leadership and management	6,448	12	60	25	3
Quality of provision on the Early Years Foundation Stage	6,448	12	60	25	3
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	6,448	13	62	23	2
Feeling safe	6,448	16	62	20	3
Adopting a healthy lifestyle	6,448	17	63	19	1
Enjoying and achieving	6,448	16	60	22	2
Making a positive contribution	6,448	18	61	20	1
Skills for the future	6,448	14	60	24	1

Annex 3. Other analyses

Table 9 Primary schools

Aspects of the school	Total number of schools inspected	Percentage of schools			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100					
Overall effectiveness					
Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?	4,618	9	44	39	7
Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils	4,618	12	42	40	6
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	4,618	9	52	35	4
Outcomes: how well are pupils doing taking account of any variation?					
Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4,618	8	46	40	6
Pupils' attainment ¹	4,618	7	25	56	13
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4,618	6	50	39	5
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4,618	8	56	33	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	4,618	28	64	7	0
Pupils' behaviour	4,618	23	66	11	0
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	4,618	25	67	8	0
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	4,618	21	60	19	0
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4,618	8	40	47	5
Pupils' attendance ¹	4,618	10	34	47	9
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4,618	18	63	18	0
How effective is the provision?					
The quality of teaching	4,618	5	52	39	4
The use of assessment to support learning	4,618	6	47	43	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4,618	11	53	34	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4,618	32	56	10	2
How effective are leadership and management?					
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4,618	12	50	34	4
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4,618	10	51	35	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4,618	7	46	42	5
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	4,618	18	63	19	0

Aspects of the school	Total number of schools inspected	Percentage of schools			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100					
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4,618	20	62	17	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination	4,618	14	51	31	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4,618	15	60	23	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4,618	7	45	46	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4,618	10	44	40	6
How effective is the Early Years Foundation Stage?					
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4,175	10	62	27	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4,175	9	64	26	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4,175	10	63	26	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage.	4,175	11	61	26	2
Overall effectiveness: how effective is the boarding provision?					
The effectiveness of the boarding provision	1	0	100	0	0

1. The judgements for pupils' attainment and pupils' attendance are high, above average, average and low.
2. Data exclude two primary schools whose inspection reports are withheld from publication at time of writing.

Annex 3. Other analyses

Table 10 Secondary schools

Aspects of the school	Total number of schools inspected	Percentage of schools			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100					
Overall effectiveness					
Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?	888	13	36	41	11
Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils	888	13	36	41	10
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	888	14	53	29	4
Outcomes: how well are pupils doing taking account of any variation?					
Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	888	11	39	41	10
Pupils' attainment ^{1,2}	887	10	19	46	25
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	888	7	45	40	7
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	888	10	48	37	5
The extent to which pupils feel safe	888	26	61	12	1
Pupils' behaviour	888	13	57	28	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	888	16	64	20	0
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	888	27	51	21	0
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	888	13	45	38	5
Pupils' attendance ¹	888	14	40	36	10
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	888	18	53	28	0
How effective is the provision?					
The quality of teaching	888	4	47	45	5
The use of assessment to support learning	888	3	38	54	6
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	888	17	59	23	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	888	37	50	11	2
How effective are leadership and management?					
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	888	17	50	29	4
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	888	11	51	33	5
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	888	12	47	35	6
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	888	14	55	30	0

Aspects of the school	Total number of schools inspected	Percentage of schools			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100					
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	888	27	56	16	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination	888	17	50	30	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	888	19	58	22	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	888	14	45	40	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	888	13	36	41	10
How effective is the sixth form?					
Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	440	7	36	53	4
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	440	7	36	54	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form ³	439	7	43	47	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	440	12	41	44	3
How effective is the Early Years Foundation Stage?					
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	24	21	71	8	0
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	24	17	75	8	0
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	24	17	75	8	0
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage.	24	21	67	13	0
Overall effectiveness: how effective is the boarding provision?					
The effectiveness of the boarding provision	5	20	80	0	0

1. The judgements for pupils' attainment and pupils' attendance are high, above average, average and low.
2. In one secondary school inspected in 2009/10, no judgement was made for pupils' attainment.
3. In one secondary school with a sixth form inspected in 2009/10, no judgement was made for the quality of provision in the sixth form as the students were on study leave and inspectors were unable to observe any lessons.

Annex 3. Other analyses

Table 11 Special schools

Aspects of the school	Total number of schools inspected	Percentage of schools			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Figures are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100					
Overall effectiveness					
Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?	370	35	43	17	5
Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils	370	38	40	19	3
The school's capacity for sustained improvement	370	34	47	16	2
Outcomes: how well are pupils doing taking account of any variation?					
Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	370	26	52	19	3
Pupils' attainment ^{1,2}	101	1	1	30	68
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	370	28	52	18	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	370	28	51	18	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	370	56	39	5	1
Pupils' behaviour	370	46	47	5	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	370	53	40	7	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	370	46	40	12	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	370	31	44	22	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	370	11	44	35	11
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	370	45	45	8	1
How effective is the provision?					
The quality of teaching	370	26	52	20	2
The use of assessment to support learning	370	28	45	24	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	370	38	45	15	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	370	66	28	4	2
How effective are leadership and management?					
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	370	38	43	16	3
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	370	35	46	17	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	370	23	47	26	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	370	51	40	9	0

Aspects of the school	Total number of schools inspected	Percentage of schools			
		Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	370	63	29	8	0
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination	370	46	38	14	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	370	46	39	14	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	370	21	47	30	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	370	36	42	19	3
How effective is the sixth form?					
Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	170	33	48	18	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	170	32	51	17	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	170	34	47	18	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	170	34	47	18	2
How effective is the Early Years Foundation Stage?					
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	202	46	45	9	0
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage ³	201	45	45	9	0
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	202	44	46	10	0
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage.	202	46	44	9	0
Overall effectiveness: how effective is the boarding provision?					
The effectiveness of the boarding provision	38	42	39	18	0

1. The judgements for pupils' attainment and pupils' attendance are high, above average, average and low.
2. In 269 special schools inspected in 2009/10, no judgement was made for pupils' attainment.
3. In one special school with an Early Years Foundation Stage inspected in 2009/10, no judgement was made about outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage as no children were on roll at the time of inspection.

Annex 4. Glossary

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This list is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to provide definitions or explanations of some of the key terms that are used in the Annual Report and which may be unfamiliar to readers.

Term	Definition or explanation
Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)	<p>This is an index of multiple deprivation calculated by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The index shows the proportion of the population in each lower super output area who live in households that are income deprived (that is, receiving Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Working Families' Tax Credit or Disabled Person's Tax Credit below a given threshold).</p> <p>The new Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 contains seven domains which relate to income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education skills and training deprivation, barriers to housing and services, living environment deprivation, and crime.</p> <p>There are also two supplementary indices (Income Deprivation Affecting Children and Income Deprivation Affecting Older People).</p>
Inspection and regulation	<p>Ofsted regulates and inspects social care, early years and childcare provision.</p> <p>Regulation is for those providers registered by Ofsted. It has four aspects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) registration, for which applicants meet the requirements for registration 2) inspection includes judgements about the quality of provision as well as a check of continued compliance with requirements for registration (other than inspections of those on the Childcare Register, where Ofsted checks only compliance with requirements) 3) investigation of any information that suggests non-compliance with requirements for registration 4) enforcement, whereby Ofsted takes legal action to bring about compliance with requirements for registration; or against those who operate without registration. <p>Those providers who are not required to register with Ofsted may be subject to inspection. Inspection involves visiting a provision at regular intervals, usually set out in law, to check the quality of what is provided.</p>
Childcare and early years	
Early learning goals	The knowledge, skills and understanding which young children should have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they reach the age of five.
Early Years Foundation Stage	New registration and inspection arrangements against the Early Years Foundation Stage started on 1 September 2008. This single framework sets the standards for care, learning and development for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday.
Sure Start children's centres	These provide a range of services for children and their families from pregnancy through to when a child goes to school. Children's centres provide families with, or make arrangements for them to have access to: early learning and childcare; family support; health services; support into employment; other specialist services.

Term	Definition or explanation
Maintained schools	
Categories of concern	<p>There are two Ofsted categories of concern:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) a school is made subject to special measures if it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and if the persons responsible for leading, governing or managing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement 2) a school is given a notice to improve if it is judged through inspection to be: a) failing to provide an acceptable standard of education but demonstrating the capacity to improve, or b) not failing to provide an acceptable standard of education but performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.
Interim assessment	<p>From September 2009 Ofsted has varied the frequency of schools' inspections. We now inspect most schools judged good or outstanding at their previous inspection at approximately five-year intervals unless we identify any concerns. To help decide whether we could wait longer than three years before undertaking a full inspection of a good or outstanding school Her Majesty's Inspectors consider various sources of information about the school's performance. This is called an interim assessment.</p>
Key stages	<p>These are the five stages of the maintained school curriculum between the ages of three and 16 years:</p> <p>Early Years Foundation Stage: from birth to 31 August following a child's fifth birthday</p> <p>Key Stage 1: 5–7 years</p> <p>Key Stage 2: 7–11 years</p> <p>Key Stage 3: 11–14 years</p> <p>Key Stage 4: 14–16 years.</p>
Warning notice	<p>A warning notice may be issued by a local authority to the governing body of a school about which it has serious concerns. Warning notices should only be used where there is evidence to justify both the local authority's concerns and the governing body's reluctance to address these concerns. The governing body may make representations about the warning notice to Ofsted. Ofsted will decide whether there are sufficient grounds to accept the appeal. If the appeal is upheld the warning notice will be rescinded; otherwise it will be reissued. Once the warning notice has been confirmed, the governing body has 15 working days to comply with the warning notice. Such compliance may not involve full rectification of the problem, since it will not always be practical to do so within the time, but it will involve positive steps towards the solution.</p>
National qualification levels	
Explanation of national qualification levels	<p>Level 1 includes qualifications at level 1 and level 'E' (entry level), such as NVQs, foundation GNVQs and other foundation or pre-foundation qualifications.</p> <p>Level 2 includes level 2 NVQs, intermediate GNVQs and precursors (BTEC first certificate or first diploma, City and Guilds Diploma of Vocational Education at intermediate level), GCSEs and other intermediate level qualifications.</p> <p>Level 3 includes level 3 NVQs, advanced GNVQs and precursors (BTEC national certificate or national diploma, City and Guilds Diploma of Vocational Education at national level), advanced VCEs, GCE A, A2 and AS levels and other advanced level qualifications.</p>

Annex 4. Glossary

Term	Definition or explanation
Learning and skills	
Adult and community learning	Adult and community learning, provided by councils, the voluntary and community sector, specialist adult education establishments and by some further education colleges, is diverse in character and aims to meet the needs and interests of a wide range of communities and the different groups within them. Provision includes 'First Step' courses for those who have not participated in learning for some years and where progression is a primary aim; courses leading to qualifications; provision for informal adult learning; and programmes and projects that specifically target improvements in community cohesion and the contribution that local people make to their neighbourhoods.
Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships are work-based learning programmes for young people and adults. Learners complete a framework which includes practical training, work towards technical certificates and key skills training. Apprenticeships, which last approximately two years, equate to a level 2 qualification; Advanced Apprenticeships generally last three years and provide a qualification at level 3.
Diplomas	The 14–19 Diploma is made up of different elements, combining theoretical study with practical learning. The largest element is known as the 'principal learning'. This covers the specialist subject content. The other elements required to achieve the Diploma qualification comprise: functional skills; a unit of additional or specialist learning intended to complement or extend the 'principal learning'; a project; and 10 days' work experience. To be awarded the Diploma, learners are required to meet the necessary standards in each of these elements.
DWP contracted employment provision	These programmes, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, are designed to help people improve their employability skills and find work. Very much focused on individual need, they comprise a range of elements, such as the development of job-seeking skills and the opportunity to work towards relevant qualifications.
Entry to Employment	Entry to Employment are courses for 16–18-year-olds not participating in any form of post-16 learning, to help them to progress to an apprenticeship, further learning or a job. It includes three interdependent core areas: basic and key skills, vocational development, and personal and social development.
nextstep	nextstep is the national information, advice and guidance service for adults. There is one main nextstep contractor in each of the 10 geographical regions. They subcontract some or all of their provision to a range of specialist providers and agencies. Their main focus is on clients without a level 2 qualification.
Offender learning	Ofsted undertakes judicial service inspections in partnership with HMI Prisons and HMI Probation. Ofsted HMI evaluate the quality of learning and skills in prisons, including young offender institutions and secure units for young people. Learning and skills provision in the community settings with HMI Probation are inspected across a range of work-based learning providers and colleges. Prison and probation inspection findings form part of the reports published by HMI Prisons and HMI Probation, and can be found on each inspectorate's website. Separate reports for prison and probation learning and skills are also placed on the Ofsted website.
Prime contractors	Prime contractors receive funding from the Department for Work and Pensions to offer contracted employment provision; they allocate this to a range of subcontractors, according to local need.
Sector subject areas	Sector subject areas are 15 groups of subjects as classified by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). Most subject areas have a number of secondary subject areas or tiers. For example, subject area seven, retail and commercial enterprise, covers warehousing, hospitality, hairdressing and beauty therapy, as well as retailing. In providers that offer second-tier subjects, the area for inspection may be at that level and not the whole subject area.
Specialist designated institutions	Specialist designated institutions have educational status under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, clause 28. They were founded as philanthropic institutions, mostly in the 19th century, to help the disadvantaged in society.

Term	Definition or explanation
Train to Gain	The Train to Gain initiative enables employers to access free training for employees without a level 2 qualification to undertake training towards one. Skills brokers work with employers to identify their training needs and link them with appropriate training providers.
Workstep	This is provision funded by the Department for Work and Pensions for learners with learning difficulties and/or disability. The aim of Workstep is to enable participants to progress to unsupported employment where this is feasible and where it is not to help them improve their skills and develop their potential within their existing, supported work environment.
Social care	
Common Assessment Framework	The Common Assessment Framework is a standardised approach to conducting assessments of children's additional needs and deciding how these should be met.
Residential family centres	Residential family centres are defined in Section 4(2) of the Care Standards Act as establishments at which: (a) accommodation is provided for children and their parents; (b) the parents' capacity to respond to the children's needs and to safeguard their welfare is monitored and assessed; and (c) the parents are given such advice, guidance and counselling as is considered necessary.
Team around the child	The team around the child is a model of multi-agency service provision. The team around the child brings together a range of different practitioners from across the children and young people's workforce to support an individual child or young person and their family. The members of the team around the child develop and deliver a package of solution-focused support to meet the needs identified through the common assessment.
Virtual headteacher	A virtual head teacher is someone appointed by a local authority to promote the educational achievement of all the children looked after by that authority. These children may attend schools in that local authority or schools in other local authorities.

Notes



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