

The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08



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Laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families pursuant to Section 121 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 19 November 2008.

HC 1114

London: The Stationery Office

£26.60

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ISBN:978 010295809 6

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November 2008

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Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear Secretary of State

The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector 2007/08

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

This is the first full year of reporting on the work of the new Ofsted, which came into existence on 1 April 2007 by bringing together in a single organisation four previously separate inspectorates.

As usual, the report begins with my commentary on Ofsted's findings from across the full range of its remit. The first section of the report presents an evaluation of the quality and standards in care, early education, schools, colleges, adult learning and skills, and children's services. It is based on evidence from more than 45,000 inspections and regulatory visits in 2007/08.

The second section draws extensively on Ofsted's thematic inspections and surveys in the different areas of its remit. This section evaluates the effectiveness with which providers seek to address three important matters: improving the life chances of the least advantaged members of our society through excellence in provision; safeguarding children and young people from neglect, abuse and other forms of harm; and enabling learners to acquire the skills they need to succeed in their working lives.

I hope that the report will be of interest to a broad spectrum of readers and that its wide-ranging approach to the evaluation of learning and care will contribute to the continuing work of raising standards and aspirations, and improving lives.

Yours sincerely



Christine Gilbert

Preface

Christine Gilbert

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector



This Annual Report presents evidence from the first full year of inspection and regulation undertaken by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, which came into being in April 2007. The report draws on evidence since July 2007 and reflects the first full year of inspection and regulation by Ofsted across its expanded remit, including findings from childcare, children's social care, and education and skills provision for learners of all ages.

As in previous years, the first part of the report offers an overview of findings from inspection and regulation from across the full range of Ofsted's remit, from childcare and early education to adult learning. The evidence is drawn from our inspection and regulatory visits to providers and from the focused survey inspections we carry out in order to collect more detailed information about subjects and aspects of provision in education and skills. Increasingly, our inspections are proportionate and our resources are focused where there is the greatest need for improvement.

The second part of the report explores three important themes. The first, 'Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care', examines the means by which providers achieve and sustain excellence and, in so doing, make significant improvements in the life chances of the most disadvantaged children, young people and adults.

The second thematic section reports on the progress which has been made in ensuring that children grow up safe from harm and neglect, and with the personal skills needed to enter adult life successfully; this section draws on the third joint chief inspectors' report on arrangements to safeguard children.¹ Finally, in 'Skills for working lives', we report on the quality of provision which seeks to enable learners to acquire the skills needed for successful working lives.

In addition to the full report, a summary is available, setting out the key findings of the report and my commentary.

The full report and the summary are published in printed form and on our website, www.ofsted.gov.uk. The report makes only brief reference to national GCSE and test results for 2008, because the data are provisional at the time of going to press.

As in previous years, we shall be recognising and celebrating those providers of education, care and skills whose work is of the highest quality. The annual list of outstanding providers will be published simultaneously with this report.

Commentary

As Chief Inspector, the production of the Annual Report offers me a unique opportunity to reflect on what is working well for children and learners and to shine a light on what needs to be improved. That means presenting an overview of quality: strengths, weaknesses, success stories, concerns. I hope this report does just that. It does not pull punches where there are concerns; but, equally, it shows where things are improving and going well for children, young people and adult learners. Ofsted is much more than a schools inspectorate these days, and this report reflects outstanding quality and strong improvement across all the sectors we regulate and inspect.

Changes in a single year are rarely dramatic; nor would we expect them to be, despite our understandable impatience with the pace of change. This is why what matters most is sustained improvement in both outcomes and capacity. As I look back over the annual reports of my predecessors, one thing is clear: for most children and learners, things are getting better, and this Annual Report illustrates the point.

- ✦ There is a higher proportion of good or outstanding childcare and early education than ever before.
- ✦ Of the maintained schools inspected this year, almost two thirds are good or outstanding. The proportion of good or outstanding schools has risen by five percentage points since 2005/06. The quality of nursery education is particularly high.
- ✦ In the children's social care sector, of the services inspected this year, two thirds are good or outstanding.
- ✦ Improvement continues in secure accommodation for children and young people; behaviour is better and there is now a proper focus on basic skills.
- ✦ The trend of improvement in colleges of further education continues, with an increased proportion good or outstanding.
- ✦ Many providers in the adult learning sector are successfully meeting the needs of learners who have found it difficult to engage in learning at or beyond school, or to move into sustained employment.
- ✦ Initial teacher education programmes are designed well and trainees are highly motivated and enthusiastic.

Eradicating failure

But such undoubted improvements do not mean that all is well; if education in England is going to compare favourably with the best in the world, standards need to improve further. There has been a considerable reduction in the proportion of 11-year-olds who transfer from primary to secondary education without reaching the expected level in English and mathematics; even so, the proportion today is still one in five. A decade ago, two thirds of secondary age pupils left compulsory education without grades A* to C in five subjects at GCSE including English and mathematics. Today the figure is still more than half.

There are, then, still major challenges ahead and worrying pockets of poor performance. This is particularly true of services for disadvantaged children. Across England, the opportunities available to these children fall well short of those available to others. As I said last year, the relationship between poverty and outcomes for young people is stark. The poor outcomes for young people living in the most disadvantaged areas are seen at every stage of the education and care sectors. To give just one example, Ofsted's recent report on childcare, *Leading to excellence*, highlights not only the variation in the quality of provision across the country but that children living in deprived areas have access to fewer good childcare settings.

A number of measures have had some impact on these young people and it has been encouraging to see the success of initiatives such as the London Challenge and Teach First. It is also encouraging to see that of the 10 academies inspected this year three were outstanding, five good and two satisfactory. We are also beginning to see the positive impact of a growing number of children's centres and extended schools. There are signs too that more young people are staying on in education and training. Yet the rate of improvement in the performance of disadvantaged groups of learners remains too slow and the quality of the support for them is still not good enough. So while the attainment of disadvantaged children and young people has risen, so have standards nationally, and consequently the gap between those best placed to take advantage of the services provided for them and those missing out – typically, and put simply, children from poor families – remains wide. Despite effort and investment, the educational attainment of looked after children and their levels of participation in post-16 education, training and employment remain unacceptably poor.

Commentary continued

Poverty is not the only indicator of lives at risk. The progress of many learners for whom English is an additional language is uneven, and there is too much variation in the support provided to this group of learners from one local area to another. In prisons, too little attention is given to adults for whom English is an additional language, and often little distinction is made between those who may be illiterate in their own language and those who are literate but have poor English language skills. And, as has been stressed in annual reports over the years, the gap remains between the performance of male and female learners.

We have seen some narrowing of the gap in GCSE achievement between black, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and white pupils, but for some groups the combination of gender, ethnic group and socio-economic background is associated with the very lowest levels of economic achievement. For example, national data suggest that the impact of poverty is greater on secondary pupils of White British and Black Caribbean background than on other groups. The attainment of White British boys from poor homes remains particularly low, blighting their opportunities to participate in higher education, seen by many as the key to social mobility. Ofsted's evidence also shows that programmes designed to help adults in deprived areas move into work have too low a success rate. In short, if you are poor, you are more likely to receive poor services: disadvantage compounds disadvantage.

For the youngest children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, early and effective intervention can greatly improve their subsequent achievement and life chances. In the overwhelming majority of schools, these pupils make satisfactory or better progress, and in most local areas support agencies are working together more effectively across health, education and social care. But there are unacceptable delays in access to some key specialist services, and there is too much variation in the training of teachers to teach pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In the further education and adult skills sectors there is too much inconsistency in the degree to which individual learning needs are met. Provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is among the least effective aspects of adult and community learning. And in custodial settings, the welfare of young people and adults in this group gives cause for concern.

Hence the importance of the quality of the services provided for those in disadvantaged circumstances. With the right

educational provision and social support around them, children and young people from poor families can reach high standards, overcoming initial disadvantage to achieve personal success. Ofsted will shortly be publishing a review of outstanding secondary schools in challenging areas – schools which have demonstrated that they can deliver high quality education, year in year out, against the odds. Effective programmes for adults in challenging circumstances enable them to find permanent jobs and to exert a positive influence on their families and communities. Indeed, inspectors consistently report that good provision can make a profound difference to adult learners' life chances.

Typically, the provision that really makes a difference is ambitious. It does not believe that anyone's past or present circumstances should define their future. Children and learners are put first and treated as individuals; they are supported and expected to make progress and achieve well. Aspirations are high. They are engaged in their own development and learning. Where children and young people are involved, parents and carers are actively included in their development and progress, so helping them to take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

Success across all the areas we regulate and inspect does not happen by chance. It is the result of careful planning, monitoring and review. It involves a relentless search for ways to generate further improvement. And, crucially, it rests on the outstanding commitment, skills and dogged perseverance of the staff involved. The importance of learners experiencing consistently high quality teaching cannot be overemphasised; by way of example, Ofsted's recent report on the teaching of mathematics highlights vividly the difference that can be made when a subject is taught well. As has been said before, satisfactory provision will not be good enough for these children and learners.

Safeguarding children and young people

We have a particular responsibility as a society to ensure that services for children, young people and their families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable – particularly children in care or custody – are as good as possible. This is why I am so determined to highlight where such provision falls below that standard. As part of this commitment, in 2008 Ofsted, with partner inspectorates, published the latest three-year review of safeguarding. In the second part of this Annual Report we highlight again its important messages. Most children are safe in their homes and communities and

receive the quality of care and support they need, but there are still weaknesses and there remains much to do, and to do with a sense of urgency. The challenge to those responsible for improving inadequate services is identified unequivocally by Ofsted's inspection of children's services. Those services that are judged to be outstanding in supporting the looked after children in their care share an important characteristic: they perform well across the entire spectrum of services that have an impact on the lives of these children and young people, thereby ensuring a level of consistency and stability previously lacking.

But there are particularly worrying concerns about weaknesses in children's homes and the volatility of the quality of them. For example, around 7% of children's homes are judged to be inadequate in keeping the children in their care safe. Given the centrality of these services to children's lives and prospects, this is a high level of inadequacy. Inspections highlight the lack of experienced and competent staff, and insufficient compliance with requirements for the supervision of staff. Moreover, the choice of placement remains limited for most children and some feel it is hard to influence decisions that involve them.

Rates of educational attainment and school attendance remain unacceptably low for looked after children compared with other children, and rates of improvement have been slower than for their peers. Children and young people in most areas continue to experience frequent changes of social worker. This lack of continuity has an adverse effect on the implementation of their care plans. Some looked after children and young people who go into custody subsequently have less contact with their allocated social worker than required or expected; this was the case in one in six youth offending team areas inspected. This is a particular problem where children are in custody a long distance from their home area. Furthermore, this Annual Report identifies shortcomings in the support for children and families who are involved in family court proceedings and where the welfare of children is, or may be, in question.

Inspection has identified many improvements to safeguarding arrangements over the past three years, noting successful practice across a range of settings. But some children and young people are still not served well enough by public services, and there is still much to do to ensure that all children are properly safeguarded, particularly looked after children and those in secure settings.

Prioritising literacy and numeracy

Much has been written in recent years about the priority afforded the teaching of English and mathematics in schools. This must continue to be a high priority. There is certainly evidence of improvement but it remains too slow, and there are schools where reading is not strong which are not yet systematically using the most effective teaching methods: in particular the use of phonics in the teaching of early reading. However, it is encouraging to report that primary trainee teachers now often have a good knowledge of how to teach early reading and writing: if we get it right for young children, we can help them avoid difficulties in later life.

Yet too many have not acquired these skills at school and it is all the more important then that they have access to high quality support for literacy and numeracy in later years. Raising the skills level of the nation is a major government priority: not only are high standards of technical and vocational skills important, but good standards of literacy and numeracy are central to securing and sustaining employment. A high priority must be the provision of well targeted support for those from disadvantaged groups, with particular attention given to identifying and addressing problems with literacy and numeracy.

The report indicates that the quality and availability of support for these basic skills are at best patchy. The poor literacy and numeracy skills of some groups of young people and adults are particularly striking. These include offenders, whose skills are below level 1 for over 60% of those assessed, while nearly all children and young people entering secure settings have skills below the national average.

It is clearly easier to assess skills than improve them, an issue emerging from Ofsted's inspection of provision offered through Train to Gain and Jobcentre Plus. Too much time is spent in accrediting existing skills rather than developing new ones. The best providers now link an individual's literacy and numeracy skills to specific employment skills and potential work roles, but this is sensitive territory and employers are often reluctant to broach concerns about basic skills with employees. Nevertheless, a failure to address learners' needs in literacy and numeracy is a significant and long-term weakness of the adult learning and skills sector.

Commentary continued

Improving capacity

It is encouraging to see how much is improving across the sectors we regulate and inspect. This Annual Report provides many examples of improvement, sometimes sector-wide improvement, from across the education, skills, childcare and social care sectors. For example, the quality of self-evaluation is now good or outstanding in seven in 10 maintained secondary schools; 10 years ago it was judged to be at least good in only three in 10 schools. This is a remarkable turnaround, and particularly important. Settings that can identify honestly and clearly their strengths and weaknesses are likely to be well placed to identify their most important priorities and from these to bring about improvement.

Further education colleges are continuing to improve, with over 70% now good or outstanding; and although the number of students is relatively small, it is encouraging to see that independent specialist colleges – generally catering for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities – are performing better than ever before. The work-based learning sector is also improving, with the engineering, business administration and construction subject areas standing out from an increasingly successful range of programmes; completion rates are rising in apprenticeship frameworks. Employers' needs are increasingly being met, for example through programmes such as learndirect.

This report reviews how settings that were once inadequate have improved and in many instances moved to excellence. The numbers are particularly encouraging: over 1,700 childcare settings and 180 early education providers that were inadequate at their previous inspection are now satisfactory or better; almost 400 schools and six colleges that were inadequate are now satisfactory or better; and 116 children's homes that were once inadequate are now satisfactory or better. The circumstances and the routes taken are invariably unique to the individual institution or provider, but some common factors behind the improvements emerge, including:

- ✦ leadership which establishes a clear and ambitious direction for change, takes tough decisions, sets the right pace for sustained progress and secures the commitment of staff
- ✦ objective, open and reflective self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, conducted in conjunction with service users and staff, and leading to a wise analysis of the implications for individuals and the actions to take to secure improvement

- ✦ dialogue and feedback to ensure that needs are being met in a culture of excellence, both for individual service users and for the wider community from which they come.

Let me highlight two further features of outstanding settings. First, the importance of effective assessment: in schools, assessment is a key component of good teaching and learning, but also a vital management tool to highlight progress or the lack of it and to help evaluate the impact of support mechanisms. Managers of effective children's homes assess the needs of the children, evaluate the quality of care effectively and tackle weaknesses to bring about improvement. In the best childcare settings, adults regularly assess the development of the children; they also monitor the impact of their own work and, again, take action to bring about improvement.

The second feature of effective settings, across the sectors, is the way they engage and involve the children, young people and adult learners in the plans and actions that will drive improvement. Learning is personalised to meet both specific and group needs; this includes the setting of individual targets and making explicit what is needed to achieve them. In children's homes, for example, the children will be involved in making decisions about their lives; they will be clear about what is happening to them and understand the plans for their future.

These features are neither surprising nor necessarily complicated: listen to the users of a service, assess their needs collaboratively and realistically, and then take action in the light of this information. But just as these features are highlighted as strengths in the most effective settings, so they emerge, time and time again, as weaknesses when settings fail.

Supporting improvement

Many institutions need to improve, and support can come from many sources. But not all support is supportive; without careful handling, support can overwhelm or distract. A key message from this Annual Report is that good leaders know how to assess the support offered; they take what is essential, and they resist all but the right support at the right time. This point is worth emphasising: unless external support is carefully matched to individual circumstances and its impact is rigorously evaluated, it can create more problems and, at worst, slow the pace of improvement.

I have already highlighted concerns for those groups of children and learners who are missing out in the general improvement across sectors, the rising levels of attainment and the remarkable range of opportunities now available to most. Most settings improve, often strongly and rapidly, from an inspection judgement of inadequacy, and become at least satisfactory and often good or even outstanding. Becoming outstanding is just the beginning; sustaining this level of provision should be the goal of every leader.

But I am also concerned about those institutions and providers where there is no improvement, or, in some instances, deterioration. For example, Ofsted reported 553 childcare settings that were good or better at an earlier inspection but are now inadequate, and 168 schools and four colleges which were once good or better and are now inadequate. Of particular concern is the volatility in the quality of children's homes: for example, the 36 children's homes that are now inadequate having once been judged to be good or better. Changes to staffing or management can rapidly have a negative effect on the continuity of quality within homes.

There are messages for the institutions and the support services in this set of data, but there are also messages for Ofsted: early warning systems need to be more finely tuned, picking up more astutely local concerns such as those from parents, or lengthy periods with interim or volatile senior management structures. Inspection needs to be smarter at intervening and flagging concerns before they escalate. The key challenges for Ofsted are to help improve the weakest, to prevent those that are improving from slipping back, and at the same time to recognise and disseminate the features of good practice.

Changing school inspection

This is why earlier this year I published proposals to change school inspection and will go on to make changes in other areas too. In line with our strategic plan, Ofsted must focus inspections on those areas and issues where they will have the most impact on outcomes for children and learners. Good and outstanding schools will be subject to a lighter touch inspection. This will allow us to focus on schools that are coasting and schools that have inconsistent results or are slipping, as well as those that are inadequate. We shall identify these schools more quickly and inspect them more frequently. There is more we should learn from the huge amount of information available to

us about the performance of pupils and their schools, and we are also looking to tap more directly into the views of parents and children.

Inspectors are already alert to the issues raised in this commentary. They will continue to investigate whether particular groups of pupils are achieving as well as they should, including those in the most vulnerable circumstances – and indeed, the most able. They will judge specifically how well each school fulfils its duties in terms of equalities and community cohesion, and they will seek evidence of the outcomes for learners in terms of their well-being. Too much teaching is dull, lacking challenge and failing to engage pupils. That is why inspectors will spend more time in classrooms than in recent years, evaluating the quality of teaching and the impact it has on learning. More detailed recommendations on what is needed for the school to move on will invariably focus on the precision of classroom practice. Inspectors will take note of the circumstances of pupils and schools, and will, as now, look closely at measures of progress. But progress is not enough. If we are to increase social mobility and social justice the standards achieved by individuals are crucial for future success in education, employment and training.

Conclusion

This is my first Annual Report drawing on inspection evidence for a complete year across the wide-reaching remit of the new Ofsted: the regulation and inspection of childcare and children's social care, and the inspection of local authority children's services, schools, colleges, initial teacher education, work-based learning, adult education and more.

This report leaves me encouraged by the recognition that so much is going well for so many children, young people and adult learners; but frustrated that there is still too much that is patently inadequate, and too many settings and institutions where the rate of improvement is unacceptably slow. As Chief Inspector, I will focus inspection and regulation directly and proportionately where the need for improvement is greatest. Indeed, in a time of economic uncertainty and financial constraint, it is all the more important that regulation and inspection are able to provide timely and evidence-based recommendations not only to those inspected but also to those responsible for establishing policy and direction for care, education and skills in England.

Key findings



- ✦ A higher proportion of childcare and early education is good or outstanding this year than in 2006/07 but the level of inadequate childcare remains the same at 4%. The quality of provision varies across the sector and between areas. Overall, the quality of childcare is not as good in areas of high deprivation as elsewhere.
- ✦ Over six in 10 providers of childcare and early education inspected are good or outstanding in enabling children to stay safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve and make a positive contribution.
- ✦ Almost two thirds of maintained schools inspected are good or outstanding, a slightly higher figure than in 2006/07, but 9% of secondary schools and 4% of primary schools are inadequate. The gap between the performance of the best and the weakest schools is unacceptable. Of special schools inspected, 80% are at least good, with 26% outstanding. Nursery schools are particularly effective: 97% of those inspected are good or outstanding.
- ✦ The proportion of pupil referral units which are at least good in their overall effectiveness is similar to that for all schools, while the percentage judged inadequate is slightly higher. However, only 7% of pupil referral units are outstanding; the proportion for schools generally is 15%.
- ✦ The large majority of non-association independent schools inspected meet at least 90% of the regulations.² In just over half these schools, the quality of education provided and pupils' achievement are good or outstanding. However, it is a major concern that about a third of non-association independent schools do not fully meet the requirements for safeguarding pupils.
- ✦ In colleges of further education, success rates for courses have continued to improve and this year an increased proportion of colleges are good or outstanding overall. In six in 10 colleges, students' achievement is good or outstanding. Underperforming colleges fail to set challenging targets and too much of the teaching is no better than satisfactory.
- ✦ Sixth form colleges continue to be highly effective.
- ✦ There has been improvement in several areas of adult learning and skills. The sector is flexible and diverse in providing opportunities for a broad range of learners, some of whom have typically found it difficult to engage in learning or to move into sustained employment. Much remains to be done, however, to overcome the barriers faced by some of the most disadvantaged adults. The sector generally engages well with employers but scope remains for greater involvement of employers in training.

- ✦ Initial teacher education programmes are designed well and trainees are highly motivated and enthusiastic. More should be done to ensure that all trainees promote equality and inclusion in their teaching.
- ✦ Most social care provided for children in children's homes, through adoption and fostering agencies and in residential schools is at least satisfactory overall and two thirds is good or outstanding. However, one in 12 providers are inadequate. This is a cause for concern.
- ✦ Of the children's homes inspected between July 2007 and August 2008, two thirds are good or outstanding. However, 8% of children's homes were inadequate at their most recent inspection. Safeguarding and management are the areas most frequently requiring improvement in inadequate children's homes.
- ✦ National minimum standards and regulations for private fostering arrangements are not yet consistently met, and the attention and resources that local authorities give to monitoring private fostering arrangements vary. This calls into question the ability of some local authorities to improve the quality of this provision.
- ✦ In secure accommodation for children and young people, the improvements reported last year have been maintained, especially in standards of behaviour. Most young people leave with some accreditation in essential skills and there is an appropriate emphasis on raising their attainment in literacy and numeracy. However, they have too few opportunities to gain work-related skills.
- ✦ In adult prisons, while many offenders develop good skills for employment, others have too few opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications.
- ✦ Inspections of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), which plays an important role in safeguarding children's welfare in family court proceedings, have been highly critical of the unacceptable variation in the quality of front-line practice, particularly in private law work.
- ✦ Most councils and their partners contribute effectively to children's safety and welfare and to ensuring that they enjoy their education and achieve well. Educational achievement is improving overall but there is too much variation between local areas and between outcomes for some disadvantaged groups of pupils and their peers.
- ✦ There are often long delays in producing the findings of serious case reviews conducted when children have died or been seriously hurt and child abuse is thought to have been a factor. As a result, the potential for learning from these reviews to improve practice is severely limited. Lessons from recent reviews are not always leading to improvement.

Quality and standards in care, early education, schools, colleges, adult learning and skills, and children's services



Childcare and early education



Introduction

1 For many families with young children, safe childcare provision must be available to enable parents to go to work. They rely on registered childcare providers such as childminders, nurseries or other day-care provision. High quality childcare provides a secure foundation for children's future development and achievements. Ofsted has been responsible for the registration and inspection of childcare provision since 2001.³

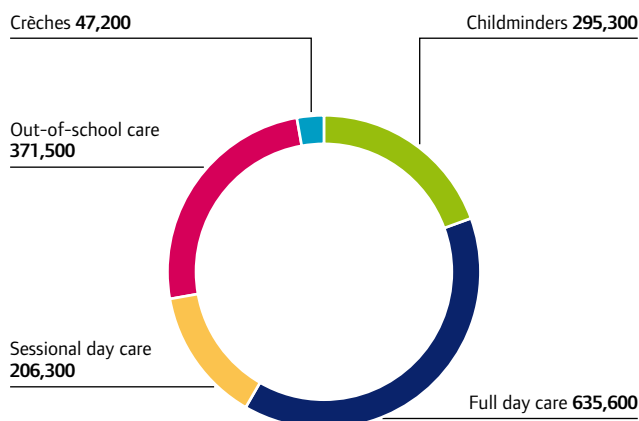
2 This section reports on the scale of the registered early years and childcare sector and the quality of provision, improvements and regulatory action taken from July 2007 to August 2008. During this period, Ofsted inspected 31,000 settings, 8,000 of which also provide government-funded early education.

Size of sector

3 At 31 August 2008, one and a half million registered childcare places were available and there were 99,900 providers in total (Figure 1). Over the last four years there has been a rise of 7% in places, but there has been little change this year (Figure 2). The decline in childminding places (8%) over the last four years and sessional care

places (24%) is more than offset by a steady growth in places in larger full day-care provision (31%) and out-of-school places (12%).

Figure 1: Number of childcare places: August 2008 (total 1,555,800)

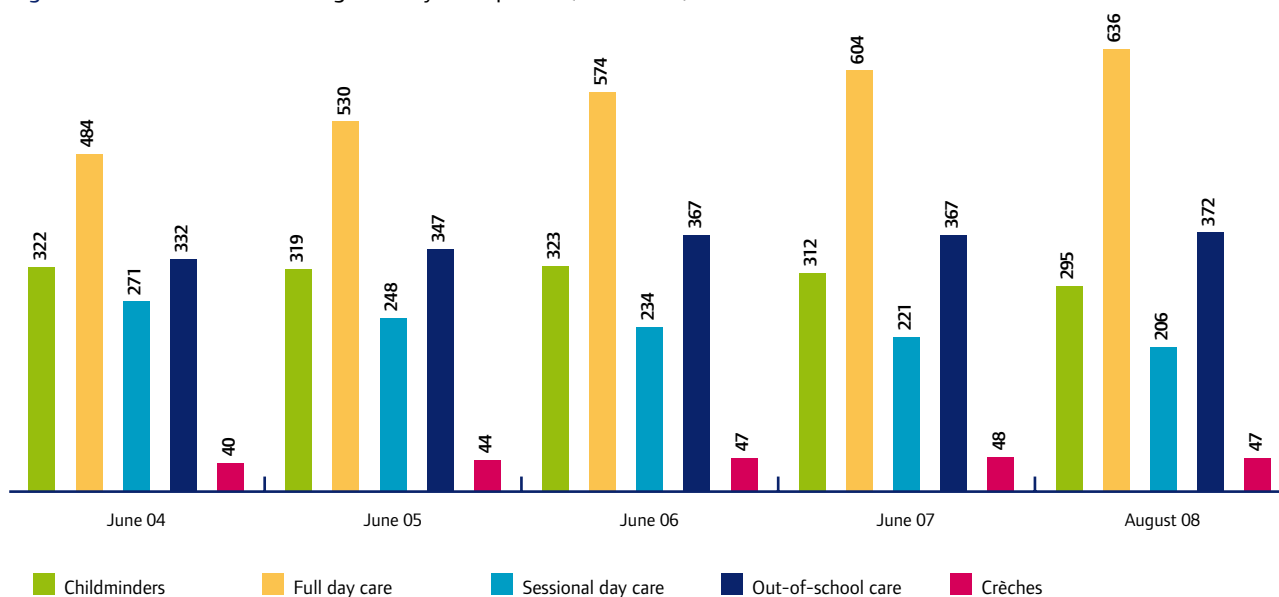


Figures are rounded and do not add up to the total.

³ For further information, see Annex, p.122.

Childcare and early education continued

Figure 2: Trends in childminding and day-care places (thousands)



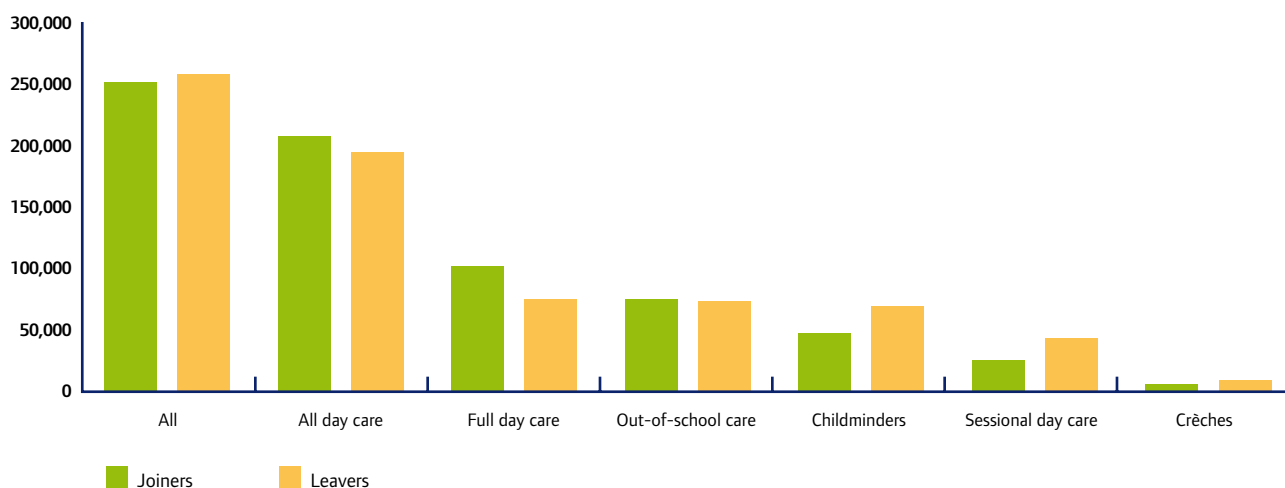
4 The sector is fluid, with many providers joining and leaving. This affects all types of provision (Figure 3). The quality of provision that has closed varied widely; almost half the settings (49%) provided good or outstanding care at the last inspection, 43% were satisfactory and 7% were inadequate. Overall, this represents a less positive profile than for the sector as a whole, in which proportions of good or outstanding, satisfactory and inadequate provision are 62%, 35% and 4% respectively.

5 About 4,000 of the total number of childminders who left the sector during the year had not looked after any children over the previous three years. They accounted for the loss of over 16,500 notional places.

6 Trends in net numbers of places over the last four years have varied across the regions. Growth rates have been higher in London (13%) and the North West (12%) and lower in the South West (3%) compared with the average across England (7%). This is largely the result of different rates of growth in out-of-school places; numbers have risen in London by 24% and in the North West by 19%, but in the South West by just 5% compared with the average rise for England of 12%.



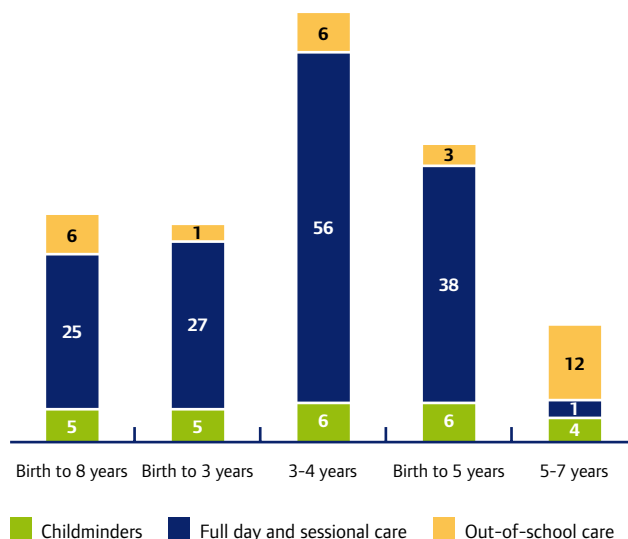
Figure 3: Numbers of childcare places accounted for by providers joining and leaving the sector between July 2007 and August 2008



7 Around a third of children aged under eight attend registered childcare each week, with 25% attending full day or sessional care, 5% with childminders and 6% going to out-of-school schemes (Figure 4). These estimates are based on the number of registered childcare places, the estimated attendance levels for each age group and population figures.⁴

8 Around two thirds (68%) of three- and four-year-olds for whom government-funded early education is available attend registered childcare provision each week. One third of under-threes attend registered childcare provision; and about one in six (17%) of five- to seven-year-olds attend childcare before or after school. The role played by each type of provision varies across the age ranges (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Estimated weekly attendance in registered childcare (percentage of age groups attending)



⁴ These data are an estimation of the percentage of all children under eight years old attending a registered childcare provider at any one time. This excludes most provision run by schools. The figures should therefore be used with caution as gaps in the data may lead to misinterpretation. The estimation is based on four data sets. These are:

- the number of registered childcare places as at March 2008 – source: *Quarterly childcare statistics as at: 31 March 2008*, Ofsted, 2008

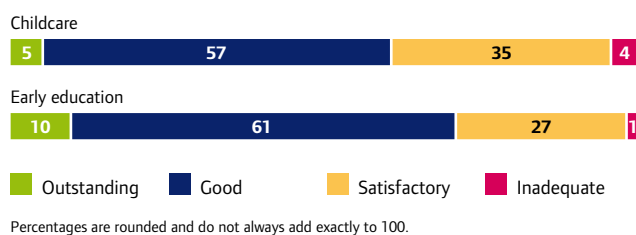
- estimation of the age groups attending – source: DCSF childcare and early years providers survey, 2007
- estimated average number of children per place – source: DCSF childcare and early years providers survey, 2007
- estimated resident child population in England on 30 June 2006 – source: Office for National Statistics.

Childcare and early education continued

The quality of provision

9 Of the 31,000 childcare settings inspected during the year, around six in 10 are good or outstanding (Figure 5). Around seven in 10 of the 8,000 providers of early education inspected are good or outstanding.

Figure 5: The quality of childcare and early education: July 2007 to August 2008 (percentage of providers inspected)

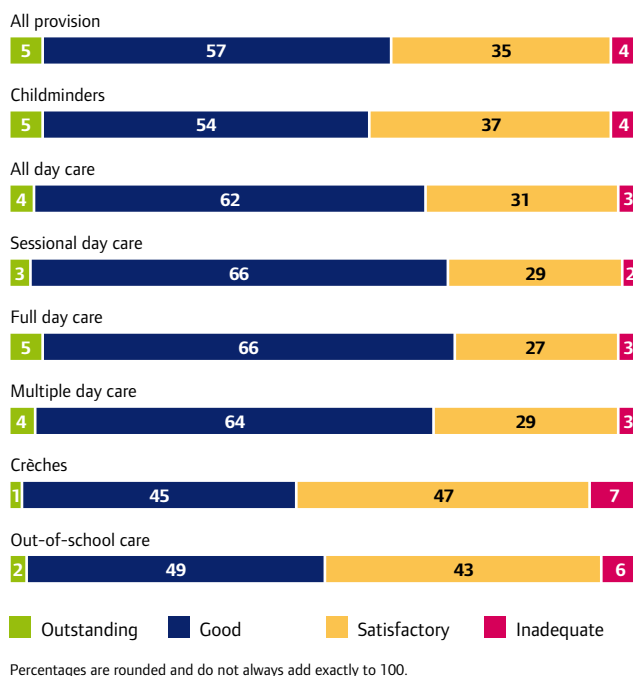


10 The quality of provision varies across the different types of provider (Figure 6).⁵ For example, 71% of full day-care settings but about half (51%) of out-of-school schemes provide good or outstanding childcare. This is mainly because staff in out-of-school settings are often less well qualified and less skilled in providing care and managing behaviour.

11 In both childcare and early education, higher proportions of the providers inspected this year are good or outstanding than in 2006/07. In childcare, 62% of settings are at least good, compared with 58% last year. In early education, 71% of settings are at least good, compared with 63% last year.

12 Over 1,200 settings were found to be inadequate, and the percentage of inadequate settings, at 4%, remains the same as last year (Figure 6). Out-of-school schemes and crèches have the lowest levels of good and outstanding provision. The main weaknesses in these types of settings include insufficient rigour in checking that staff are suitable; insufficient attention to risk assessment; and lack of necessary procedures and records for safeguarding children. Most inadequate settings improve to become satisfactory within a year.

Figure 6: The quality of childcare by type of provider: July 2007 to August 2008 (percentage of providers inspected)



13 Overall, well established provision has a slightly higher proportion that is good or outstanding than that registered more recently. This suggests that providers improve with experience and training. In longer established settings, overall, 62% are good or better in enabling children to stay safe compared with 57% of settings registered more recently. For helping children to make a positive contribution, the comparable figures are 68% and 62%.

14 The quality of provision varies considerably by region.⁶ In 28 local authorities, less than half the childminding is good or outstanding, while in nine local authorities more than three quarters of childminding is at least good. There are similar differences in the quality of group day care.

⁵ For definitions of different kinds of provision, see Glossary, p.135.

⁶ Local authority data are based on the whole period from April 2005 to August 2008.

15 Provision is generally of poorer quality in the most disadvantaged areas. In the 20% of local authority areas that are most deprived:⁷

- ✘ only 51% of childminders are good or outstanding, compared with 59% in the rest of the country
- ✘ only 55% of group day care is good or outstanding, compared with 63% in the rest of the country.

16 For this reason, children and families living in areas already experiencing disadvantage face further inequality. Some of the most disadvantaged children therefore have a poorer foundation for full-time education than their contemporaries from more affluent homes. The thematic section ‘Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care’, on page 70 of this report, explores more fully the links between disadvantage and the quality of education and care.

17 Nevertheless, there is provision of high quality in areas of disadvantage, including the 20% most deprived areas. For example, 79% of childminders in Blackpool and 70% in Liverpool are at least good; in Leicester and Wolverhampton, over two thirds (68%) of group day-care provision is good or outstanding.

Outcomes for children

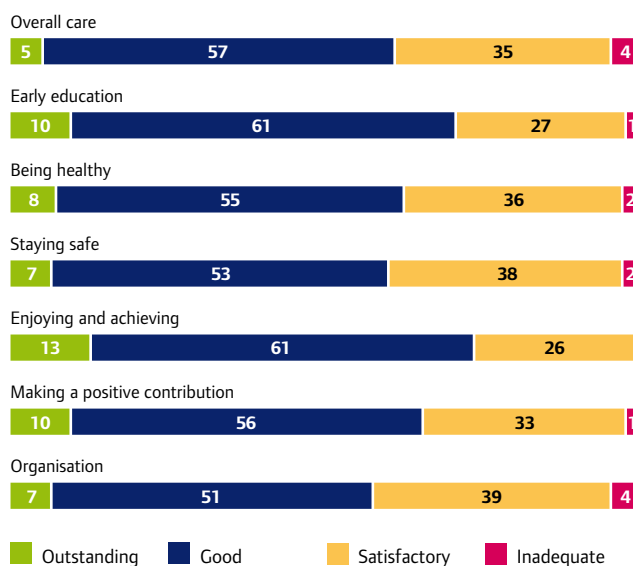
18 Inspectors judge how well settings enable children to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, and make a positive contribution.⁸ They also judge how well a setting is organised to support this.

19 Most providers promote outcomes for children well. For each of the four Every Child Matters outcomes evaluated in early years settings by Ofsted, over half the registered providers inspected are good or outstanding (Figure 7). They are particularly successful in helping children to enjoy what they do and to make good progress in their learning and development.

Being healthy

20 Just over six in 10 providers (63%) are good or outstanding in helping children to enjoy good physical and mental health and live a healthy lifestyle (Figure 7). In these settings, children are alert, well nourished and comfortable

Figure 7: Quality of overall care, organisation, early education and Every Child Matters outcomes in childcare settings: July 2007 to August 2008 (percentages of providers inspected)



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

31,000 settings were inspected for overall care and outcomes, and 8,000 for early education.

because adults respond to their particular needs, including routines for eating and resting. Children develop good eating habits and enjoy being active, indoors and out.

21 In the 2% of settings that provide inadequate support for children in being healthy, typical weaknesses include a failure to keep first aid training and skills up to date and not following the necessary procedures for administering medication.

Staying safe

22 Six in 10 providers are good or outstanding in protecting children from harm and neglect (Figure 7). In these, the first priority for adults is to ensure children’s safety; they are rigorous in checking the suitability of new staff, and they are appropriately trained and fully confident in protecting children from harm. Consequently, children learn how to keep themselves safe and measures are taken to deal with potential risks.

⁷ This analysis is based on the communities and local government indices of deprivation, 2007, and looks at inspections across the last three years.

⁸ The five Every Child Matters outcomes – being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well-being – are set out in *Every Child Matters: change for children* (DfES/1081/2004), DfES 2004. Inspectors of childcare and early education provision judge how well settings promote the first four of these outcomes.

Childcare and early education continued

23 In the 2% of settings that are inadequate in relation to the staying safe outcome, typical weaknesses include a failure to ensure that safety measures, such as fire procedures, are in place. In some cases, not enough staff are on duty to ensure children's safety at all times. Ofsted's follow-up actions where settings are inadequate are detailed in the section on 'Improvement', page 19.

Enjoying and achieving

24 Children enjoy themselves and achieve when they are getting the most out of life and developing skills for adulthood. Of the settings inspected, 74% are good or outstanding in helping children to enjoy what they do and to achieve well (Figure 7). In these settings, children are happy and excited about learning. They take part enthusiastically in a range of stimulating activities, planned on the basis of accurate assessment of their individual needs. Skilled and well trained adults motivate children to learn by capturing their interest, arousing their curiosity and helping them to explore and experiment through their play. They also monitor the children's progress rigorously.

25 Few settings, less than half a per cent, are inadequate in this area. In these, the main weaknesses are poor assessment or planning to support each child's development needs and too limited a range of activities and resources to sustain the children's interest.

Making a positive contribution

26 Ofsted inspects how well providers help children to develop good behaviour, respect others' similarities and differences, relate well to those around them, make decisions and begin to support the community and the environment. Of the settings inspected, 66% are good or outstanding in this area of their work (Figure 7). In these, children are confident because they are valued; they are encouraged to share their ideas and experiences, and to develop independence. They are consulted about activities and rules. Adults know the children well and respond to them as individuals to promote their welfare and development.

27 Children take part in activities which meet their needs and abilities. A strong focus on the inclusion of every child helps to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged because

of gender, ethnicity, home language, culture or religion. Children develop an understanding of the wider world, and of their own and others' beliefs and cultures. The specific needs of individuals are met very well. Those who are learning English as an additional language use words and phrases from their home languages and dual language books. Adults work to remove barriers for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, working closely with parents and outside agencies.

28 Children behave extremely well. Adults provide models of calm and respectful behaviour, and children show concern for others and play harmoniously. They develop reasoning and negotiating skills and learn to manage their own behaviour. Adults help them to consider the impact of their actions on others and to resolve minor conflicts through talking.

29 Strong links with parents and carers support care that is sensitive to the circumstances of every child. Parents are clear about the principles and aims of the provision; before a child starts at the setting, clear expectations for the care are agreed. Staff and parents share information about the children's progress. Parents' views are sought, valued and used to support improvement.

30 In the inadequate settings (1%), weaknesses include unclear procedures for parents to raise concerns; no clear agreement with parents about aspects of children's care; lack of attention to making children aware of diversity in the wider world; and poor management of children's behaviour.

Organisation

31 Of the settings inspected, 58% are good or outstanding in their organisation to promote good outcomes (Figure 7). In these settings, children are at the heart of all that happens. Adults regularly assess their development and use the information to plan the next steps, involving each child in the process. There are robust vetting and recruitment procedures.⁹ Adults are clear about their roles and they work well together. Managers support staff effectively to identify individual development needs and encourage them to add to their knowledge and skills through training. Adults regularly monitor what they do, are committed to improvement and take action to bring it about. In a recent

survey of providers, 96% of respondents said they regularly evaluate their services and record their evaluations as part of their efforts to improve.¹⁰

32 In the 4% of settings with inadequate organisation, common weaknesses are a lack of rigour in monitoring and dealing with ineffective practice; unclear roles and responsibilities; and unsatisfactory support for staff development.

Improvement

33 Ofsted reinspects, within six months, the inadequate settings which give rise to the most serious concerns, and all other inadequate settings within a year. By the time of reinspection most have improved. Of the 1,930 settings with inadequate childcare reinspected this year, 89% are at least satisfactory and 26% are now good. Of the 200 settings with inadequate early education reinspected this year, 90% are at least satisfactory. Stringent actions have been set for the settings that remain inadequate and they continue to be monitored.

34 Inspectors set actions when providers do not meet specific national standards or regulations.¹¹ This year 4,500 were set, involving 4% of providers inspected. Actions set were mainly to ensure that:

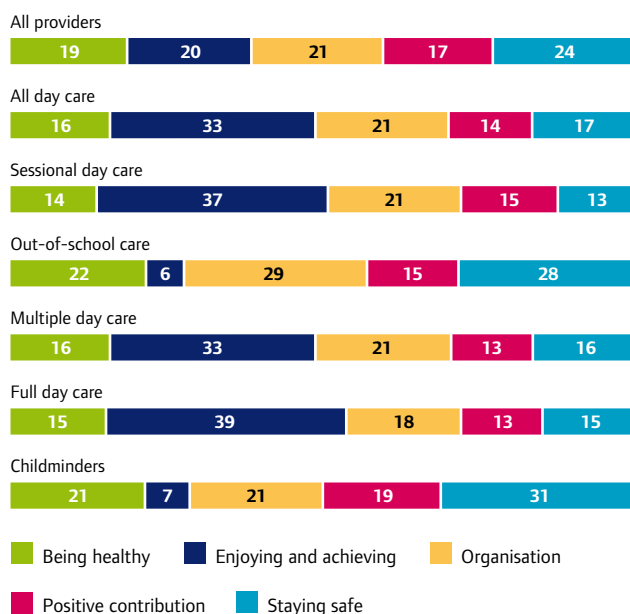
- ✘ procedures to check adults' suitability to work with children are in place and full records are maintained
- ✘ sufficient numbers of staff are present with children
- ✘ a qualified manager is always present
- ✘ children are supervised by an adult with first aid qualifications
- ✘ necessary records are kept to support children's safety and well-being.

35 Inspections show that providers participating in quality assurance schemes are more likely to provide good or outstanding care and early education.¹² For example, 83% of childminders taking part in a quality assurance scheme provide good or outstanding care for children, compared with 55% of those who are not.¹³ Some providers have found that participation has helped them improve the quality of their provision. However, there are many good and outstanding settings that are not involved in quality assurance schemes.

Of the settings inspected, 74% are good or outstanding in helping children to enjoy what they do and to achieve well. In these settings, children are happy and excited about learning.

36 In good or satisfactory and even outstanding settings, there is scope for further development, and inspectors identify areas for improvement. Inspection reports detail the improvements made by most providers in response to recommendations from earlier inspections. During the last year, inspectors made over 77,500 such recommendations. The types of these varied across the sector and are classified in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Recommendations for further improvement by type of provider: July 2007 to August 2008 (percentage of recommendations)



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

¹⁰ For more details, see *Ofsted News*, issue 8, September 2008.

¹¹ *National standards for under 8s day care and childminding* (DfES/0651/2003), DfES, 2003.

¹² Quality assurance schemes help providers to work towards specific principles or standards of quality and improvement. Independent assessors award accreditation

of a scheme to providers who demonstrate their achievements against the scheme's requirements.

¹³ Data on quality assurance schemes are based on the period from April 2005 to August 2008.

Childcare and early education continued

37 Typical recommendations included:

- ✘ improve learning experiences for children by making activities more varied and appropriate to their ages and by allowing them to learn and play independently
- ✘ make better use of observations of children's starting points and progress to plan their further learning and development
- ✘ work more closely with parents by sharing information more effectively and involving them more in promoting their children's welfare and development
- ✘ develop more appropriate complaint processes for parents
- ✘ improve children's safety by completing better risk assessments or keeping more accurate records, including daily attendance and appropriate consent for outings
- ✘ take more active steps to avoid cross-infection between children and ensure consent has been obtained for emergency treatment
- ✘ improve recording of accidents and medication administered
- ✘ improve children's awareness and appreciation of diversity
- ✘ improve the consistency of provision through better communication with staff and clearer understanding of roles.

Ofsted reinspects, within six months, the inadequate settings which give rise to the most serious concerns, and all other inadequate settings within a year.

Concerns, investigations and enforcement

38 This year, parents and the general public raised 9,700 concerns or complaints with Ofsted about standards of care for young children. These included 3,100 about childminding, 6,000 about day care, and 640 about unregistered care. This is a higher number than last year but represents just over five complaints per 1,000 childcare places, a similar proportion to last year. Most of the increase was related to group day-care provision and concerned suitability of adults, promoting children's health and partnership with parents (national standards 1, 7 and 12).

39 Most concerns raised about childcare relate to the suitability of the adults involved (national standard 1) and safety (national standard 6). Child protection issues accounted for around 330 cases.¹⁴

40 Ofsted takes concerns very seriously. Inspectors investigate complaints involving possible non-compliance with national minimum standards and action is taken to ensure any necessary improvements are made. If a child protection issue is raised, children's social care services will be contacted within two hours; if children are thought to be at risk a visit will be made to the provider within one to three days. All investigations will be completed within 30 days. Actions are proportionate to the level of concern. The levels of statutory enforcement measures continue to fall. In 71% of cases investigated this year, Ofsted found that minimum standards were met and no further action was needed. Formal warnings were given in 22 cases, indicating that a further offence would probably result in prosecution.

41 In a few cases (2%) Ofsted took enforcement action. It served 21 enforcement notices, five notices of decision to impose, remove or change conditions of registration, and 23 notices of decision to cancel registration.¹⁵

The impact of inspection

42 In a survey of parents using childcare that had been recently inspected, 96% thought inspection helps settings to improve and 40% had already noticed improvements within six months of the inspection.¹⁶

¹⁴ Further information can be found in the 'Safeguarding children' section of this report; see p.88.

¹⁵ Ofsted can take the following range of enforcement actions: issuing a notice of non-compliance with regulations, requiring the provider to take action by a set date; bringing a prosecution; administering a Caution on Record as an alternative to prosecution; removing, varying or imposing conditions of registration;

cancelling a registration; and applying to a magistrate's court for an emergency order to vary, remove or impose conditions or to cancel registration.

¹⁶ During spring 2008, Ofsted conducted a survey to gather the views of children's social care and childcare providers and managers on its inspection and registration process. Ofsted also contacted parents for feedback on their personal experiences of childcare provision. Over 1,700 responses were received.

Quality and standards

Maintained schools

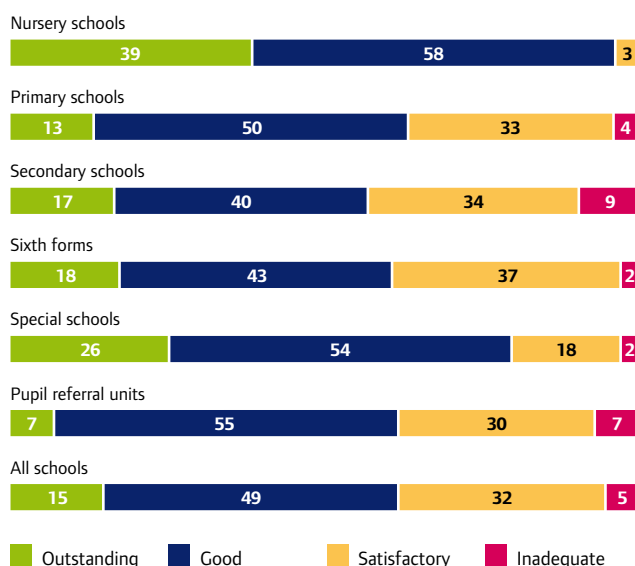


Introduction

43 Between September 2007 and July 2008, inspections were carried out in 6,075 primary, 1,164 secondary and 352 special schools. This year the proportion of schools receiving lighter touch inspections was raised to 29%. Inspectors also carried out monitoring visits to 896 schools in categories of concern, including 643 visits to schools subject to special measures and a further 253 to schools that had been given a notice to improve. In addition, 156 monitoring visits were made to schools which had been judged to be satisfactory overall, but with some weaknesses. Evidence is also drawn from over 1,300 schools selected for survey inspections relating to subjects and aspects of the provision.

Overall effectiveness

Figure 9: The overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008 (percentage of schools)



Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Maintained schools continued

44 Of the maintained schools inspected in 2007/08, 95% are at least satisfactory in their overall effectiveness (Figure 9). The proportion judged inadequate this year is slightly smaller than in 2006/07. Almost two thirds are good or outstanding. As was the case last year, the great majority of nursery schools are at least good. Over a third are outstanding and none is inadequate. The proportion of good and outstanding primary schools this year is similar at 63% to the figure of 60% in 2006/07, while the corresponding proportion of secondary schools has increased. Of the secondary schools inspected this year, 17% are outstanding, compared with 13% in 2006/07. However, 34% are satisfactory and 9% are inadequate. This last figure is the same as last year's and demonstrates that an unacceptable gap remains between the performance of the best and weakest schools.

45 The quality of self-evaluation is good or outstanding in over seven in 10 schools inspected. This continues the 10-year trend of improvement in school self-evaluation noted in the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in 2006/07. Ofsted's school self-evaluation form has been completed by the very large majority of schools inspected this year. Effective governing bodies are closely involved in the process of school self-evaluation and school governance is good or outstanding in 67% of schools. A notable characteristic of leaders in good and outstanding schools is their determination to provide high quality teaching, supported by ongoing assessment, and their skilful analysis of data to identify and act on weaknesses.

46 The large majority of schools promote well the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people.¹⁷ As reported last year, inspectors judge pupils' health, safety, enjoyment and their contribution to the community more positively overall than their achievement and their progress towards attaining economic well-being.

47 Attendance is inadequate in some 6% of secondary schools. Moreover, poor attendance by some pupils in schools where the overall attendance is satisfactory remains a barrier to closing the gap between the achievement of different groups of pupils.

48 The very large majority of special schools are good or outstanding (Figure 9). Those that continue to improve have high expectations of pupils' achievement and match work very well to meet individual needs. Most of the inadequate special schools cater for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Some of these schools have failed to adapt their curriculum sufficiently to meet their pupils' needs and to raise achievement.

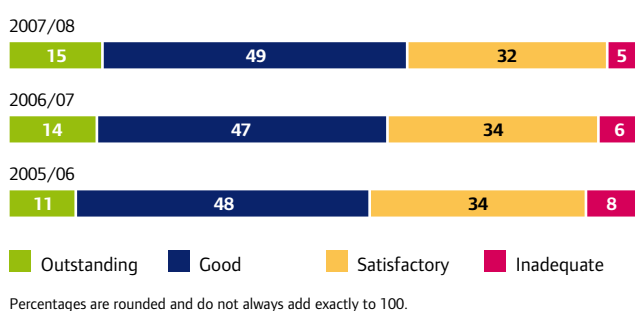
49 The proportion of pupil referral units that are good or better is similar to that for all schools, while the proportion judged inadequate is only slightly higher (Figure 9). However, the proportion of outstanding pupil referral units is lower than that for schools generally. Good and outstanding pupil referral units are effective in giving pupils the confidence to return to mainstream schools or, through working with partners, preparing pupils for employment or training. In the minority of units that are inadequate, unsuitable curricula and teaching methods fail to motivate reluctant and often vulnerable learners. Where this is the case, the support and challenge provided by local authorities are insufficient to promote significant and sustained improvement.

Of the maintained schools inspected in 2007/08, 95% are at least satisfactory in their overall effectiveness... Almost two thirds are good or outstanding.

Overall effectiveness: 2005/06–2007/08

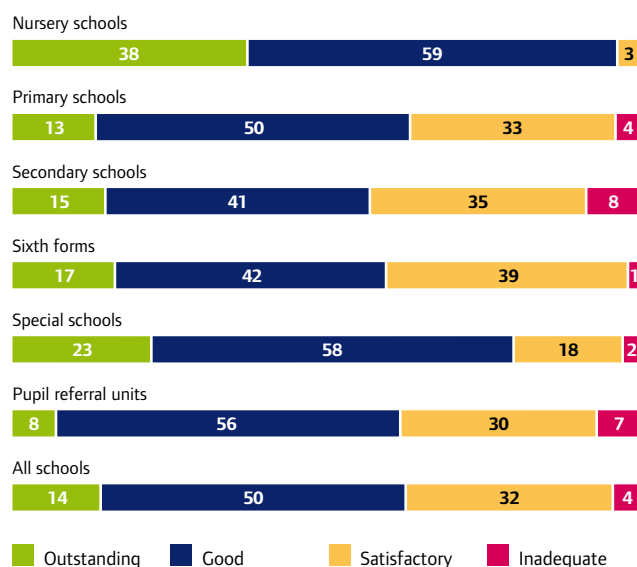
50 Figure 10 shows the summary data for the overall effectiveness of schools inspected in each of the three years since 2005/06, when the present inspection arrangements began. It is important to bear in mind that different samples of schools have been inspected in each of the three years.

Figure 10: The overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2005 and July 2008 (percentage of schools)



Achievement and standards

Figure 11: Pupils' achievement in schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008 (percentage of schools)



51 The results of the 2008 National Curriculum assessments show that, at Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 2 or above, the standard expected for their age, has remained the same in all subjects as in 2007. In reading, the proportion achieving Level 2 or above was 84%; in writing the figure was 80%, in mathematics it was 90% and in science it was 89%. Girls outperformed boys in all subjects and particularly in reading and writing.

52 In the 2008 Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above, the standard expected for their age, increased from 80% to 81% in English and from 77% to 78% in mathematics.¹⁸ Results in science remained unchanged at 88%. Girls outperformed boys in science and English; the widest gap was in writing (74% for girls, 60% for boys).

¹⁸ National Curriculum assessments at Key Stage 2 in England, 2008 (provisional), Statistical First Release (SFR 19/2008), DCSF, 2008.

Maintained schools continued

53 The percentages of pupils achieving the expected Level 5 or above in the 2008 Key Stage 3 tests were 73% in English, 77% in mathematics and 71% in science.¹⁹ While the proportion reaching the expected standard declined by one percentage point in English and two points in science, there was a rise of one percentage point in mathematics. Girls outperformed boys in English and mathematics in 2008 but boys' attainment was higher than that of girls in science.

54 In the 2008 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils in maintained schools achieving five or more A* to C grades, or equivalent, has increased by three percentage points to 62.9%. The proportion gaining five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, has also risen from 45.7% in 2007 to 47.3% this year.²⁰

55 Pupils make good or outstanding progress in almost two thirds of schools inspected; achievement is outstanding in a slightly higher proportion of secondary than primary schools (Figure 11). In over a third of schools, pupils' progress is no better than satisfactory and, in an unacceptably high proportion of secondary schools (8%), progress is inadequate. The proportion of primary schools in which pupils' progress is inadequate is 4%; while this is half that for secondary schools, it is too high, representing over 230 schools inspected.

56 Over two thirds of all schools are good or outstanding in promoting equality in the progress made by different groups of pupils. In schools in which pupils from different

ethnic groups achieve equally well, staff use data about their progress to personalise their learning, provide additional support where needed and scrutinise their progress. Pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language, as well as advanced bilingual learners, benefit from a clear focus on their language skills in subject teaching. This is also the case for pupils with poor attainment in literacy. There is a similar focus in schools which have successfully reduced the gap between the achievement of boys and girls. These schools are also active in promoting greater involvement with parents and carers, and increasingly use mentoring to motivate pupils and provide good role models. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good or outstanding progress in around two thirds of all schools. However, their progress is inadequate in 3% of primary schools and 6% of secondary schools, almost always as a result of inadequate provision.

57 The vast majority of students in school sixth forms make at least satisfactory progress (Figure 11). However, this broadly positive picture masks wide variation in some schools between different subjects and courses. Progress can range from well above to well below average in the same school (see ii, p.120). In 1% of the sixth forms inspected, the students' achievement is inadequate.

58 In 81% of special schools, pupils make good or outstanding progress as a result of teaching which is matched to their specific needs. For many pupils, this means achieving small steps in learning, for example working towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum.

Pupils make good or outstanding progress in almost two thirds of schools inspected; achievement is outstanding in a slightly higher proportion of secondary than primary schools.



¹⁹ *National Curriculum assessments at Key Stage 3 in England, 2008 (provisional)*, Statistical First Release (SFR 20/2008), DCSF, 2008.

²⁰ *GCSE and equivalent results in England, 2007/08 (provisional) – key tables only*, Statistical First Release (SFR 28/2008), DCSF, 2008. *GCSE and equivalent examination results in England, 2006/07 (revised)*, Statistical First Release (SFR 01/2008), DCSF, 2008.

However, in 2% of special schools, pupils' progress is inadequate (Figure 11). A common weakness is failure to evaluate progress systematically to ensure it is rapid enough.

59 Achievement is inadequate in 7% of the pupil referral units (PRUs) inspected (Figure 11). Given the troubled histories of many of these pupils, their progress needs to be sufficiently rapid to enable them to fill the gaps in their previous learning. In around two thirds of PRUs, achievement is good or outstanding, a similar proportion to that in schools nationally, although achievement is outstanding in only 8% of units. In outstanding PRUs, teaching and leadership are strong. There is a focus on teaching methods and innovative curricular provision. Varied and interesting activities lead to improvements in basic skills, especially literacy, which support reintegration into mainstream provision. These PRUs provide courses leading to accreditation, opening the way for pupils into further education or employment.

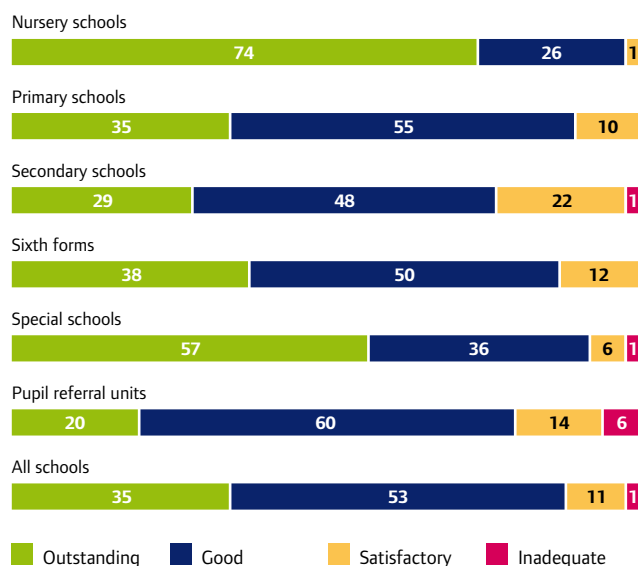
60 Pupils' personal development and well-being are good or outstanding in the great majority of schools (Figure 12). Good communications, consistency and mutual respect between adults and learners characterise these schools. Pupils are positive about their learning and their wider contribution to the school community, knowing that their views are sought and taken into account. Almost all schools make at least satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and, in most, this is good or outstanding. Less than half a per cent of schools are inadequate in this respect, although among pupil referral units the proportion is higher at 5%.

61 In schools inspected in 2007/08, attendance is higher overall than in those inspected last year. Although pupils' attendance is at least satisfactory in most schools, it is good or outstanding in only 55% of primary schools and 52% of secondary schools, and is inadequate in 2% and 6% respectively. In special schools, attendance is good or outstanding in 78% of those inspected, a higher proportion than in other kinds of provision, but inadequate in 3%. In around 45% of schools, attendance is no better than satisfactory.



Pupils' personal development and well-being

Figure 12: Pupils' personal development and well-being in schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008 (percentage of schools)



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

Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Maintained schools continued

62 Attendance is inadequate in 14% of the pupil referral units inspected this year. Finding ways to engage these pupils in work that they see as interesting and relevant remains a significant challenge. Rising levels of attendance are often associated with improvements to the curriculum and teaching, and better liaison with pupils' previous schools.

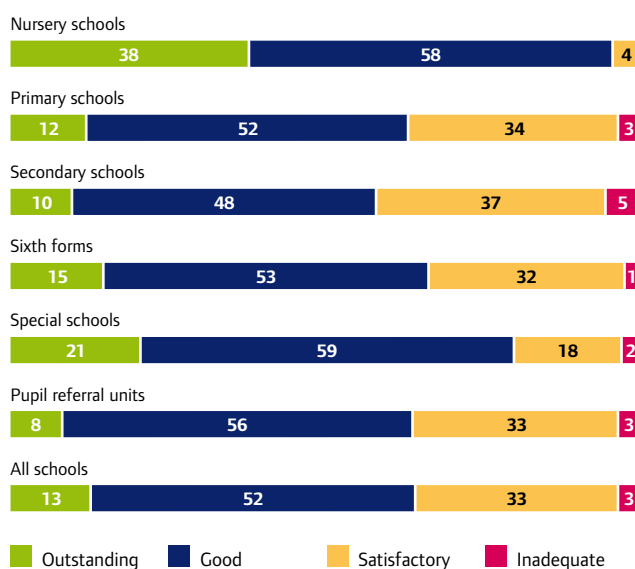
63 In 93% of primary and 72% of secondary schools, pupils' behaviour is good or outstanding; it is inadequate in only 2% of secondary schools. The vast majority of pupils behave acceptably when they are in school. Anti-social behaviour in its most extreme and high profile forms is far less common within schools than in some other contexts. Responses to the Tellus3 survey this year indicate that children generally feel safer in school than when they are out in their local areas (see i, p.120).²¹ However, in the minority of schools in which behaviour is inadequate, learning is hindered by poor concentration, persistent low-level misconduct and, sometimes, by more serious disruption involving a minority of pupils. Some pupils lack respect for adults and their peers and are boisterous and inconsiderate in moving around the school site. There is scope and a need for improvement in the 28% of secondary schools in which pupils' behaviour is no better than satisfactory.

64 Ensuring that all staff share clear expectations and communicate them to pupils is key to promoting positive behaviour and attitudes to learning. In schools which manage behaviour successfully, senior leaders see this as an integral part of school improvement, and train and support their staff accordingly. There are clear and coherent behaviour policies, implemented consistently by all staff. The quality of teaching and learning is a crucial influence on behaviour. For example, in most of the secondary schools in which behaviour is inadequate, teaching and learning are also inadequate, with inconsistent management of behaviour as a contributory factor. In the secondary schools where behaviour is outstanding, teaching is almost always good or outstanding. These schools often provide vulnerable pupils, including those at risk of exclusion, with personal mentoring to support their learning.

65 The inspection of safeguarding in schools continues to be given a high priority in 2007/08. Schools must demonstrate that their procedures comply with current government requirements and that they do all they can to protect pupils. Overall, 77% of schools are good or outstanding in their care of pupils. These schools work well with parents, carers and other agencies to ensure that they identify and meet the needs of all pupils, especially vulnerable pupils and their families. However, 1% of schools inspected were failing to comply with safeguarding requirements and 'working together with other agencies' was frequently identified as a weakness. The overwhelming majority of schools carry out pre-employment vetting of staff satisfactorily.²²

Quality of education

Figure 13: The effectiveness of teaching and learning in schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008 (percentage of schools)



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

Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

²¹ Tellus3 is a confidential online survey to gather the views of children and young people in England about their experiences and views of their life, their school and their local area. The survey is based on an online questionnaire which was developed jointly by Ofsted, the DCSF and Ipsos MORI. Children and young people were asked to complete the survey between 17 March and 12 June 2008. 148,988 responses were included in the national report after the cleaning process. In terms

of feeling safe from being hurt by other people, 75% of children and young people responding to the Tellus3 survey feel 'very safe' or 'quite safe' around their local areas. In school and travelling to school, 88% feel 'very safe' or 'quite safe'.

²² The issue of safeguarding is explored in more detail in the thematic section of this report; see p.88.

66 Teaching and learning are good or outstanding in 64% of primary schools and 80% of special schools inspected, which are similar proportions to those for 2006/07 (Figure 13). In secondary schools, 58% of teaching and learning is good or outstanding, compared with 52% in 2006/07. However, in each of the three types of school, the proportions of inadequate teaching remain similar to last year's figures and too much teaching is still no better than satisfactory.



Ensuring that all staff share clear expectations and communicate them to pupils is key to promoting positive behaviour and attitudes to learning.

Primary schools

67 The proportion of good and outstanding teaching in primary schools is similar to that for 2006/07. The proportion that is no better than satisfactory in these schools is also consistent with last year's figure and too high at slightly over one third. The best teaching is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and focused clearly on developing pupils' understanding of important skills. In these classes, relationships between teachers and pupils are constructive and pupils are encouraged to become independent in their learning. Teachers use assessment well to monitor pupils' progress, to enable them to understand how well they are doing, and in the planning of challenging activities.

68 The key characteristics of inadequate teaching have not changed. They include ineffective teaching methods, low expectations, weaknesses in planning and poor use of assessment, so that the tasks and resources fail to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. In inadequate lessons, teaching is often pedestrian or pays too little attention to what pupils need to do to improve. There are also areas for improvement in lessons that are no better than satisfactory. For example, in English lessons seen during survey inspections, a common weakness was giving insufficient time to develop pupils' independent and sustained writing. Opportunities to use and apply mathematics tend to be restricted to short everyday problems rather than more extended work (see xvi, p.120). Teachers' poor subject knowledge is the main barrier to improving weak provision in science (see xxiv, p.120).

69 Survey inspections found that in some schools, over-emphasising preparation for the national tests in English, mathematics and science, especially in Year 6, restricts the time available for activities that can most interest and challenge pupils: speaking and listening in English, using and applying mathematics, and scientific investigation. Pupils' attainment can then become narrowly based. More generally, focusing too much on the three core subjects can have negative effects on the curriculum in terms of breadth, balance and pupils' enjoyment. In the most effective schools, pupils do well in tests without this unduly restricted approach to teaching and learning.

Maintained schools continued

70 Many teachers in primary schools have good generic teaching skills but, where they lack expertise in a subject, teaching often becomes overly directive and their expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. In such lessons pupils, especially the higher attainers, have little scope to be creative, to research and produce their own hypotheses or solutions, or to explore and develop their understanding at higher levels. Pupils who are involved in assessing their own progress show a greater understanding of what they need to do to improve. In successful schools, teachers mark work, including homework, constructively and punctually.

71 In 2007/08, Ofsted carried out a small-scale survey of schools to establish the extent to which they had implemented the findings of the Rose Review on the teaching of early reading (see xxi, p.120).²³ All but one of the schools visited had responded positively to the review and a quarter had introduced for the first time a systematic programme for the teaching of phonics. Schools reported that this systematic approach had raised their expectations of how quickly and well their pupils made progress in learning to read and write.

72 The curriculum is good or outstanding in 69% of primary schools, a similar proportion to last year; of the nursery schools inspected, curricular provision is also good or outstanding in a similar percentage to that reported in 2006/07. The difference between a satisfactory curriculum and a good or outstanding one often lies in the way teachers adjust programmes of learning to meet individual needs and engage and motivate pupils, for example by enhancing the provision with a range of activities outside the classroom. Effective schools make links between subjects to improve pupils' skills. Survey inspections provide good examples of curricular planning that has led to opportunities in different subjects for pupils to write at greater length. Careful planning helps pupils to benefit from links across subjects, increasing their understanding and enjoyment.

73 Around half the schools surveyed for primary languages this year are making good progress towards making languages an entitlement for every pupil in Key Stage 2 by 2010 (see xxviii, p.120). Pupils enjoy learning a language and are mostly willing to take risks, which helps them to

make good progress; their speaking skills are often of high quality. However, in around one third of the schools, lack of time devoted to languages, and the curriculum approach adopted, limit what can be achieved.

74 The contribution of new technology to improving teaching in primary schools is inconsistent in its effectiveness. Inspection reports often refer to the gap between the exciting use of technology in the very effective schools and its more pedestrian use in schools in which the curriculum is no better than satisfactory.

Secondary schools

75 Teaching and learning are good or outstanding in 58% of secondary schools inspected; they are outstanding in one in 10 (Figure 13). These are higher figures than those reported last year. The best teaching challenges and engages pupils, making regular use of assessment to match activities to their needs and abilities. In sixth forms, the level of good and outstanding provision is higher than in secondary schools generally. In 5% of secondary schools, however, the quality of teaching and learning is inadequate, a similar proportion to that for 2006/07. Ofsted's survey inspections find that, in general, secondary teachers' subject knowledge is good. In a few subjects, including English, mathematics and science, weaker teaching is sometimes associated with a significant turnover of staff. In mathematics, many schools find difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified teachers, particularly subject leaders. In science, too, the supply of teachers continues to fall short of current requirements, although there are some signs of improvement.

The best teaching challenges and engages pupils, making regular use of assessment to match activities to their needs and abilities.

76 As in primary schools, a key feature of teaching that is no better than satisfactory is the setting of tasks for pupils that are not sufficiently demanding. These tasks limit opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding, and apply what has been learned. The result is their loss of interest, slow progress and, often, deteriorating behaviour. Teaching that fails to inspire pupils may be too dependent on published materials which are not well matched to their needs, or may result from an unduly narrow focus on preparation for the national tests.

77 The use of assessment to track pupils' progress, plan work and manage approaches to whole-class discussion continues to be a common weakness. Efforts to improve it have been concentrated mainly on English and mathematics. In these and other subjects, however, ongoing assessment is often under-used so that pupils do not know the strengths and weaknesses of their work and the steps needed to improve their attainment. A survey of the impact of the 'assessment for learning' strand of the National Strategies found that it was good or outstanding in only a minority of schools, with a generally lower impact in secondary than in primary schools (see iii, p.120). Across the curriculum, in the minority of schools in the survey where inspectors saw good practice in assessment, teachers had understood and applied carefully the key principles of assessment for learning. In the majority of schools, however, assessment remained an area of relative weakness.

78 Survey evidence shows that, although there is much good and outstanding teaching in English, the quality is uneven in many schools. In mathematics, teaching that is satisfactory rather than good focuses on developing pupils' knowledge and skills through exercises rather than through approaches that develop understanding. There is rather more unsatisfactory teaching in science than in other core subjects. Progress is limited by teachers' focus on pupils' knowledge of content rather than on developing their understanding, and by insufficient attention to investigative work. Teaching and learning in information and communication technology are strongest when pupils are using technology to communicate and present their ideas. However, there are weaknesses in teaching the more demanding aspects of the subject, and its use across the curriculum remains inconsistent. Although citizenship is now



well established in many secondary schools, it remains fragile in others where action has not been taken to improve the curriculum and the training for staff.

79 Effective teaching in art, design and technology, music and physical education provides pupils with the knowledge, skills and opportunities to develop their own creativity. Surveys of subjects in the past have criticised schools where aesthetic and creative subjects appeal only to particular groups of pupils. However, a strength of the best music departments surveyed this year is their high expectations of all pupils. In the best physical education departments, there is a broad range of opportunities that appeal to groups of pupils who are often more reluctant to participate.

Special schools

80 The quality of teaching and learning is good or outstanding in 80% of special schools, a similar proportion to that for 2006/07 (Figure 13). It is outstanding in a higher proportion of special schools than in schools generally. The curriculum is also good or outstanding in 83% of these schools and is rarely inadequate. Effective curricular planning is characterised by the careful matching of programmes to individual pupils' needs.

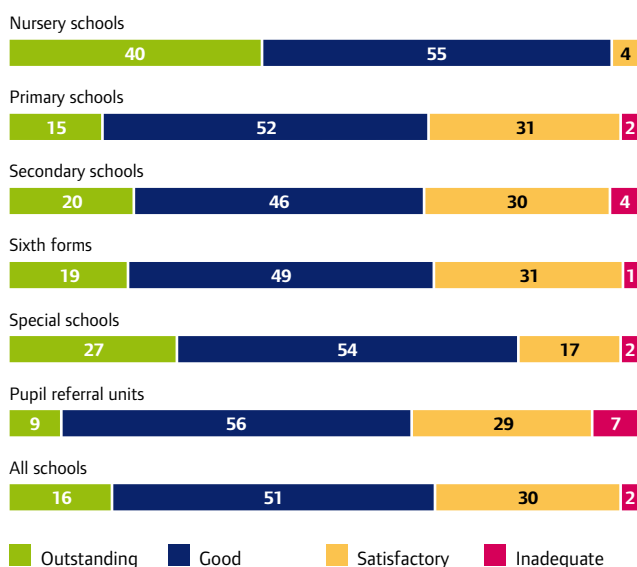
Maintained schools continued

Pupil referral units

81 The proportion of pupil referral units in which teaching and learning are good or outstanding is similar to that for all schools nationally, although there is less outstanding teaching than in other kinds of schools (Figure 13). Outstanding teaching focuses strongly on meeting pupils' individual needs, improving their attainment in literacy and numeracy and restoring their confidence in themselves as learners. The effectiveness of local authorities in providing appropriate support and challenge to promote improvement in the teaching in these units is variable, and too many allow inadequacies to remain. A higher proportion of pupil referral units have good or outstanding curricular provision than in the sample inspected in 2006/07.

Leadership and management

Figure 14: The effectiveness of leadership and management in schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008 (percentage of schools)



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

Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

82 Leadership and management are good or outstanding in just over two thirds of all schools, a similar proportion to that for 2006/07 (Figure 14). They are most effective in nursery and special schools. They are outstanding in 20% of secondary schools, compared with 17% in 2006/07. As in previous years, leadership and management in the vast majority of schools are at least satisfactory, although the proportion of schools in which they are inadequate remains around 2%.

83 The quality of the leadership and management remains, with that of teaching and learning, a key factor in a school's success or otherwise. A high proportion of the schools placed in a category of concern have temporary or absent headteachers, while those that make the most rapid progress have a secure and effective leadership team, including middle managers.

84 Outstanding leaders establish high expectations throughout the school. They involve staff at all levels, engage pupils and parents and act accordingly. These leaders delegate responsibilities for action to senior colleagues but monitor the impact well. School self-evaluation is rigorous, work on improvement is effective and sustained, and management systems ensure that provision is of a consistently high quality. In the third of schools with satisfactory leadership, some are improving as new leaders come to terms with their task. Others lack the necessary vision, drive and direction to move from being satisfactory to good, sometimes because they focus too much on day-to-day systems and are insufficiently ambitious for the achievement of their pupils.

85 The quality of self-evaluation is good or outstanding in almost three quarters (72%) of all schools inspected this year and outstanding in around a fifth. Only 2% are inadequate in this respect. School inspection reports frequently refer to the link between the increased rigour of self-evaluation and a strong capacity to improve. Conversely, weak monitoring and evaluation explain why initiatives founder. In the surveys of the subjects of the curriculum, a strong feature across the departments visited is improved self-evaluation.

86 Governing bodies are good or outstanding in about two thirds of schools. Governors are most effective where they contribute fully to strategic planning and provide constructive challenge to school leaders' evaluations. The use of the self-evaluation form (SEF) has encouraged the supply of information between headteachers and governing bodies and enabled the latter to engage more effectively in debate about the school's effectiveness. Absence of such constructive debate and challenge is a key feature of ineffective governing bodies; they are too ready to accept the judgements and views of others.

Academies

Figure 15: The overall effectiveness of academies inspected between September 2005 and July 2008

Overall effectiveness	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Outstanding	0	1	3
Good	3	1	5
Satisfactory	5	6	2
Inadequate	1	0	0
Total	9	8	10

87 The academies programme is part of a government strategy to raise standards in some of the country's most disadvantaged areas. The first three academies opened in September 2002, and by September 2007 the number had risen to 83. Most academies have replaced schools in challenging circumstances, many of which had previously been in Ofsted's categories of concern. However, nine academies have replaced former City Technology Colleges, some of which were already high performing schools. As the number of academies expands, the links between institutions are developing, including some formal federations.

88 Ofsted's monitoring visits to academies confirm the significant challenge that many face, particularly in the first year, in raising standards and improving the outcomes for pupils. The monitoring visits also confirm the difficulties faced by most academies in improving the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress. Even so, three academies, all previously City Technology Colleges, have sustained their high performance and were judged to be outstanding in their overall effectiveness in their first inspections as academies. None of the 10 academies inspected in 2007/08 was judged inadequate and the overall picture is one of steady improvement: three were outstanding, five were good and two satisfactory in their overall effectiveness (Figure 15). Leadership and management are at least good in the academies inspected and arrangements for federation between some academies are a particular strength. Other strengths include the quality of care, guidance and support, and pupils' personal development and well-being. In addition, there have been notable overall improvements in provision in academy sixth forms, compared with previous years.

Fresh Start schools

89 The Fresh Start initiative replaces schools with long histories of problems and low achievement with new schools which are opened on the same site, often with improved facilities and enhanced staffing. Since the start of the programme in 1998, 57 schools have been given a fresh start. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) provide independent monitoring and evaluation through regular visits to Fresh Start schools, of which eight remain in the programme. At the end of two years, the schools receive their first full inspections, after which they are no longer in the Fresh Start programme. This year, eight Fresh Start schools had their first full inspections and, of these, five are satisfactory in their overall effectiveness and two are good. One was given a notice to improve. All the schools still in the Fresh Start programme and which have been monitored are making satisfactory progress.

Maintained schools continued

Monitoring visits to schools which are satisfactory in their overall effectiveness

90 In April 2007, Ofsted began a programme of monitoring visits to schools which, although satisfactory overall, have some weaknesses. In 2007/08, 156 of these visits have taken place. Almost all the schools viewed being judged satisfactory in their overall effectiveness as a challenge to improve. Nearly 40% had made good progress and one had made outstanding progress by the time of the monitoring visits; 6% had made inadequate progress in tackling their weaknesses. Almost half the schools had restructured their leadership teams and almost all had significantly improved their systems for monitoring and evaluating their performance. The most frequent reasons for inadequate progress by the time of the monitoring inspections were related to high levels of staff mobility, especially at leadership level, and a slow response to the need to improve standards and achievement.

Schools causing concern

91 Of the schools inspected this year, 375 have been placed in one of Ofsted's categories of concern, either requiring special measures or being given a notice to improve.²⁴ The total includes 9% of the secondary schools inspected, 4% of the primary schools and 2% of the special schools. This means that 474 schools are now in one of these categories of concern, compared with 551 in 2006/07. These figures show a slight fall on the previous year. Nevertheless, over 20,000 pupils, some 3.6%, of Year 11, are completing their GCSE year in schools causing concern.

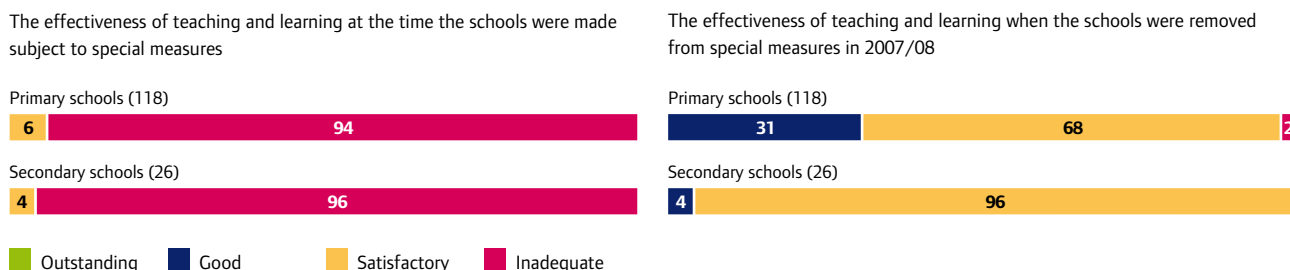
92 Ofsted inspectors make regular monitoring visits to schools which are subject to special measures. Most of these schools improve sufficiently within two years to be removed from the category. These improvements stem from strong and decisive leadership which uses information from inspection and from monitoring visits effectively to understand the school's weaknesses and tackle them accordingly. Figure 16 illustrates the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning from the time when schools are placed in special measures to the stage of their removal from the category.

93 One of the key challenges in these schools is to sustain improvements in leadership and in teaching and learning over successive years. In a small number of schools, this does not happen. Of the schools made subject to special measures in 2007/08, 22 primary and three secondary schools have previously been in a category of concern prior to September 2005. This reflects a failure to sustain longer term improvement, often associated with a lack of continuity or depth in leadership.

94 Of the 153 schools that required special measures and were reinspected this year, 75% are now satisfactory and 16% good. The great majority of the remaining schools were given a notice to improve. This is because, although they have made progress and have the capacity to improve, important areas of their work continue to be inadequate.

95 Six to eight months after inspection, schools given a notice to improve receive a monitoring visit, followed by a full inspection 12–16 months after being placed in the category of concern. Most make at least satisfactory progress in the year following their original inspections. Early in 2008, Ofsted carried out a survey of 44 schools which had been monitored and/or reinspected in the academic year 2006/07. From this survey, it emerged that the schools valued the monitoring visits highly and that the prospect of early reinspection galvanised action to bring about improvements. These improvements are most apparent in the quality of teaching and learning and in the schools' leadership and management.

Figure 16: Improvement in teaching and learning in schools removed from special measures in 2007/08



Figures in brackets indicate the number of schools.

Three schools have not been included in this analysis because the inspections which made them subject to special measures took place before September 2005 and therefore made use of a different scale of inspection judgements.

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

96 During 2007/08, the schools which had been given a notice to improve in 2006/07 were reinspected. Of these, nine in 10 had made at least satisfactory progress overall and 40 of these are now good schools. However, a very small minority had declined and were made subject to special measures.

97 A small number of schools causing concern have formed federations or more informal partnerships with other schools. This has been successful in many cases in hastening the recovery of inadequate schools. The key elements in this recovery are more incisive leadership and management, bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. There are also occasional examples, however, of the leaders of the stronger schools becoming distracted from the need to sustain improvement in their own schools by the additional demands of the federation or partnership.

The impact of inspection

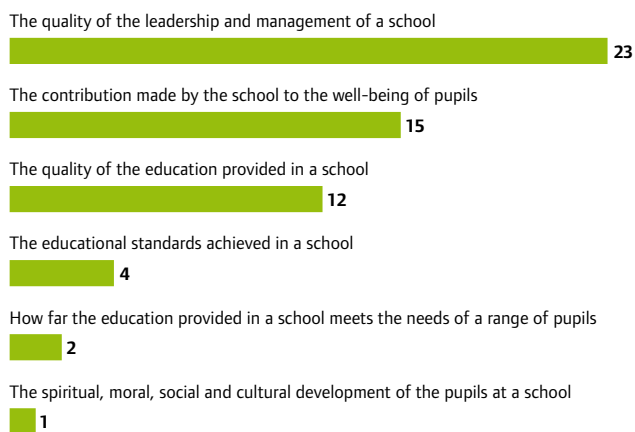
98 Through its School Inspection Survey, Ofsted invites schools to evaluate the usefulness of inspection in helping them to improve. Of headteachers whose schools were inspected and who responded to the survey this academic year:

- ✦ 92% believe judgements about their schools were fair and accurate
- ✦ 96% intend to use the recommendations from inspection to move their schools forward
- ✦ 96% agree that inspection had identified the right issues for improvement
- ✦ 91% believe that the dialogue between inspectors and staff was productive in identifying ways in which practice can be improved
- ✦ 94% were satisfied with the way their inspections were carried out
- ✦ 82% believe the benefits of inspection outweigh the negatives.²⁵

²⁵ From responses to the School Inspection Survey received by 30 September 2008.

Complaints about schools

Figure 17: Number of resolved qualifying complaints by subject, September 2007 to August 2008



Note that individual complaints may be concerned with more than one subject.

99 Anyone can complain to Ofsted if he or she has concerns about a school and, where the complaint qualifies for consideration, Ofsted has powers to investigate.²⁶ Ofsted has more extensive powers to investigate when a complaint is made by a registered parent of a pupil at the school in question. The procedures for handling complaints were reviewed and refined in late 2007 to improve the way in which Ofsted investigates complaints and collects feedback from complainants.

100 During the current year, Ofsted received 1,257 written complaints about schools.²⁷ The majority of complaints were not investigated as they concerned individual pupils, or parents had not made full use of local complaints procedures. Ofsted referred these complainants to more appropriate sources of help or advice.²⁸ Ofsted investigated complaints which related to the work of a school as a whole, where parents had made full use of local complaints procedures, or which raised some specific safeguarding concerns. These accounted for about 5% of written complaints received.²⁹ The majority of these complaints concerned the leadership and management of a school, pupils' well-being or the quality of education provided (Figure 17). In one case a complaint raised concerns which were significant enough to warrant an immediate inspection of the school. The inspection found the school's effectiveness satisfactory overall and that it had made good progress in improving its performance. In another case an inspection was brought forward as a result of a complaint.

101 One in five of the qualifying complaints were considered to be informally resolved following Ofsted's investigation of the issues raised by the complaint.

102 Ofsted now informs schools of any qualifying complaint it receives and when it decides to retain a complaint. This year, 28 complaints have been retained for further reference, for example to form part of the evidence base for a lead inspector at a future inspection.

103 Ofsted has also provided general advice and specific guidance about making a complaint about a school in response to 3,330 enquiries received by its customer service centre between September 2007 and August 2008.

²⁶ Section 11A–11C, Education Act 2005, as amended.

²⁷ Written complaints received and 'closed' between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2008.

²⁸ Ofsted referred 1,199 complainants elsewhere.

²⁹ Forty-five qualifying complaints and 13 complaints related to safeguarding issues. Complaints about safeguarding issues are referred to a specialist team within Ofsted. Members of this team ensure that they are passed to appropriate children's services and that action is taken to address the concerns raised.

Quality and standards

Independent schools

Introduction

104 In March 2008, Ofsted completed the first cycle of inspections of non-association independent schools which began in September 2003. In future these schools will be inspected within a three-year cycle. Ofsted inspects all independent schools that are not members of associations affiliated to the Independent Schools Council or Focus Learning Trust. These member schools are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or the Schools Inspection Service (SIS) respectively.

105 This year, Ofsted inspected 433 non-association independent schools, of which 88 were newly registered. These schools range in size and character from large boarding and day schools to children's homes offering education to individual pupils in public care. They also include Steiner and Montessori, foreign, stage and faith schools and tutorial colleges. Around a third of the schools cater wholly or mainly for pupils with special educational needs.

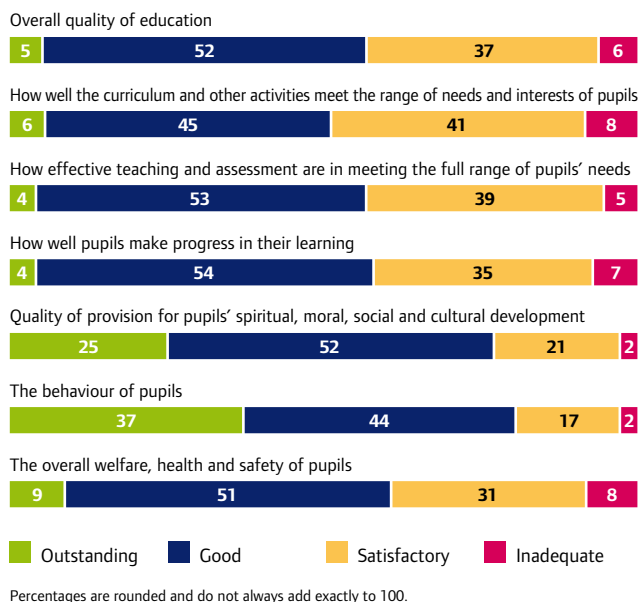
106 Additionally, Ofsted visited 115 schools in connection with registration and monitored a sample of inspections and reports by independent inspectorates. The additional 212 visits covered: assessing applications for registration of new schools; assessing applications from schools to make a material change to their provision; and investigating concerns or complaints at the request of the Registration Authority, which is the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Effectiveness and improvement

107 About three quarters of these non-association schools now meet at least 90% of the regulatory requirements and only 3% meet fewer than 70%.³⁰ Schools are now more aware of the regulations and the issues which inspection identifies and so take action before their own inspections.

108 The overwhelming majority of the schools now meet all regulations for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (Figure 18). Pupils' behaviour is good or outstanding in 81% of schools, the result of clear and effective systems which encourage good behaviour and enable pupils to make a positive contribution to their

Figure 18: Inspection judgements on non-association independent schools inspected between September 2007 and August 2008 (percentage of schools)



school and the wider community. Individual support and good levels of supervision help pupils, including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, to develop confidence and self-esteem.

109 This year's inspections show more effective provision than in previous years in all types of non-association school, including faith schools. In almost all faith schools the provision for personal and social development and citizenship enables pupils to acquire an appreciation of their own and other cultures. Around two thirds of the 14 evangelical Christian schools inspected this year made at least good provision for their pupils. In all but one of the 52 Muslim schools inspected, the quality of education was at least satisfactory and it was good or outstanding in half of them. However, in around a third of the 21 orthodox Jewish schools inspected, although the religious curriculum and teaching were good or outstanding, the secular curriculum was too narrow and the teaching in secular studies was inadequate.

³⁰ All independent schools in England must meet the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended 17 January 2005. They are inspected under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, amended 2005.

Independent schools continued

110 The quality of education is good in 52% of non-association independent schools inspected, but outstanding in only 5% (Figure 18). Pupils' progress is good or outstanding in 58% of these schools. The curriculum emphasises basic skills and teachers are generally knowledgeable and encourage pupils to work hard. Although much of the teaching is competent and effective, little of it is inspirational. The small proportion of outstanding schools are characterised by a creative curriculum and committed staff, with strong specialist expertise. A common weakness in schools where the provision is otherwise satisfactory is the lack of planning to meet the full range of pupils' aptitudes and needs.

111 Although the quality of education is good or outstanding in 40% of independent special schools, it is inadequate in one in 10. A similar proportion of those that are also registered as independent children's homes provide an inadequate quality of education for looked after children, and in such cases the progress of these vulnerable pupils is restricted.

112 Important weaknesses remain in procedures for safeguarding pupils.³¹ It is a major concern that, this year, around three in 10 schools did not fully meet the new safeguarding regulations, because staff had not received up-to-date training on child protection, detail was lacking in safeguarding policies or checks on staff were insufficiently rigorous.³² One in five schools did not hold all records of such checks on a central register, as is now required. Around a quarter of schools still failed to fulfil their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002, or to provide appropriate facilities for sick pupils.

113 The quality of education is inadequate in 6% of the schools and their progress is being monitored (Figure 18). This year 21 monitoring visits were made. These follow-up visits take place, in most cases, about six months after the original inspection. Most of the schools had made satisfactory or good progress but those which had not improved were subject to enforcement action from the Registration Authority. Two schools closed and one was removed from the register.

Non-maintained special schools

114 Non-maintained special schools make provision for pupils with a wide range of complex learning, sensory, communication, physical and behavioural, social and emotional needs. The majority of these schools are effective and provide a good standard of education and care. Nearly all the schools inspected provide boarding; this is at least good in all but one and it makes a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development and well-being. A particular strength in these schools is the way in which teachers, teaching assistants, therapists and other professionals work together to reduce barriers to learning and to enable pupils to overcome their difficulties and develop their self-esteem.

The impact of inspection

115 Ofsted invites headteachers of independent schools to take part in a post-inspection survey which seeks their views on the quality and usefulness of their inspections. Of those responding to the survey during 2007/08:

- ✘ 94% were satisfied with the way the inspection was carried out
- ✘ 93% were satisfied that the inspection would help the school to move forward
- ✘ 89% thought that the judgements about the school and its main strengths and weaknesses were fair and accurate
- ✘ 96% thought that the inspection report made clear what action the school needed to take.³³

Although the quality of education is good or outstanding in 40% of independent special schools, it is inadequate in one in 10.

³¹ Further information can be found in the 'Safeguarding children' section of this report; see p.88.

³² These came into effect in independent schools in July 2007.

³³ Figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Quality and standards

Further education colleges

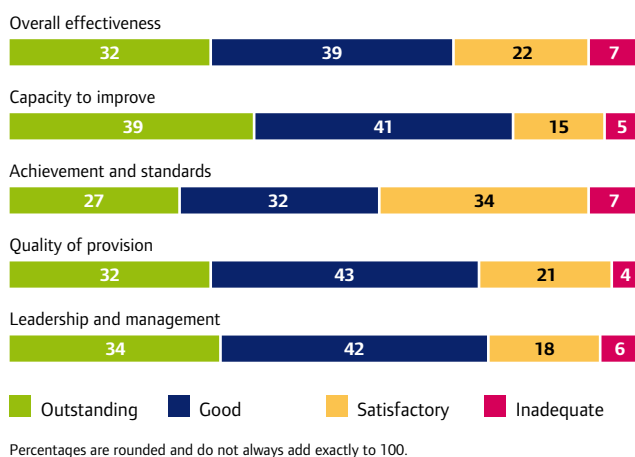
Introduction

116 Ofsted has continued to tailor its approach to inspecting individual colleges according to their performance at their last inspections, data on students' achievements and information from annual monitoring visits by inspectors. Colleges with very high standards have received inspections lasting only two days. 'Light touch' inspections for good colleges have continued, allowing for a more intensive approach for satisfactory and inadequate colleges.³⁴ Ofsted has received strong support from colleges for this proportionate approach.

117 Between September 2007 and June 2008, there were 72 inspections of general further education or tertiary colleges, 33 of sixth form colleges, two of higher education institutions and six of specialist further education colleges. Of these inspections, 32 were short inspections, lasting two days.

Overall effectiveness

Figure 19: Overview of colleges, excluding independent specialist colleges, inspected between September 2007 and June 2008 (percentage of colleges)



118 The proportion of colleges that are good or outstanding in their overall effectiveness has risen from 62% of those inspected in 2006/07 to 71% of those inspected in 2007/08 (Figure 19). The proportion of outstanding colleges has risen from 19% to 32%. Judgements about work-based learning were made in 58 of the colleges inspected, of which 35 were graded good or better. The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for 2006/07 commented on the significant proportion of colleges in which overall effectiveness was no better than satisfactory and performance had not improved since the last inspection. In 2007/08, this proportion fell, with just under a quarter of colleges judged satisfactory. Of these colleges, half were not improving and their capacity to improve was graded as no better than satisfactory.

119 Of the seven colleges that were inadequate at their previous inspections, five were judged satisfactory, one good and one remained inadequate on reinspection. However, seven general further education colleges inspected this year are inadequate, compared with four in 2006/07. Sixth form colleges continue to be highly effective; over half of the 33 inspected are outstanding in their overall effectiveness. Many of these colleges were also outstanding in their previous inspection. In a recent small-scale Ofsted survey report, data on students' progress indicated that sixth form colleges in the survey sample performed better than other post-16 providers (see ii, p.120).

³⁴ Two-day inspections for colleges with very high standards were introduced in 2007/08. Lighter touch inspections for good colleges, lasting a week and involving a small team of inspectors, began in 2006/07.

Further education colleges continued

Achievement and standards

120 Overall success rates on courses in further education have continued to improve. The most recently available data, for 2006/07, show that in provision funded by the Learning and Skills Council, success rates in further education colleges, excluding work-based learning and Train to Gain programmes, are at 78%.³⁵ This is 50% greater than the figure for 1997. Most colleges inspected have at least satisfactory achievement and standards; the proportion of good or outstanding colleges rose slightly to 59% (Figure 19). In the best colleges, success rates are high and progress is excellent; students achieve grades higher than might be predicted from their previous attainment. A common feature of outstanding colleges is a culture of high expectations and aspiration, reflected in the standard of students' work and high levels of attendance. Students are encouraged to become independent learners. Progression to further or higher education and employment is excellent. These colleges have challenging but realistic targets for pass rates and for retaining students on courses, and they monitor the targets rigorously. In most colleges which offer courses for students aged 14–16, success rates are high and are improving, with good progression to higher level courses for this age group. About a third of learners in colleges progress to higher education and half to employment related to their courses, although not all colleges are able to provide accurate data.

121 The effective colleges have taken steps to improve achievement and standards through a careful analysis of progress and outcomes. More frequently, this now includes tracking the performance of different ethnic groups and the relative performance of male and female students. Colleges use the information to identify and tackle areas of underperformance.

122 In the few cases in which standards and achievement are inadequate, colleges fail to set realistic and challenging targets or measure themselves critically against national averages. Improvements are frequently judged too generously by managers and not enough note is taken of national trends and benchmarks. Poor attendance is common, with too little focus on students' rates of progress.

Quality of provision

123 The quality of provision is at least satisfactory in most of the further education colleges inspected (Figure 19). In three quarters, it is good or outstanding. In many colleges, the quality of teaching and learning has improved through rigorous and effective monitoring. Rapid and appropriate actions are taken to improve teaching where necessary and good practice is disseminated. Managers use their findings from lesson observations to plan suitable staff development. Colleges have improved teachers' use of information learning technology and many subject areas and departments have excellent online resources, which students value highly. Assessment in these colleges is effective in supporting students' progress and they are given prompt and expert advice on how to improve their work. Weaker colleges judge teaching too generously and fail to pay enough attention to the quality of learning. In these colleges, too much teaching is satisfactory rather than good, and teachers often fail to deal with students' individual needs.

124 Many colleges continue to respond well to employers' needs. For example, there has been a significant expansion in Train to Gain programmes in general further education colleges. Productive and flexible partnerships have been developed with a range of stakeholders, including businesses and community organisations. Most further education colleges provide good quality advice and guidance to students. The best colleges measure the impact of advice and guidance rigorously. Effective additional learning support is linked to improvements in students' success. Well managed colleges analyse learners' progress and outcomes closely to judge the effectiveness of support. The quality of tutorial support and the use of individual learning plans are good in all but a minority of colleges. Effective individual learning plans help to accelerate students' progress. However, some colleges' use of initial assessment to set and monitor targets remains underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

125 There are clear links between the quality of leadership and management, the overall effectiveness of colleges and their capacity to improve. In 6% of colleges inspected, leadership and management are inadequate, a similar proportion to last year (Figure 19). Outstanding and good colleges have a clear and appropriate vision supported by good communication and close teamwork. An important aspect of highly effective institutions is the expertise of governors and the challenge they provide. Well informed governors have high aspirations for the college and are supplied with critical data, enabling them to provide highly effective support to improve standards. Although the management of work-based learning in colleges was judged good or better in 35 of the 58 colleges where it was inspected, this compares less favourably with the grades for leadership and management across the colleges as a whole.

126 Colleges' self-assessment is becoming increasingly rigorous. The best colleges analyse robust and detailed data about their performance to plan improvements and take a self-critical view of their capacity to improve. Where leadership and management are less effective, there is often a lack of ambition for learners' achievement. National averages, for example, are sometimes used to set targets which may not be challenging enough for a particular college. Colleges that are satisfactory but not improving often share common characteristics. These include weak governance, inaccurate or ineffective use of data, too little accountability and a poor focus on improving the quality of provision.

A common feature of outstanding colleges is a culture of high expectations and aspiration.

127 This is the first year that Ofsted has published separate graded judgements about equality of opportunity. Of the colleges inspected, 76% are good or outstanding in this aspect. They give a high profile to issues of equality and diversity, which are formally evaluated through impact assessments. Provision is designed well to meet the needs of a broad range of learners and the performance of different groups is closely monitored.

128 In addition to full inspections, there is an annual monitoring programme. This year, good and outstanding colleges were monitored using the performance data held by Ofsted. The data confirm that standards in these colleges are generally high. Satisfactory and inadequate colleges received additional inspection visits. The monitoring visits to colleges which were satisfactory but not improving showed that most are now making at least reasonable progress in tackling areas for improvement.³⁶



³⁶ Further consideration is given to vocational provision in the highest performing colleges in the 'Skills for working lives' section of this report; see p.104.

Further education colleges continued

Independent specialist colleges

Introduction

129 Independent specialist colleges provide education for students aged between 16 and 25 years who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most of this provision is funded by the Learning and Skills Council. The providers include small privately owned organisations, colleges that belong to local or national charities and, increasingly, colleges owned by large national healthcare organisations. Ranging in size from those with fewer than 10 learners to those with nearly 300, these colleges provide for nearly 3,500 of the most vulnerable learners.

Overall effectiveness

130 There were 22 inspections of independent specialist colleges between September 2007 and June 2008. Four were reinspections of inadequate provision. Half the colleges are good or outstanding in their overall effectiveness, a higher proportion than last year, and 10 have improved since their last inspection. Eight of the colleges are satisfactory. Three colleges are inadequate. Two of these are attached to schools which are not included in the judgement of inadequacy. These colleges were new to the sector and ill-prepared for the demands of further education. The number of poor quality independent specialist colleges is reducing as contracts from the Learning and Skills Council are withdrawn from providers that are consistently judged inadequate and they no longer form part of the post-compulsory education sector.

131 Achievement and standards are good in over half the colleges inspected. The processes for recognising and recording achievement are well established in successful colleges and, when possible, learners are fully involved at each stage. Good colleges use a range of national qualifications to meet the learners' needs.

132 In successful provision, teaching and learning are improving, with rigorous assessment and high expectations of learners. Colleges continue to provide an extensive range of programmes. External links are effective and community partnerships are good. Support and guidance are generally good or outstanding. However, weak assessment, poor target-setting and insufficient coordination of work in basic skills often characterise provision which is satisfactory or

inadequate. Some colleges have extended their provision to post-19 learners with complex needs without ensuring their staff have the necessary expertise.

133 Leadership and management in these colleges are better than in previous years. Good leadership and management are characterised by rigorous self-assessment, clear planning and a strong culture of continuous improvement. The weaker colleges do not have a sufficient understanding of learners' needs and personal goals, and they do not give enough consideration to the skills they will need for their future. Although in a minority, too many colleges still do not comply fully with legislation to promote equalities or use data effectively to bring about improvements.

Dance and drama schools

134 This year Ofsted inspected 20 individual courses at 15 dance and drama schools and colleges where some students receive financial awards from the Learning and Skills Council. Fifteen of the courses inspected are outstanding and five are good. The standard of students' work is very high. Students develop acting, dancing and singing skills to a professional level and apply them in performance with impressive discipline. They become reflective and articulate practitioners. Assessment is rigorous and accurate. Many students progress to related employment in highly competitive performing arts contexts. Leadership and management of these courses are good and continue to improve in most schools.

The impact of inspection

135 Ofsted invites further education and independent specialist colleges to complete an evaluative questionnaire in the period following their inspections. This year:

- ✦ 56 out of 82 respondents to the relevant question believed that the gains from the inspection process in helping the organisation to improve outweighed the negative effects.
- ✦ 72 out of 73 respondents to the relevant question agreed that the key issues identified in the inspection report provided a sound basis for action and further development.

Adult learning and skills

Introduction

136 A significant proportion of the adult population is engaged in learning. Some of the costs of adult learning programmes are met by public funding, but investment is also made by employers in training their own workforces, and by individuals seeking to improve their own skills and qualifications. The adult skills sector engages successfully with employers and is characterised by its diversity and flexibility in meeting individual, social and economic needs for a more highly skilled workforce.

137 The sector includes work-based learning, adult and community learning, welfare to work provision funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, nextstep (information, advice and guidance for adults) and learndirect.

138 Work-based learning is the largest area in the sector in terms of providers and the number of inspections undertaken.³⁷ These include inspections of Train to Gain, a programme to meet the skills needs of employers by providing a tailored advice and brokering service and offering funded training for employees without a level 2 or level 3 qualification. This section contains the summative evidence from inspections in this area. The issues are further explored in the ‘Skills for working lives’ section of this report (p.104).

Work-based learning

Figure 20: Overall effectiveness of work-based learning providers inspected between July 2007 and August 2008 (number of providers)

	Work-based learning
Outstanding	16
Good	133
Satisfactory	90
Inadequate	18
Total	257

139 This year, there have been 257 inspections of work-based learning (Figure 20). The overall picture is one of improving provision. On average, the proportion of good or outstanding provision has risen from 48% last year to 58% of the total. Of the 16 outstanding providers, six were employers offering highly specialised programmes in gas, nuclear and railway engineering. The proportion of inadequate providers, at 7%, is the same as last year.

140 Three subject areas in the sector show particular strengths: 42 of the 65 inspections of engineering provision, 50 of the 75 inspections of business administration provision and 16 of the 25 inspections of construction provision gave rise to judgements of good or outstanding. Inadequate provision (around 10%) is highest in preparation for life and work and in health and social care.

141 Overall, the national average for learners’ completion of full apprenticeship frameworks improved in 2006/07 to 61% for apprentices and 58% for advanced apprentices. Despite continuing improvement, completion rates remain too low and vary considerably between subject areas. Initial data on Train to Gain show a similar success rate of 60%. Despite a small improvement, the rate of progression to further training or employment by learners on Entry to Employment programmes is generally too low.

142 In much of the provision, learners acquire good vocational skills and their practical work is also good. The better providers ensure learners work to the exacting deadlines and standards required by industry. Learners’ general work skills, self-confidence and self-esteem all frequently improve through participating in learning. Learners on Train to Gain programmes, in particular, develop confidence and motivation at work through the opportunity to gain a qualification.

143 In the most successful providers, the training of apprentices is closely coordinated with on-the-job learning. The vocational experience of teachers and learners is often used well to illustrate particular points and provide background knowledge. Training materials are regularly updated to reflect current working practices, and providers ensure programmes are adapted to meet learners’ individual needs.

³⁷ For more information on the different kinds of provision within the sector and on national qualifications, see the Glossary, p.135.

Adult learning and skills continued

144 Most providers offer highly flexible training and assessment arrangements to take account of shift patterns and work demands. There continues to be a wide range of provision in work-based learning. Productive links with employers and effective progression to further training are key strengths in the better providers, but there are still too many providers who do not involve employers sufficiently in the delivery, planning, assessment and coordination of training.

145 Some significant and long-standing weaknesses continue to hinder learners' progress and completion of programmes. These include, in particular, insufficient access to timely assessment, poor progress reviews and target-setting, and failures to identify and meet learners' needs in literacy and numeracy. Although most providers use appropriate initial assessment tools, too few have the expertise to translate the results into an effective programme of support for the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

146 Leadership and management are satisfactory or better in most work-based learning providers. Productive collaboration with partners is a key strength in many good providers; for example, they work closely with employers, schools and support agencies to increase recruitment to learning programmes, employment and prospects for progression. Many of the employers participating in Train to Gain are existing clients of providers, so the scheme is not doing as well as it could in reaching out to new groups. The better providers have succeeded in extending the range of employers taking part and in reaching employers who have not been involved in training recently, but few learners on the programme have been referred through the advice and brokerage service.

147 Providers' arrangements for improving quality remain an area for further development. Self-assessment processes are not sufficiently thorough and evaluative, nor consistently used to bring about continuous improvement. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory in the vast majority of providers inspected but not enough providers use data effectively to monitor trends in the performance of different groups of learners. Learning activities and reviews are often not used well to promote equality and diversity.



Adult and community learning

Figure 21: Overall effectiveness of adult and community learning providers inspected between July 2007 and August 2008 (number of providers)

Adult and community learning providers	
Outstanding	3
Good	17
Satisfactory	22
Inadequate	7
Total	49

148 Adult and community learning aims to meet the needs and interests of communities and the groups within them, including adults who are often among those most in need of opportunities for learning to improve their life chances. They include people from diverse backgrounds and individuals with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learning activities are offered in a wide range of venues and at times to suit learners.

149 The overall volume of provision has declined this year. The overall numbers of adult learners funded by the Learning and Skills Council have also fallen, particularly enrolments on non-accredited courses. However, numbers of learners on longer, accredited courses have increased. Providers may also receive separate funding for family learning, Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities, and provision below level 2 to promote progression to further learning.

150 Of the 49 adult and community learning providers inspected since July 2007, three are outstanding, 17 good, 22 satisfactory and seven inadequate (Figure 21). This represents a decline in the proportion of good and better providers compared with last year, and a rise in the proportion of inadequate providers.

151 Of the curriculum areas most frequently inspected, information and communication technology performs best, with 16 of the 26 providers judged good or outstanding. The quality of the provision in preparation for life and work is a matter of concern, with less than half of the providers inspected good or better; while provision in seven of the 49 providers inspected is inadequate. In previous years, provision in family learning has been generally good but it is less so this year; four of the 22 providers inspected are inadequate. The features of the inadequate provision vary, but ineffective arrangements to plan individual learning, monitor and support progress and assess outcomes for adult learners are common.

152 Learners enjoy their courses and generally make good progress in developing relevant skills. Much of the provision is effective in preparing them for further learning or employment, but often the evidence of progression is anecdotal rather than based on reliable data. Many providers identify the reductions in funding for adult

provision at further education colleges as a significant barrier to planning for progression. Learners who want to follow courses leading to qualifications still find their choices limited in some providers and rates of success for some on accredited courses continue to be low. Definitions of success and achievement on non-accredited courses are still not sufficiently clear across the sector.

153 Teaching and learning are satisfactory or better in 46 of the 49 providers inspected, although as in previous years there are wide variations in their quality. Effective classes are most common in the arts, while the least effective are in preparation for life and work, particularly those for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Generally, tutors do not use assessment sufficiently to plan learning. Despite a national initiative in this area, the planning and monitoring of learners' progress on non-accredited courses remain poor in over a quarter of the providers inspected.

154 In the better provision, programmes are matched very well to learners' aspirations and potential. Programmes meet both national and local priorities, and providers ensure that suitable opportunities are well located for priority groups. Guidance and support for learners are usually good or better, although some provision relies too much on the motivation and knowledge of individual tutors or development workers.

155 Leadership and management are good or better in 20 of the 49 providers inspected. Major restructuring is under way in many providers to ensure the financial viability and the continuity of the service. The relevance of the curriculum to priority groups is improving. Community development initiatives have a more professional and clearer focus. Providers have enhanced their responsiveness through managing systems better to integrate the particular needs of dispersed communities with the range of subjects offered. However, eight of the 43 providers inspected this year have inadequate 'skills for life' strategies.³⁸ Where providers have been targeted to meet employers' needs they have not made enough progress and there is little formal consultation to identify employers' requirements. In 20 of the 49 providers inspected, quality assurance arrangements are not robust enough nor applied consistently.

³⁸ Skills for life provision supports the development of literacy, numeracy and language skills.

Adult learning and skills continued

New Deal, Programme Centres and Employment Zones

Figure 22: Overall effectiveness of New Deal, Programme Centres and Employment Zones providers inspected between July 2007 and August 2008 (number of providers)

	New Deal (prime contractors)	Programme Centres	Employment Zones
Outstanding	0	0	0
Good	6	3	3
Satisfactory	17	12	1
Inadequate	3	4	0
Total	26	19	4

156 Most employability programmes funded by the Department for Work and Pensions are mandatory for those in receipt of benefits. Many of the participants in employability programmes are particularly hard to help and include those who are participating for the second or third time, after failing to get, or stay in, a job.

157 In 2007/08, the first full year of inspection for these programmes, 26 New Deal (prime contractors) and 19 Programme Centres were inspected (Figure 22). Around two thirds are satisfactory, but three New Deal programmes and four Programme Centres are inadequate.

158 Prime contractors (providers) manage New Deal programmes over wide areas, working with subcontracted partners. Although still too low, the proportion of participants progressing to employment has improved since last year. Most New Deal prime contractors are now reaching a target of 35–40%. Participants generally improve their employability and personal skills, often through gaining job-related additional qualifications such as the basic hygiene certificate and health and safety at work awards. Job-focused training for many New Deal participants is satisfactory and the quality of teaching and learning during jobsearch sessions is good. In better providers, participants receive effective personal and work-related support and barriers to employment are identified effectively. Too few New Deal providers offer participants work experience. Target-setting in development plans and reviews is often poor.

159 Programme Centres offer a voluntary programme that includes advice on searching for jobs and opportunities for work-related training. Fewer Programme Centres achieve their contracted targets. The better Programme Centres focus on participants' employment goals and some have appointed consultants to engage employers, with the aim of increasing the number of job opportunities for participants. However, others are still not increasing the vocational options offered to participants.

Job-focused training for many New Deal participants is satisfactory and the quality of teaching and learning during jobsearch sessions is good.

160 Employment Zones involve a single or small group of very experienced providers working in areas of high deprivation. Of the four Employment Zones inspected, three are good and one is satisfactory. Employment Zones achieve higher rates of job entry at around 50%, with good rates of retention in employment.

161 Jobcentre Plus conducts an initial assessment of participants' literacy and numeracy skills and refers those in need of further support to a local course before they join the programme. While these arrangements are working satisfactorily, not all providers give sufficient consideration to participants' varying levels of literacy and numeracy in their jobsearch and other workshop activities.

162 Leadership and management are mostly satisfactory. Better contractors are tightly focused on improving the quality of their provision and increasing their job outcomes. Prime contractors' management of their subcontractors remains an area for improvement. The move away from single provider contracts to a prime contract arrangement has meant that the responsibility to quality assure the work of subcontractors is now placed on the prime contractor. Early prime contract inspection results identified the need for prime contractors to develop processes to monitor the performance and quality of their subcontractors' work. Recent inspection results identify effective monitoring of quality and performance and a focus on quality improvement amongst contract partners. There is not enough sharing of good practice between the various sites used by individual providers, and between providers.

163 Most contractors have appropriate procedures to meet their legal obligations, but not all comply fully with their duty to promote equality in relation to race, gender and disability. Some staff do not sufficiently challenge participants' inappropriate behaviour and attitudes. In addition, there are examples of providers moving into accommodation which is not accessible or not properly equipped for people with restricted mobility. Some contractors carry out insufficient analysis of data on the performance of different groups of participants and therefore have a poor understanding of the learners' characteristics and needs.

Workstep

Figure 23: Overall effectiveness of Workstep providers inspected between July 2007 and August 2008 (number of providers)

	Workstep
Outstanding	1
Good	18
Satisfactory	17
Inadequate	2
Total	38

164 The Workstep programme supports adults with complex disabilities to build independence, learn everyday coping skills and develop the confidence to reach their potential. Where appropriate, outcomes include progressing into unsupported employment.

165 In 2007/08, 38 providers were inspected, of which 29 were county or borough councils (Figure 23). Two more council providers found inadequate at their previous inspections were reinspected; one of these remains inadequate. Overall, the outcomes of full inspections this year are broadly the same as in 2006/07, with indications of some improvements. In addition, one provider has been judged outstanding.

166 Workstep participants make satisfactory progress in developing skills for employment and personal skills through structured programmes, with support from well qualified and professional staff. However, their progress into unsupported, open employment is still poor. Although providers are increasingly adept at identifying those who are ready for this, many participants do not make the final move into unsupported employment.

Adult learning and skills continued

167 Partnership working with employers is improving, particularly in preparing participants for specific job roles. Workstep employment officers, based with providers, give effective support to many host employers and supervisors, enabling participants to gain confidence and make a good contribution. The best providers now offer a good range of jobsearch activities, but in some cases participants remain in this phase for too long. Last year, participants' needs for work-related support with literacy and numeracy were not met well. This year, most providers have satisfactory arrangements for assessing and meeting participants' needs.

168 Leadership and management are rarely less than satisfactory. The best providers focus strongly on the experience of participants and improving progression into open employment. Too many providers, however, have underdeveloped quality improvement systems. Some managers face the challenge of managing contracts which are static or declining in number, and this reduces the opportunities for learners to work with new people.



Learndirect

Figure 24: Overall effectiveness of learndirect providers inspected between July 2007 and August 2008 (number of providers)

	Learning centres	Ufi (Headquarters) /Regions
Outstanding	2	0
Good	21	4
Satisfactory	27	1
Inadequate	4	0
Total	54	5

169 This year 54 centres were inspected, together with four regional inspections and Ufi (the University for Industry – the organisation that funds learndirect courses), (Figure 24). The learndirect provision is improving and inspections this year included two learning centres judged outstanding. Twenty-seven of the 59 providers inspected are good or better. The number of inadequate providers has risen from two in 2006/07 to four in 2007/08. In three of these cases, Ufi subsequently withdrew funding and transferred learners to other centres.

170 Nationally, achievement and standards are generally satisfactory or better. The success rate for skills for life is consistently good at around 73%. In information and communication technology and business and management programmes the success rates in 2007/08 have improved from a poor position last year to rates of 66% and 73% respectively.

171 In the best providers, learners work through a series of short programmes to achieve their learning goals and, in many cases, accredited qualifications. In the less successful providers, learners are unsure what their goals are, or are on the wrong course, and their progress slows until they withdraw. Teaching and learning are satisfactory or better in most centres. Learndirect electronic learning materials cover a wide range of subjects and, in the better centres, these are supplemented with materials for study at home or work.

172 Employers' needs are increasingly well met. The learndirect course materials are easily studied at work and the better centres organise this well. Some centres widen access to those who otherwise might not have benefited from online learning, by activities such as preparatory workshops for those with very low literacy and numeracy skills.

173 The use of individual learning plans to set targets and plan learning is an area for improvement, as it was last year. The link between assessment and the planned programme is not always well explained to learners. The use of online notes by tutors is increasing, and learners find these helpful, but they are not systematically linked to learners' progress.

174 The overall management of learndirect by Ufi is good. A common information system is used well throughout the network to set targets and monitor outcomes. Self-assessment by learning centres is satisfactory overall, although not always evaluative enough. Ufi's management of the performance of centres is particularly effective. All the regional self-assessment reports are thoroughly moderated but some development plans lack sufficient focus.

175 Ufi's approach to equality of opportunity is good. It has put in place robust measures to assess equality and diversity in all learning centres. It has very effective strategies to attract a broad range of learners to participate in accredited training courses, including those without qualifications, unemployed learners, members of minority ethnic groups and learners with disabilities. Analysis of the success rates of different groups of learners reveals no discernible differences between their levels of achievement.

Nextstep

Figure 25: Overall effectiveness of nextstep providers inspected between July 2007 and August 2008 (number of providers)

	Nextstep
Outstanding	0
Good	3
Satisfactory	10
Inadequate	1
Total	14

176 Nextstep provision is the national information, advice and guidance service for adults over the age of 19.

177 Of the 14 nextstep providers inspected, three are good, 10 are satisfactory and one is inadequate (Figure 25). While leadership and management are inadequate in only one provider, quality improvement is inadequate in three, a slightly lower proportion than last year.

178 The service continues to focus effectively on clients' personal needs and those of specific target groups, including individuals who are vulnerable or socially disadvantaged. Clients' confidence, motivation and self-esteem are usually increased as a result of attending a nextstep advice session. Most providers have continued to improve arrangements for following up clients after they have attended these sessions. Where data on positive outcomes have been provided for inspectors, they show that the proportion of clients entering learning or employment is satisfactory overall. However, the majority of providers either did not record the proportion of clients achieving a learning outcome or indicated a declining trend. There is a wide variety of systems for collating information about clients' positive outcomes.

Adult learning and skills continued

179 The quality of advice sessions remains satisfactory.

The better sessions provide a prompt and responsive service and advisers make effective use of their specialist knowledge and links to provide information and advice. Clients' needs for support in literacy, numeracy and language often form a substantial barrier to learning or employment. The quality of support for these needs is uneven. In the better providers, clients are referred to appropriate training. However, not all advisers have the confidence or the knowledge to tackle this successfully with clients. Action planning for clients remains poor. Targets are not always agreed with them, are not always specific enough and are sometimes poorly recorded.

180 A real strength of nextstep provision, in its current form, is the network of subcontractors and wider partners to meet local needs. Most providers respond well to local community needs and national priorities. They use effectively a range of carefully selected subcontractors. Advice sessions often take place in community venues that are familiar and accessible to clients. Most providers have good links with a wide network of organisations to which clients are referred for expert advice and support.

181 Arrangements to improve the quality of provision are still not thorough enough. Data are not analysed, used or monitored well. There is still too much focus on reaching targets for the numbers of clients seen and not enough on their positive outcomes. Many providers do not thoroughly evaluate the performance of different groups of clients.

The impact of inspection

182 Ofsted invites providers of adult learning and skills to complete an evaluative questionnaire in the period following inspection. In 2007/08:

- ✖ 183 out of 186 respondents to the relevant question found the whole inspection process valuable in helping them to improve the service provided to learners.
- ✖ 105 out of 113 respondents to the relevant question found the detailed findings section of their inspection report useful in helping them to improve the service provided to learners.

183 Reinspections took place of 14 adult learning providers found inadequate at their previous inspections. All but two of these providers were satisfactory or better on reinspection.



A real strength of nextstep provision, in its current form, is the network of subcontractors and wider partners to meet local needs.

Initial teacher education



Introduction

184 In 2007/08 full inspections have continued to focus on providers of teacher education previously judged satisfactory or inadequate, and on new providers or those not yet inspected. Providers judged outstanding or good at their previous inspections received lighter touch and short inspections respectively. In total, there were four full and 26 short inspections of primary provision and six full and 34 short inspections of secondary provision. Of these 70 inspections, 53 were of the training provided by partnerships led by higher education institutions and the remaining 17 were of school-centred initial teacher training. Ofsted also carried out inspections of further education teacher training in 17 higher education-led partnerships and an inspection of the London-based Teach First programme (see xxii, p.120).

185 Additionally, four inspections sought information on specific aspects of preparation for teaching: community languages (see v, p.120); modern foreign languages in primary schools (see xx, p.120); pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (see viii, p.120); and early reading in primary schools (see xxvi, p.120).

186 2007/08 was the final year of the current cycles of inspection for initial teacher education in schools and for the further education system. At the start of the academic year, new professional standards for trainees and course requirements were introduced for those providing training for schools. New awards were also introduced for teachers in the learning and skills sector. Consequently, providers were required to adapt or rewrite their training programmes.

187 In September 2008, Ofsted introduced a new inspection framework for initial teacher education, with revised and raised expectations of providers and a concentration of inspection resources where they can have most impact.

Overall effectiveness and improvement

188 In 2007/08, the management and quality assurance of 14 of the 30 primary providers and 17 of the 40 secondary providers inspected are outstanding. Further education teacher training is good or outstanding in nine of the 17 higher education-led providers inspected.

Initial teacher education continued

189 Primary and secondary teacher training programmes continue to be well led and managed, and resources are targeted appropriately. Most providers have secure arrangements for quality assurance. There is little difference in the judgements made about school-centred training schemes and those led by higher education institutions. This is a similar position to the one reported in 2006/07. For the most part, prospective trainees have a wide range of choice in how and where they wish to be trained. An exception is for those wishing to train to teach community languages; they face significant barriers, including few choices in the location of courses.

190 Collaboration, communication and relationships within partnerships are well established, adding greatly to the coherence of courses. Training programmes are constantly updated by providers to take account of government initiatives: for example, the Rose Review on the teaching of early reading and 14–19 curriculum developments.³⁹ There is especially good quality training for trainees preparing to be future language specialists in primary schools.

191 In teacher training for further education, rigorous admission procedures lead to a thorough analysis of trainees' individual needs. Trainees are highly motivated and skilful in linking pedagogic theory to their own teaching practice. Programmes are designed well to meet the new national requirements for teachers in the learning and skills sector. The quality of centre-based training sessions remains a key strength, with trainers acting as effective role models. However, the quality of support and training in the workplace remains variable. Furthermore, too many trainees qualify with only a narrow range of teaching experience, especially those training to teach in contexts other than colleges, for example in work-based learning or in secure accommodation.

192 Providers across all sectors have adapted their training to take account of the increased emphasis on personalised learning. In particular, compared with last year, those providing training for the further education system are better at developing trainees' ability to meet learners' needs in literacy and numeracy. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement. As reported last year, more could be done to draw on the diversity of schools to ensure that all trainees promote equality and inclusion and have opportunities to teach pupils who speak English as an additional language.

193 As a result of well focused training which takes account of the implications of the Rose Review, primary trainees often have good knowledge and understanding of early reading. However, they are not always as well prepared to assess individual pupils' phonic knowledge and skills or to teach pupils to spell accurately. Training to teach pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory, although there is too much variation in practice. In some cases, there is insufficient monitoring of the quality of training opportunities.

194 There is room for improvement in monitoring the impact of equality and diversity policies across further education partnerships. Where data exist, they are not used effectively so that, for example, there is little explicit targeting of under-represented groups.

195 The Teach First initial teacher training programme offers a distinctive route to gaining qualified teacher status, and attracts highly qualified graduates who would not otherwise enter teaching. The London-based programme enables most trainees to achieve the standards necessary for good quality teaching. Trainees are increasingly encouraged and inspired to make a positive contribution to the schools in which they are placed.

196 The quality of support by mentors has improved, especially in further education teacher training where arrangements for mentoring in the workplace are now integral to all training programmes. Nevertheless, not all mentors give trainees enough subject-specific feedback so that they are clear about where they need to improve their subject knowledge. The quality of target-setting within further education trainees' individual learning plans remains highly variable, and there is not enough moderation of the judgements made about trainees. Shortcomings in programmes preparing trainees to teach in schools are often related to mentors' non-attendance at training sessions.

The impact of inspection

197 Ofsted invites providers of initial teacher education to evaluate their inspections. By the end of September 2008, 45 providers had returned their evaluations. Of these, 38 were positive overall, three were ambivalent and four were negative in their assessments of the value and impact of inspection.

Quality and standards

Children's social care

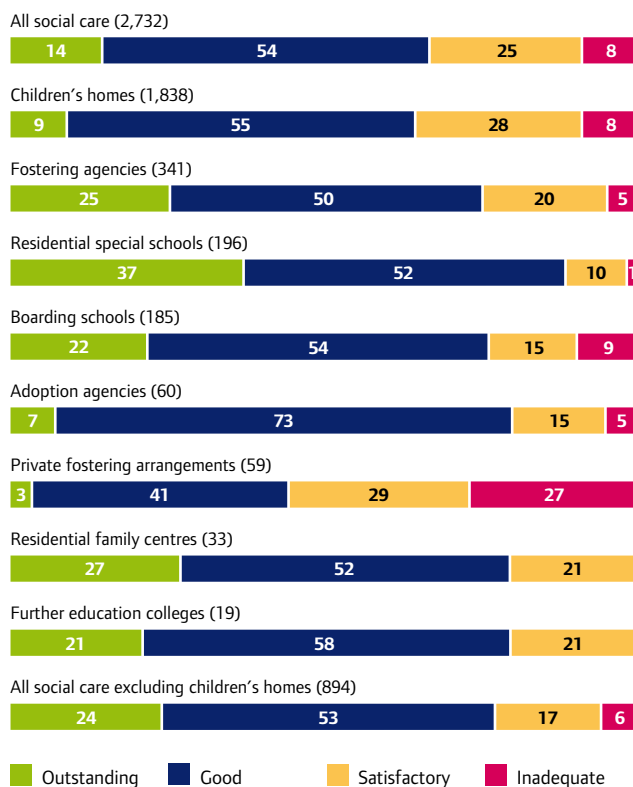
Introduction

198 This section reports on the quality of children's social care from the first full year of Ofsted inspections. During the year (1 July 2007 to 31 August 2008), inspectors made 4,801 inspection visits to 2,732 providers. These included children's homes (1,838), boarding schools (185), further education colleges (19), residential special schools (196), residential family centres (33), fostering agencies (341), adoption agencies (60), private fostering arrangements in local authorities (59), and one adoption support agency.

199 The children's social care sector is large, with over 3,600 providers. They cater for the 59,500 children and young people who are looked after in public care at any one time.⁴⁰ Each provider must meet national minimum standards and regulations specific to the type of provision. Inspections check whether these are met and how well children and young people are supported in relation to the Every Child Matters outcomes.

Overall effectiveness

Figure 26: Quality of care at most recent inspection of providers inspected between July 2007 and August 2008 and active at 31 August 2008 (percentage of providers)



Figures in brackets are numbers of providers inspected.
 Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

⁴⁰ Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2008, Statistical First Release (SFR 23/2008), DCSF, 2008. Social services for children are provided under the Children Act 1989, which came into force in October 1991. Under this Act a child is 'looked after' by a local authority if he or she is placed in the care of a local authority by a court (under a care order) or provided with accommodation by the local authority for more than 24 hours.

Children's social care continued

200 Of the care services inspected, most are at least satisfactory overall and around two thirds are good or outstanding. Eight per cent of providers are inadequate (Figure 26).

201 Children's homes are inspected twice each year. Of these homes, 92% are satisfactory or better and two thirds are good or outstanding at their most recent inspections (Figure 26). The 120 homes operated by the voluntary sector have a higher proportion of good and outstanding (74%) provision and a lower proportion that is inadequate (3%) than homes run by local authorities and the private sector. There is a slightly higher proportion of good and outstanding homes run by local authorities (64%) than by the private sector (62%).

202 Although many homes improved between one inspection and the next, 149 were inadequate at 31 August 2008.

203 Volatility in quality is a concern. Of the 146 children's homes that were inadequate at their first inspection, 116 of these improved by the next inspection. However, 36 that were good or outstanding and 43 that were satisfactory at their first inspection were inadequate at a second inspection. Changes to staffing or management often have a negative effect on continuity within homes.

204 Safeguarding and management are the two areas requiring the most improvement in inadequate children's homes. Of the 5,000 actions required, 28% related to safeguarding issues and 23% concerned management.

205 Similar proportions of independent fostering agencies (76%) are good or outstanding as local authority fostering services (74%). Local authorities have broad duties to provide accommodation for children in need and to provide suitably matched fostering placements, often at short notice when a full assessment of need is not yet complete. Independent fostering agencies, however, generally provide placements for children who have had a full assessment, making it easier to meet their needs. Procedures to ensure children are well matched to places are not always rigorous enough and accounted for 14% of the actions set by inspectors for local authority agencies. The proportion of inadequate provision in independent fostering agencies (5%) and local authority fostering services (6%) is similar. These figures are too high.

206 Of the 60 adoption agencies inspected, 80% are good or outstanding and 5% are inadequate (Figure 26). In the latter, a lack of effective self-evaluation means that they do not have a sufficient overview of their effectiveness and lack direction in developing their service. This is often exacerbated by frequent management changes.

Safeguarding and management are the two areas requiring the most improvement in inadequate children's homes. Of the 5,000 actions required, 28% related to safeguarding issues and 23% concerned management.



207 New national minimum standards and regulations for private fostering arrangements came into force in 2005.⁴¹ Ofsted inspected arrangements in 59 local authorities; two are outstanding, 24 are good, 17 are satisfactory and 16 are inadequate. Local authorities are inconsistent in the attention and resources they give to monitoring private fostering arrangements and the standards are not yet fully embedded in practice. Shortcomings include an absence of an identified officer; inadequately trained staff who lack sufficient knowledge and understanding of private fostering procedures or the Regulations and national minimum standards; and inadequate monitoring systems to enable reporting to Local Safeguarding Children Boards.^{42, 43} This is a cause for concern. However, also of serious concern is the low level of notifications of private fostering arrangements in many authorities, suggesting that not all are notified to local authorities.

208 Where children's social care is provided alongside education, inspections of care and education usually take place at the same time. Nearly all care in these settings is at least satisfactory. In the 19 further education colleges inspected, care is good or outstanding in all but four. Care is also good or outstanding in 89% of residential special schools and 76% of boarding schools across the maintained and independent sectors (Figure 26). In these settings, children enjoy what they do and achieve well. There is an extended range of activities throughout the day, including leisure and sporting opportunities, with support for learning and homework within structured and effective routines.

Scope for further improvement identified during inspection

209 Across social care settings, some 5,000 actions were set for providers to ensure minimum requirements are met. These relate mainly to:

- ✘ procedures to check adults' suitability to work with children and to maintain relevant records
- ✘ health and safety in the environment, with particular attention to fire safety and risk assessments
- ✘ safe practice in giving medicines to children
- ✘ effective training and support for staff to enable them to understand and carry out their duties
- ✘ review of the statement of purpose, which explains the services and care children can expect to receive
- ✘ record-keeping to support children's safety and well-being. Typical shortfalls include weaknesses in placement and care plans, behaviour management and recording of physical restraint, including the time restraint lasted, the techniques used and the outcomes.

210 Apart from the actions required of providers, inspectors made over 9,500 recommendations for improvements. These include:

- ✘ notifying parents, children and other stakeholders of complaints procedures
- ✘ demonstrating that children and young people are fully consulted about decisions affecting their lives
- ✘ improving staff training
- ✘ ensuring activities meet children's needs and interests
- ✘ improving support for individual children and young people
- ✘ improving awareness on the part of staff and children of cultural and religious diversity
- ✘ providing clear, accessible records that describe a child's placement; these are of value to adults currently supporting children and to children who may need the information in the future.

⁴¹ Children are privately fostered when their parents arrange for them to stay with an adult who is not a close relative for more than 28 days. This can include young people who stay with friends because of rifts with their families, arrangements made during parental illness, children staying in families whilst attending a school away from their home area and children from overseas whose parents are not resident in this country.

⁴² An identified officer is the named person who signs off decisions about overall suitability of private fostering arrangements. Authorities must also have an identified person who has experience of private fostering and can advise social workers.

⁴³ More detailed information about Local Safeguarding Children Boards can be found in the 'Safeguarding children' section of this report; see p.88.

Children's social care continued

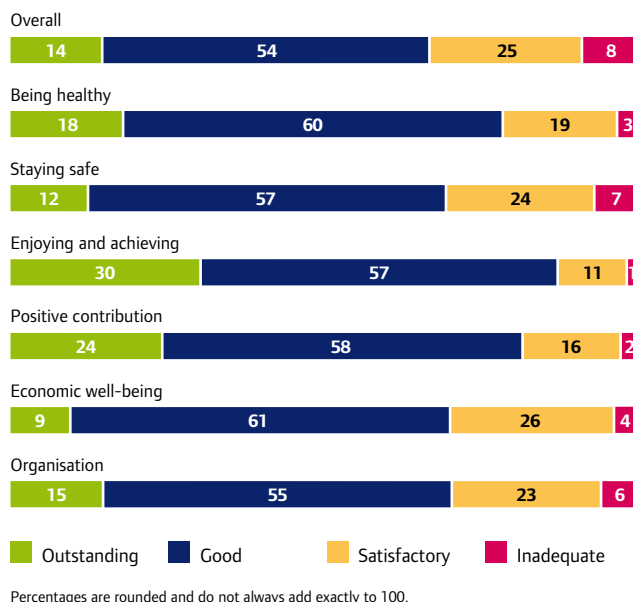
211 Each inspection report identifies the improvements providers have made since the previous inspection. Reports show that providers make suitable improvements to meet the recommendations.

Organisation

212 High quality leadership and management are essential in providing an effective service. Children develop well when services are open to new ideas and seek to improve. Of the provision inspected, 70% is good or outstanding in promoting positive outcomes for children (Figure 27). In the best services, leaders establish a shared vision with staff and carers, who are clear about their roles, are well trained and understand children's individual needs. Adults adopt a flexible approach to care and are guided by clear procedures. Managers evaluate the quality of care effectively and tackle weaknesses to bring about improvements.

213 Across the children's homes, fostering and adoption agencies and social care in educational settings inspected, 6% are inadequate in their organisation and management. The most frequent shortcomings include poor staff supervision and training; inadequate evaluation by managers of the quality of care; insufficient and poorly deployed staff; and the absence of records describing a child's placement for the information of staff and carers.

Figure 27: Most recent outcome judgements: all social care provision inspected between July 2007 and August 2008 and active at 31 August 2008 (percentage of providers)



Being healthy

214 This outcome is promoted well where children live in a healthy environment and their health needs are met. Of the care services inspected, 78% are good or outstanding at encouraging children to be healthy (Figure 27). In the best services, staff have full information about children's health care needs. Plans are kept under regular review and ensure children have the health care they need. Procedures and practices ensure that children are cared for with sensitivity and respect for their dignity.

215 In these effective services, children are actively involved in their health care. Staff act as good role models and encourage them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Children eat a healthy diet that conforms to any religious or cultural needs. They are physically active, involved in the community and are well equipped to deal physically and emotionally with life's challenges.

216 However, 3% of the services inspected are inadequate in promoting good health (Figure 27). A lack of coordinated working and planning causes delays in accessing services and children's health is compromised. Staff fail to make the link between diet and good health. Children are not provided with healthy options, diets lack variety and children are not sufficiently encouraged to develop new eating habits. Often, staff are not given appropriate guidance about giving medication safely and with understanding, and do not have adequate medical information about the children in their care or appropriate health care plans for them.



In the best services, children say they feel safe, their privacy is respected, they are well informed about keeping themselves safe and they are positive about their relationships with staff.

Staying safe

217 For services providing residential care for the most vulnerable children, whether children are safe is a crucial judgement. Children are kept safe when risks are identified and managed effectively. Of the social care services inspected, only 69% are good or outstanding in promoting children's safety (Figure 27). This figure is too low. The levels in private fostering arrangements (44%), care in further education colleges (63%) and children's homes (68%) are below this average. Other services have above the average level of good or outstanding provision, with residential special schools having the highest proportion (86%).

218 In the best services, children say they feel safe, their privacy is respected, they are well informed about keeping themselves safe and they are positive about their relationships with staff. Adults are carefully vetted for suitability; they are not left unsupervised with children until checks are completed. Staff are well trained and vigilant, and there are clear procedures for safeguarding, preventing bullying, and managing complaints, behaviour, and health and safety. The environment is well managed, and potential hazards and challenging behaviour are tackled well. Stability in placements is improved because young people's needs have been thoroughly assessed before admission and staff are well informed about how they should be met.

219 Safeguarding, however, is inadequate in 7% of services (Figure 27). Common failings are the absence of risk assessments or poor management of risks, such as inadequate fire precautions; unsafe recruitment practices, including lack of proper procedures to ensure that staff working with children are suitable; inadequate records to show that appropriate procedures have been followed; and insufficient guidance to staff on effective safeguarding procedures.⁴⁴ Where staff do not have suitable guidance, this is usually because of insufficient understanding of Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. This may mean that protocols for inter-agency working are not known and followed, and there may be delays in raising concerns and poor coordination. Consequently, necessary actions may not be taken to reduce the risks to children of sexual exploitation and drug or alcohol misuse.

⁴⁴ Further information on procedures for staff recruitment and vetting can be found in the 'Safeguarding children' section of this report; see p.88.

Children's social care continued

Enjoying and achieving

220 Of the services inspected, 87% are good or outstanding at helping children enjoy what they are doing, achieve well and take an active part in learning (Figure 27). In the best services, children experience varied activities which take account of their gender, race, culture, language, religion, interests, abilities and disabilities. They are encouraged to develop friendships. Relationships with staff and carers are very positive. Adults are sensitive to children's needs and aspirations. They celebrate success, are committed to achieving the best possible outcomes and provide individual support for children. For example, in a children's home, displays of photographs of social events and educational trips show young people that staff value learning opportunities and positively reinforce the view that learning can be fun. Good homework facilities, good availability of books and access to the internet provide positive messages to children that their education is important.

221 Children's educational needs and abilities are thoroughly assessed and staff, carers and parents all understand their roles in implementing education plans. Staff have established networks with educational specialists who assist in providing alternative education programmes when necessary. Structured opportunities for learning are in place beyond the school day.

222 In the very few (1%) social care services inspected that are inadequate in promoting children's enjoyment and achievement, children say they are bored (Figure 27). There are too few facilities and resources for their interests to be followed. Adults are unclear about their roles in promoting learning and children are unaware of what they do well or how they can improve. Insufficient communication between the home and the setting means that learning opportunities are missed.

Making a positive contribution

223 Children make a positive contribution when they are fully involved in all aspects of their lives and the wider community, are respected by those around them and have a sense of belonging. Of the care services inspected, 82% are good or outstanding at helping children make a positive contribution (Figure 27). In the best services, adults lead by example. They respect young people, who in turn learn how to have positive relationships with each other when their own feelings and beliefs are valued. Staff and carers work in partnership with parents, seeking advice and providing information. They make it easy for children to maintain contact with their parents. Full information about children is gathered from the authorities placing them or from parents. Staff are fully involved in keeping care plans under review and adapt them as children's needs change.

224 Of the care services and institutions inspected, 2% are inadequate in helping children make a positive contribution (Figure 27); most of these are children's homes. In these services, children are not involved in making decisions about their lives; they are unsure what is happening to them and about plans for their future. They do not learn to value themselves or others. Placing authorities do not provide current placement plans when children are admitted, which means that staff are not always clear about arrangements for children's care.

225 Some residential homes receive complaints from local residents. Often, these are about the perceived impact of the homes on residential areas. If Ofsted receives such complaints, it investigates to determine whether the provision meets requirements, for example whether staff in the home manage behaviour effectively. If shortcomings are found, the homes are required to improve. However, complaints are sometimes received even when staff are doing all they should. In these circumstances, it may be difficult for the homes to make positive links with the local community.

Achieving economic well-being

226 Children's economic well-being is promoted when they are supported to achieve their potential. Of the care services inspected, 70% are good or outstanding at helping children to achieve economic well-being (Figure 27).

227 In the best services, staff and carers understand how best to support the young people's transition to adulthood. For example, staff in children's homes ensure that placing authorities involve them fully in developing pathway plans to support them when they leave care and these are drawn up in time to allow them to develop the skills they need. Adults provide a safety net by continuing to support young people after they leave the home. Good pathway plans, followed up by effective support from local authorities, mean that young people are more likely to succeed in their lives after leaving care and therefore to achieve economic well-being.

228 However, of the services inspected, 4% are inadequate at helping children and young people to achieve economic well-being (Figure 27). Shortcomings include lack of planning, preparation and support for them in their transition to adulthood; and lack of care in maintaining a homely and accessible environment for them. These shortcomings have an adverse impact on those who are looked after in children's homes, residential special schools and foster placements. There is an expectation that they will receive sufficient support to prepare them for adulthood. However, where provision is inadequate, pathway plans, which detail such individual support, are not completed and this is the case for almost one in 10 care leavers. Staff or carers are excluded from the planning or do not understand their roles. This disadvantages young people leaving care, who are then ill-equipped to face the challenges of life beyond their placements. Young care leavers are disproportionately represented among those not in education, employment or training.

229 The absence of personal education plans also has a negative impact on the life chances of the young people. Staff and carers are not always clear about individuals' levels of attainment and ways to overcome barriers to learning. Uncoordinated provision seriously disadvantages young people.

The impact of inspection

230 Ofsted invites social care providers to evaluate the usefulness of inspection in helping them to improve the quality of the care provided. The most recent data show that:

- ✖ 92% of children's homes and 84% of other providers report that their inspections identified the correct issues and areas for improvement.
- ✖ 93% of children's homes and 87% of other providers believe that inspection had a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people.
- ✖ 94% of children's homes and 91% of other providers report that the inspection process helped them to improve their work further.

Of the services inspected, 87% are good or outstanding at helping children enjoy what they are doing, achieve well and take an active part in learning.

Care and educational provision for children and young people in secure settings

Introduction

231 Children and young people can be accommodated in four types of secure setting: secure children's homes; secure training centres; young offender institutions; and, on occasions, immigration removal centres, for short periods and accompanied by their families. There are currently 18 secure children's homes in England. There are also four secure training centres and 15 prisons accommodating both young offenders and/or children (juveniles). Juvenile establishments and immigration removal centres which accommodate children are inspected by Ofsted in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.⁴⁵

Education and training

232 Provision of education and training in the four secure training centres was inspected during 2007/08. Of these, education and training are outstanding in one, good in two and satisfactory in the fourth. There were full inspections of seven secure children's homes, of which one is outstanding, three are good and three are satisfactory. There were two full inspections of young offender institutions holding children; both of these institutions are satisfactory.

233 The improvements reported in last year's Annual Report have been strengthened, especially in the behaviour of children and young people. In most institutions, leadership and management are successful in supporting children's personal and social development. Education in the secure children's homes inspected makes a strong contribution to the Every Child Matters outcomes, with children understanding and following healthy lifestyles and knowing how to stay safe.

234 On arrival in secure institutions, many children and young people have poor attitudes to learning and experiences of it; indeed, many are unused to participating in structured education of any kind. Behaviour is managed more successfully than in the past and improves quickly. Most behaviour is now good in the institutions inspected. This is achieved most effectively where care staff and teachers collaborate and manage behaviour consistently.

235 Initial assessment of children's and young people's levels of literacy and numeracy is well established and effective. Nearly all children and young people enter institutions with levels of literacy and numeracy well below those found nationally for their ages. There has been an appropriate emphasis on improving basic skills and children make very good progress when opportunities for improving literacy and numeracy are linked to subjects across the curriculum. Most young people leave custody with some form of accreditation in these essential skills and, more generally, levels of accreditation are now at least satisfactory in most of the institutions inspected.

236 Teaching and learning are generally best in vocational and practical subjects, where they are consistently at least satisfactory. In the best classes, teachers have high expectations of learners and plan interesting and varied activities. Less successful lessons provide insufficient challenge, the pace is too slow and young people are bored and lose concentration.

237 The range of vocational provision is too often narrow. Most children and young people have too few opportunities to gain work-related skills that will help them move on to further education, employment or additional training on release. Evening enrichment activities are available in most institutions and, in some cases, the skills gained by young people are accredited through external qualifications. Often, these activities add significantly to their enjoyment of education.

238 Guidance and support are generally strengths of the sector. Most institutions have effective initial assessment procedures that identify any additional support needs quickly, although this information is not always used well to inform teaching and learning. Children and young people are helped to settle in quickly through good induction procedures. Target-setting and monitoring of progress have improved; they are now generally good and, in a few cases, outstanding. Some secure children's homes have developed a system of weekly tutorials which are used well to review progress. Teaching assistants generally provide effective support but, in a few cases, they are not appropriately qualified and are unsure of their role.

239 The improvements seen in the last two years in leadership and management are now having a positive impact, especially in the areas of managing behaviour and in guidance and support. Institutions are now producing more evaluative self-assessment reports. Frequently, managers identify the key weaknesses and take decisive action that improves outcomes for young people. Lesson observations by managers are now well established and, in most cases, this has contributed to improvements in teaching and learning. Centres use data more effectively to measure learners' progress and to set challenging targets. Increasingly, institutions are developing procedures to seek the views of the young people and staff, but this is not consistent across the sector. Relationships between care and education staff are generally good, and communication between groups of staff has improved significantly. There is great variation in the quality of resources, especially in terms of accommodation and facilities.

The improvements reported in last year's Annual Report have been strengthened, especially in the behaviour of children and young people.

Care in secure children's homes and secure training centres

240 Secure children's homes provide support for some of the most vulnerable children and young people. The most recent inspections judged one home outstanding, 12 good and five satisfactory. All are at least satisfactory and most are good at promoting four of the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children: staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, and making a positive contribution. However, only 10 are good at promoting economic well-being, and one is inadequate in this respect.

241 Placements in secure children's homes are made either as a remand or sentence by the courts or on welfare grounds, and allow professionals to assess the child and provide good, targeted services to reduce risks. Inspectors who track cases during inspection have seen files that show some children have had a number of places in non-secure settings, despite concerns about their safeguarding, before being placed in a secure children's home.

242 Secure training centres provide places for children between the ages of 12 and 17 who have been remanded or sentenced by the courts. These centres do not have any welfare places. Ofsted inspects them under an agreement with the Youth Justice Board.

243 Provision of care is good in three centres and inadequate in one. Significant weaknesses have been identified at the inadequate centre at each inspection since it was opened in 2004, including concerns about the quality of care, education, security and safety.

Offender learning and skills

Figure 28: Overall effectiveness of adult skills and young offender providers in prisons inspected between July 2007 and August 2008 (number of providers)

	Prisons
Outstanding	0
Good	9
Satisfactory	13
Inadequate	7
Total	29

244 Adult and young offender prisons are inspected by Ofsted in partnership with Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). HMIP inspections have found that prisons are struggling to provide sufficient purposeful activity, including learning and skills, to the burgeoning prison population. However, overall, the quality of learning and skills provision is satisfactory or better in most respects.⁴⁶

245 2007/08 was the first full year of a new methodology for the inspection of learning and skills in prisons. A focus on the three themes of vocational training and employability; support for literacy, numeracy and language; and personal development and social integration has been well received. Contractors and managers of learning and skills in prisons report that these themes support well the drive to reduce the likelihood of reoffending and promote employability.

246 Overall effectiveness is satisfactory or better in around three quarters of the full, announced inspections of prisons. Although provision is inadequate in a quarter of those inspected, these figures indicate continuing improvement. Last year, a third of the learning and skills provision inspected in prisons was inadequate, while in 2004, the proportion was just over four fifths.

247 Achievement and standards are good in over half the prisons inspected. Many offenders develop good skills for employment, gain confidence and improve their personal effectiveness. However, in some prisons, offenders have too little opportunity for accredited learning. Overall, teaching and learning in educational provision remain satisfactory but in literacy and numeracy they continue to improve.

Where prison workshops provide accredited training, the provision is satisfactory or better. However, too much of the general workshop activity contributes little to the development of offenders’ employability skills.

248 Most prisons offer an appropriate range of skills for life programmes. Initial assessment of literacy and numeracy is carried out routinely for offenders, although some assessments are carried out too early, at a time when the individual health needs of offenders should take priority. Too many offenders are still tested each time they transfer to a new prison and arrangements to transfer records of achievement are generally unreliable. The transfer of learning records when offenders are transferred between prisons, to the community through probation, or released having completed their sentence, remains poor.

249 Overall, there is too little attention to the needs of those for whom English is an additional language, and often little distinction is made between those who may be illiterate in their own language and those who are literate but have limited English language skills.

2007/08 was the first full year of a new methodology for the inspection of learning and skills in prisons. A focus on the three themes of vocational training and employability; support for literacy, numeracy and language; and personal development and social integration has been well received.

⁴⁶ The issue of training for employability in prisons is further explored in the ‘Skills for working lives’ section of this report; see p.104.

250 Provision for personal development and social integration, made by a mix of contracted providers and the prison service, is satisfactory, with some good prison service provision. Most learners develop good personal, practical and social skills and, where programmes are accredited, the success rates are good. Involvement of offenders trained to act as mentors to their peers is particularly effective in developing learners' confidence and self-esteem. However, waiting lists to join programmes are common, and strategies for managing the lists and ensuring equal access for learners are good in only a few prisons. In some cases the range of programmes available through Learning and Skills Council contracted provision is narrow. Some prisons find other sources of funding to provide additional programmes which are appropriate and relevant to local needs.

251 Resettlement programmes often start too close to the offenders' release dates for them to benefit from developing coping and living skills. In many prisons target-setting in individual learning plans remains weak, particularly for those serving short sentences.

252 Programmes that help parents develop parenting skills and literacy and numeracy skills have a strong positive impact. They help parents build new and better relationships with their children and families. Parents who, on entering prison, had little understanding of parenting and were unable to read or write now write letters to their children, and send story tapes and art work. They make more regular telephone calls to their children. These activities are often supported by family days at the prisons which combine a range of different learning and leisure activities.

253 Leadership and management are good in around a quarter of prisons, an improvement on last year's figure of around one in six. All prisons have a responsibility to establish a quality improvement group, with representation from all areas of the prison. Such groups are set up in order to suggest improvements across the range of learning and skills provision, with particular reference to its impact on the experience of the learners. In many prisons which are improving, the self-assessment process has developed well, with the quality improvement group playing a significant role. Arrangements to support equality of opportunity are at least satisfactory in all the prisons inspected. Most prisons ensure that offenders learn in environments which

Programmes that help parents develop parenting skills and literacy and numeracy skills have a strong positive impact. They help parents build new and better relationships with their children and families.

are free of harassment and discrimination. Not all offenders are fully aware of the opportunities available to them for learning and skills, and too few prisons use data well to evaluate the performance of, and participation by, different groups of learners.

Probation inspections

254 This was the first full year of joint inspection arrangements between Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted within an overall strategy to inspect the learning of offenders, from custody through to their return to the community. This methodology is in line with the Government's agenda to help reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

255 Over one third of the offenders sentenced each year receive community order sentences, some of which include provision for the development of learning and skills. The employment rate amongst this group of offenders is low but many of those in employment receive good support from their employers. Many offenders' literacy and numeracy skills remain low, often below level 1.

256 Inspectors joined HMI Probation on 13 offender management inspections covering the East of England and East Midlands regions and two probation areas in the South East.

Offender learning and skills continued

257 Many offenders have good opportunities to develop skills for employability through unpaid work and projects supported by the European Social Fund. However, much of this work is non-accredited and few offenders have a record of the skills they have acquired to support an application for work. Many learners receive good individual coaching from their supervisors and teachers, but target-setting and the monitoring and recording of progress are weak. Too often learning plans are insufficiently integrated into sentence plans.

258 Initial assessment for offenders' needs in literacy and numeracy is thorough but this is carried out in too few cases. Many probation areas have a good range of skills for life provision but the drop-out rate is high, with too much concentration on teaching to pass tests.

259 Most offenders attend learning and skills provision voluntarily. This is mostly skills for life work which can be provided as part of a court order, but insufficient use is made of sentencing to ensure that offenders participate in learning and skills. Some offenders who breach their court orders do so because the programmes do not take account of their low levels of literacy skills and, as a result, they are unable to cope with the demands of the programme. Probation offender managers seek appropriate sequencing of the interventions for offenders. However, educational activities are sometimes put in place as additional activities following a breach of court order conditions rather than as a mandatory part of the original court order. Arrangements to ensure that information for those released from custody is transferred in a timely manner to probation offender managers are poor. The coordination of information, advice and guidance for offenders is insufficient.

260 The development of new partnership arrangements between training providers, local authorities and probation offices is good in many areas but these arrangements do not include enough employers. Targets to measure performance are not challenging enough and non-completion rates are too high. Arrangements to evaluate the learning and skills provision for offenders and to share good practice are inadequate.

Youth offending teams

261 Ofsted inspects youth offending teams (YOTs) as part of the joint inspection programme of YOTs led by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. This year, Ofsted has inspected education, training and employment in 44 YOTs.

262 A majority of YOTs demonstrate good and improving partnership arrangements, particularly with local authorities and local schools. Arrangements to allocate alternative education provision have improved and are timely and effective for children and young people at risk of getting into trouble and who have been out of the education system for long periods. However, there is inconsistency in the degree to which YOTs carry out and use initial assessments of young people who become known to them. Too often, information is not requested or received promptly from the local authority or relevant educational establishment with the result that it is difficult for the YOT to secure appropriate provision for individuals.

263 Recording of the educational progress of young people in custody is variable, as is the quality of planning and placement in education, employment or training on release. Most problematic are the arrangements to ensure young people over the age of 16 have access to suitable education, employment or training. In many areas the range and quantity of post-16 provision for vulnerable young people are poor. However, a minority of YOTs demonstrate very good practice through effective partnership arrangements with local authorities, colleges and training providers to ensure suitable placements.

Initial assessment for offenders' needs in literacy and numeracy is thorough but this is carried out in too few cases.

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service



Introduction

264 The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) is a single agency which covers the 21 court areas of England. Cafcass works only in family proceedings to ensure that the welfare of the child is the court's paramount consideration. Ofsted assumed responsibility for inspecting Cafcass in April 2007.

265 Ofsted published its reports on the inspections of Cafcass East Midlands and Cafcass South East regions in February 2008 and May 2008 respectively (see xvii, xviii, p.120). Both reports made recommendations to Cafcass on the quality of service, front-line practice and management of the regions. Ofsted also undertook a joint inspection, with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration, of the experience of service users in family courts in South Yorkshire (see xix, p.120). These reports were published separately in July 2008.

Inspection findings

Private and public law

266 There were serious and significant shortcomings in the private law service Cafcass provides to children, young people and families involved in family proceedings in the regions inspected.⁴⁷ In the South East, the service was inadequate in private law cases. The delay in providing services to children and families involved in such private law proceedings, particularly in Kent, is unacceptable. By contrast, providing services in public law proceedings in the South East region was not subject to such delays.

Safeguarding

267 There was serious inconsistency in safeguarding the welfare of some children and young people in private law cases.⁴⁸ In an unacceptable number of instances, Ofsted could not be assured that Cafcass was safeguarding a child's safety or welfare. There were serious deficits in recording the work in case files. Some cases were of such concern that Ofsted asked Cafcass to take immediate action to satisfy itself that children were safe.

⁴⁷ Private law proceedings involving Cafcass are usually about situations where parents have separated and they cannot agree where a child should live or with whom they should have contact. Public law deals with relationships between parents, or those with a parental role, where the state is involved to ensure that a child does not suffer significant harm.

⁴⁸ There is further information about the work of Cafcass in relation to safeguarding in the 'Safeguarding children' section of this report; see p.88.

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service continued

Case planning and management

268 An unacceptable number of private law case files and case plans were inadequate. Many case files did not provide evidence that planning and intervention were proportionate to the child's needs. Too many practitioners concentrated on writing down what had happened, rather than on analysing and evaluating the impact on the child.

Court reports

269 Overall, public law reports were of a better standard than private law reports. They were usually clear about children's needs and succeeded in conveying the harm that they had experienced. In particular, the best public law reports advised the courts on the relative merits of particular orders and, for example, explained why it was better to have a specific order. Most of the private law reports, however, were inadequate. Key faults in inadequate reports included lack of clarity over criteria used in assessment; failure to make statements relevant to the conclusions; insufficient evidence to support statements; lack of focus on the wishes and feelings of children; and failure to evaluate the options available to the court.

Service users' views

270 Service users, both adults and children, reported that they were mostly satisfied with the service they had received. Inspectors found examples of good and satisfactory practice which met the needs of children and young people. Such practice was timely and sensitive to the needs of users, especially when presenting the issues in the case fairly, or when the presentation was balanced and therefore avoided exacerbating relations between parties. Children were reassured that the Cafcass worker was there to help them and had enough time to speak with them. Adults found that the Cafcass worker understood their point of view and treated them fairly. However, a significant minority were dissatisfied.

271 In the South Yorkshire inspection, most children said that Cafcass staff were easy to talk to and that their views had made a difference to the outcome of the case. Despite this, the wishes and feelings of children, at times, were inadequately reported. Inspectors found no unfairness in the way Cafcass staff dealt with service users, even in cases in which service users said the Family Court Adviser had been unfair to them. Service users reported that they did not know what to expect and on what criteria they were judged by Cafcass staff. Between regions the service was inconsistent because of a lack of agreed standards, assessment criteria and working practices amongst Cafcass staff.

272 The South Yorkshire service area was performing below the standard set by Cafcass itself as it did not systematically collect information about the diversity of its service users; this made it difficult for Cafcass to improve services to specific groups. Comments and complaints by service users were not satisfactorily encouraged or addressed. In most cases, agreed timescales were not met, and adults were often not well informed by Cafcass about delays in responding to their complaints.

Quality assurance

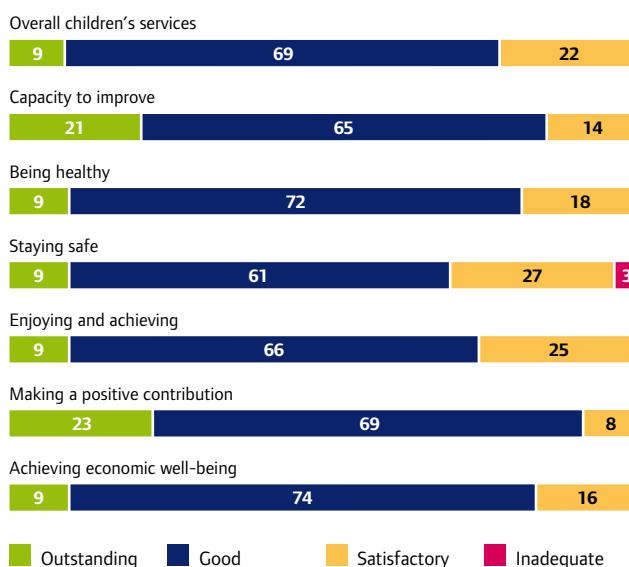
273 Although Cafcass had developed systems to assure the quality of practice, these were not yet operating effectively. The use of quality assurance processes was unsatisfactory overall, with insufficient levels of appropriate challenge. Written observations were generally positive in tone and tended to validate current practice, rather than encourage improvement. Most practitioners and managers in the South East had not had their work appraised recently. Supervision and appraisal systems concentrated insufficiently on monitoring performance and providing constructive criticism.

Children's services in local authorities



274 In 2007/08 Ofsted published 44 joint area reviews of local authority areas. These reviews focused on children and young people at greatest risk of underachieving and most in need of safeguarding, as well as on any service areas that are underperforming. In every joint area review, inspectors evaluate the effectiveness of arrangements made by the council and its partners for safeguarding children, the impact of services for looked after children and the impact of those for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Additional investigations are also undertaken if there is evidence of weaknesses in performance or outcomes from the most recent annual performance assessment or from evidence from other inspections. In addition to joint area reviews, Ofsted carried out 137 annual performance assessments of the contribution to the Every Child Matters outcomes made by local authority children's services.⁴⁹

Figure 29: Annual performance assessment outcomes for 2007 (percentage of local authorities)



Percentages are rounded and may not add exactly to 100.

⁴⁹ See the Glossary, p.135.

Children's services in local authorities continued

Being healthy

275 The contribution made by children's services to the 'being healthy' outcome is generally good, although less outstanding provision was seen than last year. There is an increasing emphasis on improving services to meet the health needs of vulnerable groups of children and young people. These include looked after children as well as young people who offend or are at risk of doing so. Additional investigations in joint area reviews identified examples of good partnership working to increase young people's engagement in programmes to reduce substance misuse and teenage conceptions and to improve access to mental health services. There are few examples, however, of significant improvement in tackling health inequalities, especially in areas where they are most deep-rooted. Timeliness and access to specialist services remain problematic in a number of areas and there is insufficient analysis and evaluation of data, particularly at a local level.

Staying safe

276 Most councils and their partners are contributing well to promoting the safety of children and young people, although four were judged inadequate in their annual performance assessment and fewer were outstanding than in previous years. Generally, there is a strong commitment to child protection and the wider safeguarding needs of children and young people. This includes keeping them safe from accidents, crime and bullying and actively promoting their welfare in a safe environment. Joint area reviews indicate that the majority of the 44 councils and their partners inspected this year have good or outstanding arrangements for safeguarding children and young people. Five local areas have outstanding safeguarding arrangements and one area is inadequate.

277 The best partnerships have increasingly effective preventative and early intervention services, including those provided by children's centres and services aimed at tackling domestic violence and substance misuse. Leadership from Local Safeguarding Children Boards is increasingly effective. Strengths in around three quarters of joint area reviews include improved responsiveness to child welfare concerns through timely intervention and appropriate referrals and support for children in need of protection.

278 Sharing of information between agencies, on child protection or welfare concerns, is improving. In a significant minority of local areas, however, there are shortcomings in the arrangements to monitor the quality of services. The quality and timeliness of intervention and of the support offered to families also vary. There is now much greater awareness of the need for safe practices in recruitment and of the importance of Criminal Records Bureau checking for staff whose jobs bring them into contact with children. Despite this, in around a fifth of the local authority areas inspected, there were flaws in the procedures for vetting staff.⁵⁰

Enjoying and achieving

279 The majority of council areas make a good contribution to the 'enjoying and achieving' outcome but, in around a quarter, this was only adequate. In these cases, the rate of improvement in educational standards is too slow. Achievement and standards are improving overall but there is too much variability, particularly for the most vulnerable groups of pupils, such as looked after children. Most councils now target their resources well to improve school effectiveness, focusing their challenge and support where they are most needed. However, in a small minority of local authorities, the impact is limited by weaknesses in using data.

The best partnerships have increasingly effective preventative and early intervention services, including those provided by children's centres and services aimed at tackling domestic violence and substance misuse.

Making a positive contribution

280 The great majority of councils and their partners are effective in enabling children and young people to make a positive contribution. Good efforts are being made to involve in decision-making some groups whose circumstances make them hard to reach. The most successful areas use a range of techniques to engage young people and to ensure their views are heard and acted upon. Examples include: participation in the selection and recruitment of key staff; involvement of looked after young people as peer educators and as trainers of council officers and elected members on issues that affect them; and the use of 'young inspectors' to evaluate formally the services for children and young people.

Achieving economic well-being

281 The proportion of good or outstanding councils in terms of their contribution to achieving economic well-being is greater than last year. Enhanced childcare provision and a commitment to developing arrangements for family learning are increasingly supporting younger children and their parents well. Nevertheless, there is a greater concentration of inadequate childcare in those areas which have the highest levels of disadvantage. While the achievements of young people aged over 16 are improving – as shown in the completion of apprenticeships and the proportion reaching level 2 qualifications by the age of 19 – wide variations in outcomes continue across the country, in particular for the most vulnerable young people.

Other aspects of provision

282 Provision for children who are looked after is good or outstanding in over three quarters of the services inspected within joint area review arrangements; one service was judged to be inadequate. Significant strengths include: multi-agency working; partnership support from agencies such as health and education; preventative work with children or families to reduce the need for children to be looked after; and the support provided for care leavers. The improvement in some aspects of support is dramatic, for example in the proportion of looked after children who have an annual health check or who are supported by a qualified social worker. However, while improving

slowly, some indicators remain poor in comparison with those for other young people. In particular, attendance and educational standards achieved by looked after children remain low. Latest available data show that their attainment, in terms of five or more higher grade GCSE passes, has improved in recent years. However, attainment by this measure has risen more quickly for all pupils nationally. The gap between the standards reached by looked after children and by their peers is therefore growing, despite the huge resources from and commitment of agencies to improve them. Where the educational achievement of this group of children is good or better, all aspects of health and social care, as well as educational provision for them, are effective.

283 Two thirds of services make good or better provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with only one service inadequate in this respect. In almost half of joint area reviews, the provision made for the youngest of these children was a key strength. In the best examples, referrals and assessment are timely, the multi-agency support provided is well coordinated, and parents and carers receive helpful information. Although these pupils often make good progress at school, many councils do not use the data they have collected to establish whether the pupils have achieved as much as they could. After the age of 16, too many young people are not given opportunities for further learning.

284 For children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the quality of specialist support, including speech and language therapy and mental health services, is generally good. Too often, however, there are long delays in gaining access to these services. The extent to which the young people are involved in developing services is variable. Most take part in their own review meetings and contribute their views at school, but otherwise the picture is far less consistent, as are the opportunities for their parents and carers to contribute to the development of services.

285 A number of local authority areas are rapidly becoming more ethnically diverse as their populations increase. Many are developing clear strategies to enhance community cohesion, reflecting their strong commitment to equality and diversity. In a few areas, however, whilst the issues are being tackled locally, the effectiveness of the actions taken is inconsistent.

Children's services in local authorities continued

286 The impact of the 14–19 strategy implemented by each council and its partners, particularly in addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, was a focus for additional investigation in 16 joint area reviews. Common strengths include the quality of partnership working and collaboration to improve achievement; support for some specific, vulnerable groups; and the range of service provision and curricular opportunities. Take-up of work-based learning is low and the involvement of employers in 14–19 developments is limited in a significant minority of local authority areas. The latest available data show that, despite an overall reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training, the picture across the country is very variable. In some local areas, action to reduce the numbers not in education, employment or training has been ineffective, particularly for some of the most vulnerable groups, for whom the proportion remains high.

287 Of the 26 youth services inspected within the joint area review programme in 2007/08, 18 are good and eight adequate. None is inadequate. This represents a significant improvement over time. In the majority of services, young people achieve well and there is good practice in youth work. Youth workers are more likely to exercise their educational skills to good effect in an increasingly wide range of settings, including housing, health and schools. Services continue to engage vulnerable groups well.

288 Good managers recognise the need to support all young people in their local neighbourhoods through youth clubs and projects. These often provide a valued opportunity for young people to meet their peers and develop new interests. Many contribute to their communities through their active involvement in an imaginative range of youth councils, forums or campaigning groups. They also have access to support and guidance from workers when needed. In a minority of cases, authorities have not given enough priority to youth provision. Much preparatory work is under way as services move towards integrated systems of youth support in 2008. At best, planning is detailed and effective, but in too many local authorities this is not the case.

289 In leading and managing children's services, councils and their partners generally set challenging but realistic goals for improvement. In the best cases, these have been translated into key priorities within the Children and Young People's Plan and are based on a comprehensive analysis of needs, use of good local data and effective consultation with young people, parents and carers.⁵¹ These elements combine to provide a coherent strategy for multi-agency working, leading to improved outcomes for children and young people, including the most vulnerable. In a few local authority areas, however, partnership with the voluntary and community sector is less well developed.

290 The Children and Young People's Plan is now at the heart of the improvement process for children's services. At best, the plans set out clearly the priorities and actions needed to improve outcomes for children and young people. Good plans have challenging targets and clear timescales and enable progress to be carefully measured.

291 In a small minority of partnerships, the lack of effective data and information, coupled with weaknesses in planning and quality assurance, has reduced the ability of elected members to hold local services to account. This is in contrast to the most effective partnerships, where performance management has successfully identified and tackled areas of underperformance to improve outcomes for children and young people. These are the local areas with the greatest capacity to improve further. In effect, success breeds success; local areas that know how to tackle weaknesses and have taken effective action to improve in one area are more likely to be successful in tackling new priorities.

Serious incidents and serious case reviews

292 Local Safeguarding Children Boards are responsible for commissioning serious case reviews when a child dies or sustains significant harm, and abuse or neglect are known or suspected to be a factor in the incident. Following notifications, if criteria set down in *Working together to safeguard children* are met, the Local Safeguarding Children Boards may undertake such a review, involving relevant agencies, usually the local authority children's service, health, education and the police.⁵² Regional Government Offices provide guidance on carrying out these reviews. They should normally be completed within four months of the decision to carry one out.

293 Since April 2007, Ofsted has been responsible for receiving notifications of serious incidents involving children and for evaluating the quality of serious case reviews. Between 1 April 2007 and 31 August 2008, Ofsted received notifications from local authorities of 424 serious incidents, relating to 282 deaths of children, 136 incidents of significant harm or injuries and six incidents of which the outcome is not yet known. Four in 10 incidents involved babies under the age of one.

294 The geographical distribution of reported serious incidents across Government Office regions varies significantly. A survey conducted by Ofsted showed that around a quarter of Local Safeguarding Children Boards had not carried out any serious case reviews, while 5% had completed five or more. Differences in the numbers of serious incidents and deaths of children and young people between local authority areas do not fully account for these variations; they are also due to varying interpretations of the guidance in *Working together to safeguard children* by Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

295 As part of its new responsibilities, Ofsted has introduced a more transparent and consistent process for evaluating serious case reviews. Since 1 April 2007, it has evaluated 92 reports of serious case reviews. Of those, 20 were good and 34 satisfactory. However, 38 were inadequate.

296 There are often long delays in producing the findings of serious case reviews. Sometimes this is unavoidable where criminal cases are conducted at the same time and when a judgement in the courts is awaited. However, some of the delays are avoidable and the agencies involved have not given the review sufficient priority.

297 The management and outcomes of serious case reviews are serious concerns, which *Safeguarding children* has emphasised by inclusion of a recommendation to the Government that Ofsted should report annually on the outcomes of evaluations of serious case reviews.⁵³

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⁵² *Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children* (13 978 0 11 271187 2), DFES, 2006. More detailed information about Local Safeguarding Children Boards can be found in the 'Safeguarding children' section of this report; see p.88.

⁵³ *Safeguarding children: the third joint chief inspectors' report on arrangements to safeguard children* (080063), Ofsted, 2008.

KEY THEMES

Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care



Key themes

Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care



Overview

298 Where providers of all kinds promote and sustain excellence, particularly from a previous base of inadequate performance, inspection identifies common factors, including:

- ✘ leadership which establishes a clear direction for change, takes tough decisions, sets the right pace for sustained progress and earns the commitment of staff
- ✘ an ethos that expects success and promotes ambition, combined with leadership which sets out what 'outstanding' looks like
- ✘ objective and rigorous self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, conducted with service users and staff and tested by inspection
- ✘ careful implementation of a plan that includes the building of capacity for delivery and a strategy for improvement, and ensures that targets are monitored
- ✘ dialogue and feedback to ensure that needs are being met, both for the individual users of a service and for the wider community
- ✘ awareness that unless external support is carefully matched to individual circumstances and rigorously evaluated, it can create more problems and, at worst, slow the pace of improvement.

299 Where providers significantly enhance the life chances of those from more disadvantaged backgrounds, inspection invariably identifies common factors, including:

- ✘ focusing on children, young people and adult learners as individuals, listening and responding to them, being well informed about their specific needs and ensuring they make progress
- ✘ involving parents and carers as fully as possible in securing young people's health, well-being and education
- ✘ concentrating intelligently first on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and then on wider skills such as communication and independent learning
- ✘ setting high expectations, and teaching a curriculum matched to the needs of the young people
- ✘ providing an accurate assessment of learning, and then activities designed to promote rapid progress
- ✘ for looked after children, doing all the important things well, spanning social care, health, education and day-to-day personal care.

Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care continued

Introduction

300 The Annual Report 2006/07 included a section called ‘Improving life chances: narrowing the gap’ (see xxvii, p.120). It focused on the issues faced by some of those groups most at risk of poor achievement: looked after children, persistent absentees, pupils with challenging behaviour, children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and young people in secure settings. A year on, the theme is revisited, this time in a section that turns its attention to the evidence from inspection of what works: approaches taken within individual institutions and the support services around them that bring about rapid improvement, often against the odds.



301 In her commentary on the 2006/07 Annual Report, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector said:

‘The relationship between poverty and outcomes for young people is stark; the poor performance of many children and young people living in the most disadvantaged areas is seen in the Foundation Stage Early Learning Goals, in National Curriculum test results, and in GCSE results. Participation in higher education continues to have much to do with socio-economic background. The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training is also closely correlated with their eligibility for free school meals when they were in compulsory education.’

302 Increasingly, inspection has focused on the quality of provision for all children or young people in an institution or an area, most importantly those in the most vulnerable circumstances: looked after children in schools, for example, or young people with the most challenging needs in a children’s home. Support of the highest quality – sustained excellence – is vital to the life chances of these children and young people. It has been said before: satisfactory provision is not good enough.

303 There is ample evidence to show that, with the right educational provision and support for their well-being, children and young people from low-income backgrounds can achieve high standards, overcoming initial disadvantage to achieve personal success. Where this happens, the attainment gap between young people from different backgrounds is narrowed. But too few among the less privileged have access to well targeted, high quality provision. Across England as a whole, the rate of improvement for those in more disadvantaged circumstances has been too slow, leading in some cases to a widening of the attainment gap despite the overall improvements.

The context: social and economic disadvantage

304 Since 1992 when it was first established, Ofsted and its predecessor organisations have seen a general improvement in the quality of the public services they have inspected. In some areas, the improvements have been remarkable. For example, in the early 1990s, around 20% of lessons in maintained schools were unsatisfactory; currently, only 3% of teaching and learning is inadequate. When Ofsted began inspecting childcare in 2001, almost 40% of providers did not meet fully the standards expected; that figure is now just 4%.

305 But this general upward trend masks a range of progress in individual settings, from exceptional improvement in some to steep decline in others. Moreover, it is particularly worrying that, while substantial numbers of providers manage to improve or sustain excellence between one inspection and the next, in some types of provision – including childcare and maintained schools – almost as many drop sharply in the opposite direction. Such volatility is unacceptable. A relatively small proportion of providers are selling short too many children and young people.

Ofsted's inspection reports continue to demonstrate the need for sustained attention to the well-being and attainment of particular groups of children, young people and adult learners. Much attention has been given to the attainment gap between boys and girls, and between those from different minority ethnic groups.

306 Ofsted's inspection reports continue to demonstrate the need for sustained attention to the well-being and attainment of particular groups of children, young people and adult learners. Much attention has been given to the attainment gap between boys and girls, and between those from different minority ethnic groups, and these gaps remain. While ethnicity and gender are important factors in educational progress and achievement, the poor attainment of pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds – indicated in schools by eligibility for free school meals – whatever their ethnic group, remains a cause for concern.

307 National data show a closer link between poverty and low achievement among some ethnic groups than others. Pupils from poorer families of White British, mixed White and Black Caribbean, and Black Caribbean heritage make much less progress over time than pupils generally, particularly in secondary education. The same national data indicate that the impact of poverty is less marked in the achievement of pupils of Black African and Asian descent.

308 The attainment gap between pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not has remained broadly constant over the past three years. For example, in terms of achieving five or more GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, at grades A* to C, the absolute difference between the two groups was 28.4 percentage points in 2005, 28.1 in 2006, and 27.9 in 2007.

309 Looked after children are a cause of particular concern. Approximately 59,500 children and young people are in the care of local authorities and 29,000 are on the Child Protection Register.⁵⁴ Many children taken into care have a background of family crisis and trauma; and 27.6% of children who have been in care for at least 12 months have a statement of special educational need. The impact of this is often reflected in the children's attendance at school and, when they are there, in their ability to learn, concentrate, behave, or to progress successfully through school. The achievement at GCSE level of looked after children has risen in recent years, but too slowly, and it has not kept pace with that of all 16-year-olds. The gap has therefore widened slightly in terms of achieving GCSE passes at grades A* to C. The gap continues post-16, in terms of entry to further and higher education.⁵⁵ Care leavers are over-represented in the prison population; re-offending rates are also high.

⁵⁴ *Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2008*, Statistical First Release (SFR 23/2008), DCSF, 2008. *Referrals, assessments and children and young people who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan, England – year ending 31 March 2008*, Statistical First Release (SFR 24/2008), DCSF, 2008.

⁵⁵ *Care matters: transforming the lives of children and young people in care* (Cm 6932), DfES, 2006.

Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care continued

310 There is a strong link across every sector between deprivation and poor quality provision. Areas with higher deprivation are more likely to have schools in an Ofsted category of concern than more advantaged areas. This means that children and families living in areas already experiencing relative deprivation face further inequity in the quality of care and support for their welfare, learning and development.

311 A few local areas buck this trend. For example, despite being among the 20% most deprived local areas, 79% of childminders in Blackpool and 70% in Liverpool are good or better, compared with 53% in London and 59% nationally. Similarly, some local authorities with significant socio-economic deprivation do relatively very well in terms of pupils' attainment. A joint area review indicated how one local authority had responded to boys' underachievement:

- ✘ very good use of comprehensive data and strong performance management of local authority services, driving strategic direction and leading to well considered action
- ✘ schools subject to rigorous challenge and good support for governors, enabling them to question performance
- ✘ good and sustained investment in specialist provision and intervention projects, good local networks and effective multi-agency work with individuals and families
- ✘ good outreach and support work that strengthens schools' capacity to manage challenging behaviour
- ✘ good support from learning mentors, including black student mentors from further education colleges
- ✘ good reading interventions and work with parents of Traveller children
- ✘ effective support for boys at times of transition from one phase to another, involving learning mentors and peer mentors for black boys.

Moving to excellence

312 The key features of moving to excellence – and sustaining excellence – may be summarised as follows:

- ✘ effective self-evaluation
- ✘ ambition and strategic direction
- ✘ building capacity
- ✘ engaging users: children, young people and adult learners; parents and the wider community; employers
- ✘ rigorous assessment of progress and challenging objectives
- ✘ focused support for learning and development
- ✘ developing skills for independence
- ✘ making good use of available support.

These features are considered in some detail below.

Effective self-evaluation

Key messages

- ✘ Improvement starts from robust and penetrating self-evaluation, based on good data that are used effectively to identify areas of underperformance, and a shrewd analysis of the implications for individuals and groups.
- ✘ This process needs to engage users in order to identify their needs and, in response, to establish targets for their learning and progress.
- ✘ Involving all members of staff in self-evaluation can build a shared commitment to improvement.
- ✘ Inspection and other forms of external assessment are helpful in testing out the rigour of self-evaluation and in confirming key areas for action.

313 It is essential for an individual provider to know its starting point, have the ability to recognise successes, and take action if it is straying off course. Improvement therefore begins with self-evaluation – self-critical when necessary – driven by the needs of, and developed in partnership with, service users: children, parents, adult learners and employers. Key to this is recognition of weaknesses and the barriers to improvement, what can be built on and what to change first.

314 An Ofsted survey of schools that successfully improved from special measures to become good or outstanding found that the first step was a candid and thorough analysis of the current provision (see xxv, p.120). The staff in those schools that improved most quickly did not indulge in blaming one another or finding excuses for what had happened. They accepted the judgement of special measures and set their sights firmly on moving forward. Headteachers were given, and had to give, difficult messages unequivocally. They set about building effective systems to check progress and the impact of actions. All those associated with the school, including children and young people, understood what needed to be done and were held to account for outcomes.

315 Self-evaluation can build shared commitment as a strong base for improvement. For example, inadequate education in a prison was transformed to good within 18 months. The new governor created a spirit of openness by engaging staff in a frank analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the training provision. Their findings became the base from which a detailed action plan was drawn. Staff determined priorities, taking full account of the views of the learners. The education manager said:

‘There was probably something about the shared experience of the tough times we lived through and a failed inspection that bonded the staff into what became a high performing team. Staff had a renewed enthusiasm for change, and we were allowed to realise our ambitions.’

316 Judgements about the quality of providers’ self-evaluation have increasingly been recognised as one of the key elements of inspection and fundamental to improvement; self-evaluation has improved greatly over the past 10 years. For example, 10 years ago, inspectors judged that ‘development planning, monitoring and evaluation’ were good or better in 31% of secondary schools. This year self-evaluation was judged to be good or outstanding in 70% of secondary schools.

317 Inspection tests the rigour of providers’ self-evaluation. This was evident in the comments from the chief executive of a training company where a course, judged inadequate, improved to be good in just over a year. Inspectors’ feedback and the inspection report were significant in the company’s improvement.

‘We found inspectors’ feedback during inspection especially valuable and analysed the written feedback in the report to help us validate our self-assessment and develop our improvement plan. Most of all, we used all of the information to think beyond our weaknesses and create a clear picture of what a grade 1 (outstanding) would look like.’

318 This is an important part of improvement. Being able to visualise what ‘outstanding’ looks like helps staff to understand the way ahead.



Key themes

Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care continued

Ambition and strategic direction

Key messages

- ✘ A vision that expects success and promotes ambition must permeate everything that takes place in a setting.
- ✘ Self-evaluation alone does not improve anything.
- ✘ The pace of planned change has to be manageable and sustainable.
- ✘ Staff must have confidence in the leadership, be committed to building an ethos of improvement, recognise what 'outstanding' looks like, and believe in success.
- ✘ Leadership must establish the strategic direction and ensure that staff are committed to it.
- ✘ Barriers, such as a culture of blame, must be tackled with as much energy and determination as more tangible organisational issues.

319 Establishing a clear sense of direction and putting in place a firm structure to make change happen are often recognised as crucial next steps, but Ofsted's inspections show a complex interaction of factors. Improvements will not be sustained if priorities are not correctly identified, planning is not good enough, or not everyone understands what 'outstanding' looks like. If plans are not effectively implemented, progress will be too slow or will not happen at all. The quality of leadership and management, including middle management, is central to promoting and sustaining improvement.

320 When substantial change is required, it is important to move forward at a pace that is fast enough but which makes sure improvements are embedded and not superficial. In two of the most improved colleges, the principals won the staff's commitment to their vision for improvement from the outset. They then acted quickly to identify and prioritise the key actions. 'Do the hard things first' was the approach taken in one. In the other, the necessary staff changes were made within two months so that the new team could move on with the agenda for improvement.

321 Ultimately, all key managers must fully understand and support improvement plans, signing up to them and monitoring progress; if these things do not happen, improvement is hindered. A blame culture can become established and change will be seen as a threat.

The most improved educational settings have a clear and sustained focus on raising the quality of teaching and improving learning, supported by a robust and focused lesson or session observation programme, effectively linked to performance management.





Building capacity

Key messages

- ✘ It is important to implement a coherent plan to develop and maintain the skills of staff in line with the new strategic direction.
- ✘ Acting on outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation of sessions or lessons drives improvement.
- ✘ Educational settings which improve have a relentless focus on improving teaching and learning and eradicating unsatisfactory teaching.

322 Perhaps the most important responsibility of any senior management team, but more so in settings under pressure, is building capacity to ensure that:

- ✘ the right resources, including staff, are in place to face up to the challenges
- ✘ the focus is on key priorities
- ✘ professional development, led by need, is established strongly at all levels
- ✘ responsibilities and authority are distributed wisely
- ✘ succession planning is in place.

323 The principal in a college which improved from inadequate to outstanding reported that a critical factor in achieving commitment and success had been the premise that managers did not want to be deluged with theory but needed, and wanted, to be provided with the skills and tools to do their job effectively. The change programme was therefore tailored to the needs of the individuals who had to implement it.

324 The most improved educational settings have a clear and sustained focus on raising the quality of teaching and improving learning, supported by a robust and focused lesson or session observation programme, effectively linked to performance management. Good staff development focuses on the outcomes for children and learners. All staff are given opportunities to update their expertise, to see good practice, to understand how they can reflect it in their own work and to contribute to raising standards overall.

325 Inspection links overall effectiveness with continuing professional development. Continuing professional development can be the key to sustaining change, but a prerequisite for this is for senior managers to understand its potential for raising performance, to see it as a key driver of improvement, and to allocate sufficient resources and time to it. It is rare, however, to find schools in which the impact of professional development on teaching and learning has been evaluated, or in which the value for money and cost-effectiveness of professional development have been assessed.

326 The first decision in many inadequate schools and colleges is to concentrate on eradicating unsatisfactory teaching. This generally involves strengthening procedures for observing lessons and ensuring that judgements about the quality of lessons are well informed. Many managers stop giving notice of when observations will take place. Where necessary, lessons are followed up with support and development before further observations are made. This requires a willingness to improve and a significant investment in training and development. Voluntary and mutual observations by staff foster openness and provide continuous professional development. Impressive evidence is emerging from the college sector of the effectiveness of peer review.

Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care continued

327 To overcome barriers, one headteacher drew attention to existing good practice and encouraged all staff to build on the best of what was already being done. Teachers became increasingly confident and more of them started to experiment, even taking risks. For example, when it snowed, the Year 6 teacher had the confidence to spend a whole day taking opportunities to investigate the science to be found in the weather conditions. The headteacher referred to this as 'seizing opportunities for learning' and added, 'If you haven't got inspired teachers, you can't have inspired children.'

328 One college quickly recognised that 'in order to achieve good, you need to know what good looks like.' 'Improvement facilitators' were recruited from its best teachers and trained to observe lessons and coach staff. One of the most significant steps in bringing about improvement was helping teachers to understand that 'teaching' is not simply 'imparting knowledge' but centres on learning. This shift pushes teachers to encourage and enable learners to take much more responsibility for their own learning.

329 Similar strategies can be found in much smaller settings. As part of a day-care setting's improvement from inadequate to good, all staff working with children entitled to nursery education attended training courses and workshops to develop their knowledge of the Foundation Stage. An advisory teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership supported them. They developed effective teaching methods, improving the children's motivation to learn. The manager developed a six-monthly appraisal system for all staff and included a system for her own appraisal. Each member of staff had a training profile that listed areas for development, including courses attended and future training needs. These measures significantly improved the quality of nursery education and care.

Engaging users: children, young people and adult learners

Key messages

- ✦ If improvement is to be sustained, children, young people and learners must be engaged effectively in the plans and actions to drive it.
- ✦ The engagement of children, young people and adult learners must go beyond rhetoric to personalise learning and ensure the curriculum, in its widest sense, is seen as relevant and worthwhile.
- ✦ The individual needs of children, young people and learners must be correctly identified and specific targets set.

330 When a setting is inadequate, it is usually because it is not ensuring children, young people or adult learners achieve as much as they should. Outward signs are picked up first: poor behaviour, weak test or examination results, underachievement, poor attendance and failure to meet basic standards. It is rarely simply one thing going wrong: improvements demand coordinated, decisive action across the whole setting rather than just in one area, with a sharp focus on the progress learners make.

331 In May 2007, the inspection of a children's home judged it to be inadequate. It identified poor behaviour of the young people in the home; inadequate procedures for managing their behaviour, which resulted in increased physical attacks on staff; and, not surprisingly, low staff morale. When inspectors returned in October 2007, they judged the home to be good. Introducing new individual behaviour plans and insisting on their consistent implementation by the staff had transformed it. The young people were very positive about the staff's understanding of their needs and felt this, and the approach to managing their behaviour, kept them from returning to their previous dangerous conduct. They gave clear accounts of how the staff enabled them to look at life positively instead of feeling negative and aggressive towards people.

332 In a secure children's home that improved from being weak to good, the new head of education and the staff improved the curriculum considerably. It now provides a 25-hour programme of study based on the National Curriculum, with an emphasis on English, mathematics and science; vocational opportunities meet the needs of older learners. Despite limited space, these experiences have been extended creatively, for example to include basic plumbing, bricklaying and horticulture. Equality and diversity are explored well through cross-curricular activities in subjects such as history, English, cookery and art.

333 The young people's experiences have been enhanced across other aspects in the home. More opportunities are provided for planning and cooking meals in the revamped kitchen, where the young people are supported by two staff with professional cooking experience. The young people are also participating more in an interesting range of leisure activities that teach them new skills and widen their interests. This aspect develops life skills which are particularly beneficial for those who will soon have to take care of themselves when they leave the home.

334 Another inspection report on a children's home describes the impact of consulting the young people, who indicated that they would like a gym. A large spare bedroom was available and this was converted, with advice from a local gym instructor and funds from a range of local community sources. The impact has been considerable: fitness levels are rising; less confident young people learn how to use equipment and behave in a gym before using public facilities; there is an outlet for anger when needed; and the young people who are 'tagged' and on a curfew have something positive and active to do in the home.

335 A significantly improved further education college introduced the identification of students likely to struggle on a course or at risk of leaving early. They were monitored closely and regular discussions were held with them about their progress. This was part of the college's strategy to develop its own version of personalised learning; each lecturer adjusted teaching strategies accordingly.

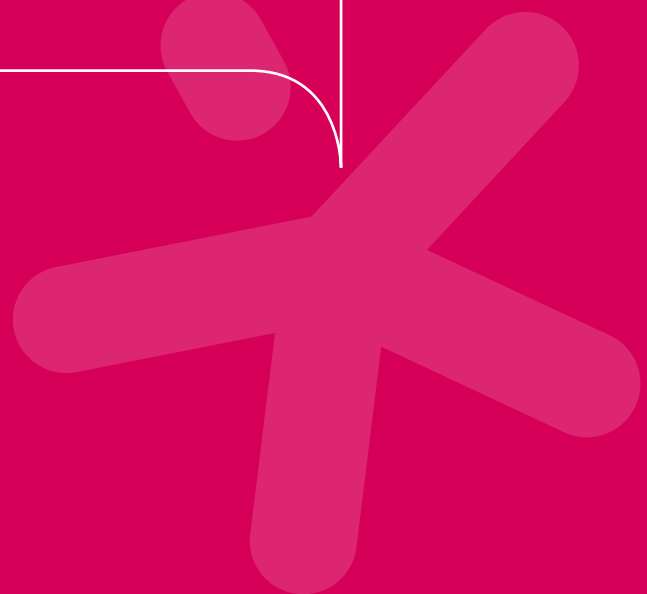
336 A fostering service judged to be inadequate in 2002/03, when it was failing to meet any of the national minimum standards, was subsequently inspected each year. In 2008, the service was judged to be outstanding. There has been sustained improvement since 2003, a key feature being the work on participation and consultation, focusing on the needs of the children being placed in foster care. The manager has developed a children's guide which has been well received. It gives each child general information about being fostered and about her or his foster carer and family. It includes the views of young people in foster care and their feelings about the experience.

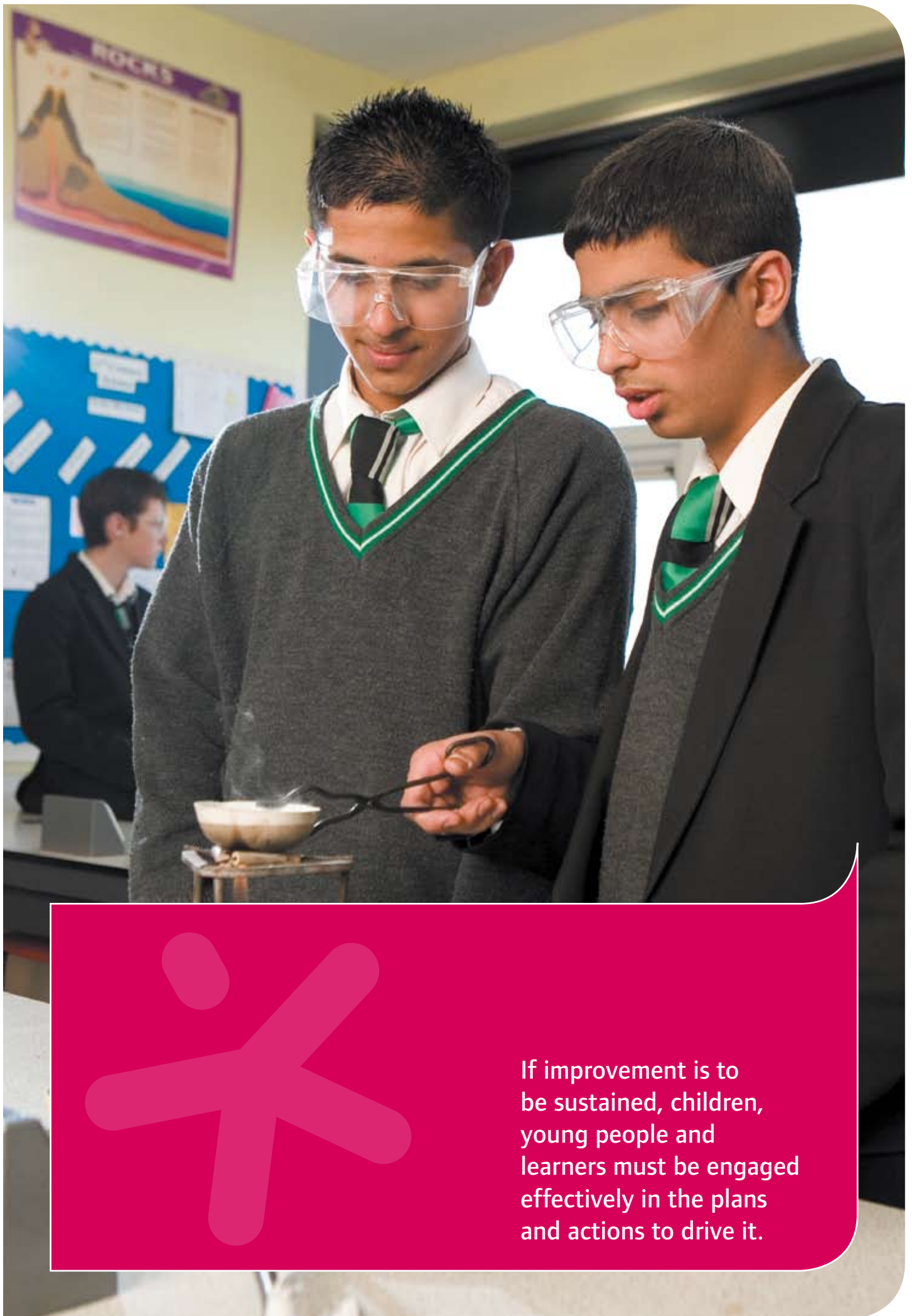
Engaging users: parents and the wider community

Key messages

- ✘ Building effective relationships with parents and carers can have a positive impact on improvement.
- ✘ Improved communications, including the encouragement of regular and frequent feedback, can contribute to rapid improvement.
- ✘ Partnerships with the wider community must be carefully managed within available resources if they are not to become a distraction; internal management and external involvement must be balanced wisely.
- ✘ Providing access to information and communication technology outside lessons is a common feature of effective schools and other settings and benefits learners.
- ✘ Effective schools and other settings identify at an early stage pupils who are disaffected or at risk of disaffection; they work with them and their parents or carers to win their confidence.
- ✘ Outstanding children's centres engage parents in discussions about learning as well as care.

To overcome barriers, one headteacher drew attention to existing good practice and encouraged all staff to build on the best of what was already being done. Teachers became increasingly confident and more of them started to experiment.





If improvement is to be sustained, children, young people and learners must be engaged effectively in the plans and actions to drive it.

Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care continued

337 Most of the settings Ofsted inspects are, of course, located in communities. The way they interact with their communities can help the setting improve and also improve what is available to the community. Evidence from institutional and survey inspections across Ofsted's remit also shows the importance of parents and carers in helping their children to achieve against the odds. Often, the educational experience of the parents of potentially vulnerable pupils will have been a negative one, characterised by underachievement and, in some cases, alienation. Such parents or carers can be the hardest to reach and engage. This is a significant barrier in attempting to narrow the gap.

338 The barrier is evident from the beginning. Nevertheless, a small-scale survey found evidence of a positive impact from services provided by children's centres, particularly on the development of young children from the most vulnerable family backgrounds (see vii, p.120). Services were good or better in most of the children's centres surveyed, and childcare and education were well integrated. Children enjoyed their activities and developed positive attitudes to learning.

339 Through links with health professionals, parents were encouraged to seek the support they needed; these services had a positive impact on the health and well-being of children and their families. Services, including childcare arrangements, were personalised and flexible, allowing parents to participate in training and employment and so to enhance their families' social and economic well-being.

340 While relationships with parents are vital in the early stages, they remain important as children and young people make progress. A survey on re-engaging disaffected pupils emphasised the importance of early intervention, through close collaboration with primary schools, to reduce the number of young people becoming disengaged as they move into and through secondary school. This survey also noted the importance of effective communication with the pupils and parents or carers (see vi, p.120). One of the key reasons for lack of re-engagement was that some parents or carers were unwilling to work with the school, sometimes colluding with their children about their absence.

341 Effective schools identified pupils who were disaffected or at risk of it and, from the beginning, a learning mentor or adviser for parents worked with them and their parents or carers to win their confidence. While not shying away from giving parents or carers difficult messages, positive information conveyed that the child was valued. The careful deployment of the wider workforce enhanced this good communication. It was improved, for example, by home-school liaison teams that went into the community to build and sustain relationships. They were able to get in touch with parents traditionally perceived as hard to reach, helping them to access services, cope with the needs of their children and support learning. The outcomes included better support from parents and carers and the pupils' improved attendance.

342 Sometimes, meeting the needs of potential students requires adjusting the curriculum. For example, managers in a college looked carefully at the levels of achievement of their potential learners, particularly those hoping to follow vocational routes, and decided that more flexible provision below level 1 was needed to provide an appropriate starting point.⁵⁶ Also, many young people in the area were leaving school with very little record of any achievement. As a priority, the college wanted to meet the needs of this group who might not enter further education or training. It introduced a pre-level 1 programme called Vocational Plus. As well as providing vocational taster courses, the programme focused significantly on developing sufficient literacy and numeracy skills for learners to enable them to progress and to cope. On successfully completing the programme, learners could then move quickly through level 1.

343 In a pre-school judged inadequate in June 2007 but which improved to outstanding by April 2008, parents reported a considerable improvement in the organisation of the setting. One mother said that she had been very close to removing her son at around the time of the previous inspection but is now delighted with his progress. The amount of information now shared with parents is outstanding. The noticeboards, surfaces and windows are full of information about the setting and the curriculum. Attention to equal opportunities is another strong aspect of the provision. The rich and varied local community is reflected positively in all that goes on. Children learn about diversity through everyday activities and through the natural inclusion of a wide range of cultures and religions. The new supervisor has made excellent links with the local authority, school and university by being active and positive about her role in the community.

344 Most schools have established their own websites to make information available to parents, pupils and the wider community. Typically, schools use their websites to publish policies and news and to celebrate the achievements of their pupils. Increasingly, schools are using secure intranets linked to sophisticated databases to provide parents with access to up-to-the-minute information about their children's attendance, progress and behaviour. Where schools have established virtual learning environments, pupils and teachers are able to access computer files created in school from home, although their roll-out nationally has been slow. A few schools allow parents to post comments on their websites. The use of school websites for consultation with parents, pupils and the community is generally underdeveloped.

345 Building trust and greater engagement with parents were strong themes in many of the schools surveyed that had improved from special measures (see xxv, p.120). In two of the schools, the work undertaken was instrumental in ensuring a full complement of parent governors for the first time. One of the schools improved communication through homework diaries, newsletters, increased parental contact by staff at the school gate and the sharing of pupils' targets. A set of simple improvements such as these appears to have been a foundation for schools' increased involvement with parents, and to have had a quick and positive impact. Another school used curriculum projects and visits to engage parents more fully in the life of the school.

346 Seeking the views of parents can provide a timely barometer of the degree of confidence – or otherwise – in a service; levels of satisfaction with the work of a school, for example, are likely to dip even before performance levels fall and can provide an astute early diagnosis of concerns. On the other hand, parents are quick to appreciate improvement, and schools emerging from special measures frequently cite acknowledgements from parents that things are getting better.



Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care continued

Rigorous assessment of progress and challenging objectives

Key messages

- ✘ The importance of effective assessment to support learning and accelerate progress cannot be overstated.
- ✘ Learners sometimes fail to meet targets because they have not been involved in setting the targets and do not understand them.
- ✘ Good target-setting focuses not only on academic progress but also on behaviour and attendance, and on social and personal progress.

An Ofsted survey of provision for children who were looked after showed the benefits of good assessment and target-setting to monitor and support progress.

347 Ofsted frequently reports on assessment as a weakness in teaching; equally, the evidence is strong that good formative assessment accelerates progress, raises standards and motivates previously disengaged pupils. It is also, however, a weakness of management if systems for assessing and recording individuals' progress are not used effectively.

348 In a day-care setting where early education and care improved from having significant weaknesses to being outstanding, innovative and child-centred portfolios now document evidence of children's achievement. Assessments and a thorough system of observing children and recording their achievements when evaluating their activities mean that staff successfully plan for all children's development and are constantly alert to ways to promote learning.

349 In another setting, children's progress in the nursery has been enhanced successfully because staff improved their knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and how children learn. Children are now making outstanding progress towards the early learning goals because all plans cover the six areas of learning and set out clearly what children are intended to learn from the activities. Assessments are used effectively to plan individuals' next steps in learning and to set sufficient challenge for all children, including the more able.

350 An Ofsted survey of provision for children who were looked after showed the benefits of good assessment and target-setting to monitor and support progress (see xv, p.120). In these schools, pupils had a voice in decisions about their targets and learning in their personal and educational learning plans. Pupils said that this focus on personal development helped them to build their self-confidence: they were able to ask teachers questions about tasks they found difficult and contribute to discussions in lessons without feeling limited by a lack of basic skills. Unified but low profile support in school for looked after children ensured that they were not made to feel different from their peers.

351 Pupils sometimes fail to meet their targets because they do not understand how to do so and have not been involved in setting the targets initially. The survey of provision for white boys from low-income backgrounds found that using diaries for subjects helped them to improve their work (see xxxiii, p.120). The diaries included advice on how to approach key topics and how to extend ideas further; tips on how to construct essays; and simple explanations of the technical terms used in particular subjects. They also included guidance on how pupils could identify their progress against the National Curriculum level descriptors for the subject, and what they needed to do to meet their personal targets. The pupils filled in the subject diaries and reviewed them every fortnight or three weeks with their tutors. They, in turn, passed on relevant information to the subject teachers. In the best examples, parents also contributed to these diary reviews.



352 In colleges and adult and community learning, there have been significant improvements in the assessment and accreditation of learners for whom English is an additional language; a large majority of these learners are working towards recognised English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) skills for life qualifications (see iv, p.120). Following the launch of these qualifications in late 2004, providers have managed their introduction successfully and rapidly. A particularly positive feature is the greater emphasis on developing learners' speaking skills in response to the qualifications for listening and speaking. Weaknesses remain in some colleges in meeting individual needs and setting goals in individual learning plans. However, where practice is good, learners value highly the individual tutorial time which is part of the process for developing individual learning plans, and it contributes well to their motivation and engagement.

Skills for independent learning

353 Across the range of settings, low levels of literacy and numeracy, poor communication skills and an inability to work independently were seen to further disadvantage groups of pupils who were already potentially vulnerable.

Key messages

- ✦ A strong emphasis on basic skills was found in the most successful approaches to raising attainment, for example of white boys from poor backgrounds.
- ✦ Clearly structured programmes of phonics in primary schools were seen to improve the consistency of phonics teaching, stimulate progress in reading and writing and raise expectations of how quickly young children could learn to read and write.
- ✦ Pupils with weak reading skills on entry to secondary school can overcome this potential barrier if the school is determined enough to make it happen.
- ✦ A highly structured step-by-step approach, starting with considerable input from the teacher and leading gradually to longer periods in which pupils worked on their own, proved very successful, although for some pupils support was needed right up to GCSE examinations.
- ✦ Homework must be engaging, relevant and accessible, and there must be systems to ensure that it can be completed by all pupils.

354 Small steps to success were effective with looked after children, sometimes working with a learning mentor in schools. Growing confidence in basic skills, reflected in changes in education plans, led to new work which was adjusted to meet the learning needs and attitudes of individual pupils. There were also benefits when schools gave attention to homework, for example by giving looked after children opportunities to complete it at school. Access was provided to new technologies, such as laptops, which were used both within and beyond the classroom. This enabled pupils to access the school's website and sites for subject work and so to complete work as fully and effectively as other pupils.

355 Secure homes accommodate children and young people with some of the most complex needs of all those who are looked after by children's authorities. These young people are particularly vulnerable. Many cannot read when they are admitted to secure units. There are many examples of young people who, with good individual care and tuition, including attention to their needs in literacy, leave secure settings able to read.

Improving life chances: outstanding education and social care continued

356 Surveys on re-engaging disaffected pupils and on workforce reform have shown the importance of well judged deployment of staff, sometimes resulting in vulnerable pupils making better progress than their peers (see vi, xxix, p.120). In half of the small sample of schools visited in a continuing survey of workforce reform, teaching assistants were contributing significantly to improving the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so that they sometimes made better progress than their peers. However, teaching assistants make a significant impact on standards only where they are well qualified and work closely with the class teacher, and where their work is monitored carefully.

357 Homework encourages pupils to work independently. Recent research has underlined the importance of ‘home factors’ in pupils’ progress, such as the provision of a computer, parents who monitor the whereabouts of their children, and the frequency of completing homework. A small-scale Ofsted survey showed that:

- ✘ Schools which employed a range of inclusive practices were able to ensure most pupils completed homework. Access to information and communication technology resources outside lessons was a common feature of effective practice and benefited pupils.
- ✘ Homework was most worthwhile when pupils understood its purpose and their efforts were acknowledged promptly.
- ✘ In most of the schools surveyed, homework was seen – by pupils and parents – as strengthening pupils’ attitudes to learning, improving their study skills and creating a foundation for higher attainment.
- ✘ In the primary schools surveyed, homework was often used explicitly to help foster links with parents; this was rarely the case in the secondary schools.

358 The report recommended that schools should:

- ✘ create homework policies based on an understanding of the demands homework makes on different groups of learners so that barriers are overcome and its purpose is understood by all pupils
- ✘ ensure that homework is set that enables all groups of pupils to complete it successfully by making it engaging, relevant and accessible
- ✘ take account of pupils’ views to evaluate the effectiveness of their homework policies.

359 A survey by Ofsted of responses to the recommendations of the Rose Review indicated that those schools that had introduced a clearly structured programme of phonics, with an emphasis on progression, had improved the consistency of their phonics teaching (see xxi, p.120). Children were enjoying their phonics lessons and recognised their own achievements. This, in turn, raised teachers’ expectations of how quickly and how well children could learn to read and write.

360 In secondary schools, too, pupils with weak reading skills on transfer from primary school were seen to make better than expected progress when:

- ✘ expert practitioners, teachers and teaching assistants, were given time and resources to work with these pupils
- ✘ the whole school understood and contributed to ensuring that all pupils could read well enough to access the curriculum and to read for pleasure
- ✘ school leaders gave high priority to improving pupils’ reading skills as they entered secondary school.

In most of the schools surveyed, homework was seen – by pupils and parents – as strengthening pupils’ attitudes to learning.

Making good use of available support: effective intervention

Key messages

- ✘ Inadequate settings benefit from external interventions when they are focused effectively, carefully matched to needs and provided at the appropriate time.
- ✘ A key feature of outstanding services for looked after children is that they provide all the important support services well.
- ✘ Strategies for removing external support must be thought through well.
- ✘ Ofsted's monitoring of progress can help to maintain momentum.
- ✘ Uncoordinated support can distract and confuse, thus slowing or even reversing the process of improvement.

361 A key feature of services for looked after children which are judged outstanding in joint area reviews is that they do all the important things well that have a direct impact on how children and young people are cared for. This spans the range of national minimum standards, regulation and guidance relating to assessment, care planning, health care, education support and day-to-day personal care which directly affect them. Doing only some of these things well is not good enough because the problems of these children and young people are often deep and complex.

362 Many institutions needing to improve, particularly those judged to be inadequate, will need help. External support can provide the essential perception of reality that is needed; local authorities can suggest where to see good practice and offer support to the organisation until it finds its feet. Schools in special measures generally receive good support from their local authority.

363 Unless external support is carefully matched to particular circumstances and evaluated rigorously, it has the potential to create more problems and, at worst, to slow the pace of improvement. In two of the schools which were much improved after special measures, meetings set up by external consultants and other advisers in the early stages distracted the senior leaders from their core purpose of moving the school forward (see xxv, p.120).

364 Since external support eventually reduces, this stage must be managed well if it is not to have a detrimental effect on improvement. Nearly all the schools sustaining improvement after special measures had developed exit strategies with the authority as it reduced its role. This helped to sustain improvement beyond the judgement of special measures. An independent inspection by Ofsted plays a key role in identifying areas for improvement. Where these are effectively tackled, institutions and agencies improve.

365 In just over half of a sample of schools that sustained improvement after special measures, headteachers and other staff who had been present at the time of the special measures judgement stressed the value of the monitoring conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). These visits were seen as a force for improvement. The professional dialogue and clear, direct feedback were important in checking the school's own judgements about its progress and in maintaining momentum.

Conclusion

366 Underlying these successes are operating principles, set out as key messages. They should not be taken to imply that bringing about the sort of transformation seen in so many settings across all of Ofsted's remit is easy or happens automatically. Sustained improvement demands strong personal qualities such as determination and commitment, as well as carefully established processes and wisely commissioned external support.

367 There are also lessons for Ofsted. The value of the continued engagement of inspectors in inadequate settings to monitor progress and steer improvement is widely acknowledged. Ofsted will build on this approach as new inspection arrangements are developed, including a focus on provision for children, young people and adult learners in circumstances that make them vulnerable to failure. Weak provision needs to be tackled urgently and vigorously wherever it occurs, and improvements need to be maintained and built upon.

368 Ofsted is developing its approach to risk assessment in order to pick up early indications of decline, either from national data or local intelligence, including the views of users, and to intervene through timely inspection in order to stem decline.

KEY THEMES

Safeguarding children



Safeguarding children



Introduction

369 On behalf of eight inspectorates, Ofsted led the 2008 joint chief inspectors' review of arrangements to safeguard children and young people. The report, *Safeguarding children*, follows two previous reports published in 2002 and 2005.⁵⁷ This section draws on findings of the review across the range of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory work. This includes joint area reviews and other joint inspections spanning a wide range of services, including schools, children's homes, and fostering and adoption services.

370 *Every Child Matters: change for children*, the Children Act 2004 and a range of other initiatives have provided a much-needed impetus for changes to the landscape of children's services in the past few years.⁵⁸ Staying safe, one of the five Every Child Matters outcomes, forms a key dimension of Ofsted's inspection work to improve safeguarding arrangements for children and young people.

371 *Safeguarding children* covers a complex and extensive agenda. The review defined 'safeguarding' as 'the process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care which is undertaken so as to enable children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully'. This definition extends the previously more narrow focus on child protection to include prevention from impairment and promotion of welfare and development.

372 The report assesses safeguarding arrangements in four areas:

- ✦ the effectiveness of the overall safeguarding systems and frameworks that are in place
- ✦ the wider safeguarding role of public services
- ✦ the targeted activity carried out to safeguard vulnerable groups of children
- ✦ the identification of and response to child protection concerns by relevant agencies.

⁵⁷ *Safeguarding children: the third joint chief inspectors' report on arrangements to safeguard children* (080063), Ofsted, 2008. The full report, together with a version for young people, is available on the website www.safeguardingchildren.org.uk.

⁵⁸ *Every Child Matters: change for children* (DfES/1081/2004), DfES, 2004.

Safeguarding children continued

Main findings

Safeguarding children highlights the improvements in safeguarding since the previous report in 2005:

- ✦ The framework within which public services safeguard children has been strengthened. The new Local Safeguarding Children Boards are well established with a clearer statutory basis from which to deliver their local plans. Joint working between services for children and young people has improved and has resulted in the provision of more preventative and earlier intervention services. Local services now show a clearer focus on the wider safeguarding needs of children and young people in addition to child protection work. This has resulted in better coordinated and more successful strategies to reduce risks to children in their homes and communities, where most children feel safe and are safe.
- ✦ The provision of targeted services to deal with specific issues is increasingly effective. They include services provided by children's centres and programmes to tackle substance misuse, teenage pregnancy and the effects of domestic violence. There have been tangible improvements in aspects of services for some particularly vulnerable groups. These include: better stability in placements for looked after children; for children who have run away, greater attention to reintegrating them into schools and children's homes when they are found; more effective assessment of the needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; and more widespread provision of targeted services for children from minority ethnic groups.
- ✦ Nearly all local authorities have revised their child protection procedures in line with new guidance. Access to procedures and guidance to staff is good across the majority of agencies. The management of front-line practice has improved. Most local authorities have established clearer thresholds for access to children's services. Almost all local authority child protection services are judged satisfactory or better.



Safeguarding children also clearly identifies those aspects where further improvement is still required:

- ✦ Local Safeguarding Children Boards have yet to secure participation from all partner agencies, give sufficient priority to targeting particularly vulnerable groups of children and demonstrate more clearly the impact of their work.
- ✦ Effective partnerships are yet to be consolidated as many Children's Trusts are at an early stage of development. In particular, a shared understanding of safeguarding is still lacking between children's social services and parts of the criminal justice system.
- ✦ Levels of concern about bullying among children and young people remain high. Although most settings where children are cared for or educated, including mainstream and special schools, comply with requirements and regulations for keeping children safe, 7% of children's homes are judged inadequate in this respect.⁵⁹
- ✦ The educational attainment of looked after children and their life chances are still unacceptably lower than those of other children. They have too little choice in where they are looked after and too many changes of social worker. Considerable concerns also persist about the welfare of children in secure settings.

- ✦ Local authority areas have made progress towards providing earlier intervention and local preventative services for children and young people but not all children have easy access to these. More still needs to be done, particularly with regard to the development of comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
- ✦ Concerns remain that staff in some services are less well equipped than others to recognise and respond effectively to signs of abuse or neglect. This includes some front-line staff in schools and in the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass). In addition, the new thresholds for local authority services are not always well understood by staff across partner agencies. Furthermore, the application of thresholds by local authorities varies in response to workload and staffing pressures.
- ✦ Serious case reviews carried out by Local Safeguarding Children Boards and evaluated by Ofsted were judged to be inadequate in around a quarter of cases and there were serious delays in producing them in almost all cases.⁶⁰ These shortcomings limit their value as a means of sharing and improving practice.

The safeguarding framework

373 Chief among the substantial changes to the local framework for safeguarding children introduced by the Children Act 2004 and the Every Child Matters agenda are:

- ✦ the duty to cooperate to secure the well-being of children and young people
- ✦ the duty for the key agencies that work with children and young people to make arrangements to safeguard and promote their welfare
- ✦ the establishment of Local Safeguarding Children Boards to coordinate and monitor safeguarding at a strategic level
- ✦ the appointment of local directors of children's services and the establishment of Children's Trusts
- ✦ the development of a Children and Young People's Plan in every area.

Local services now show a clearer focus on the wider safeguarding needs of children and young people in addition to child protection work. This has resulted in better coordinated and more successful strategies to reduce risks to children in their homes and communities where most children feel safe and are safe.



⁶⁰ This relates to evaluations of serious case reviews carried out between 1 April 2007 and 31 March 2008.

Safeguarding children continued

Local Safeguarding Children Boards

374 Local Safeguarding Children Boards replaced the former area child protection committees from 1 April 2006. Ofsted carried out a survey of the 150 Local Safeguarding Children Boards in 2007.⁶¹ Its findings are based on the 118 questionnaire responses received and 19 structured interviews with chairpersons.

375 Local Safeguarding Children Boards, central to the safeguarding agenda, are well established. There are now more independent chairpersons than when they were first set up in 2006. This is important in enhancing their independence and capacity to influence local safeguarding work. They are also beginning to focus on a wider safeguarding role in addition to child protection.

376 To carry out their role to best effect, Local Safeguarding Children Boards need to do more to secure the participation of all the relevant agencies at a senior enough level. Some statutory partners are not fully involved in the work of the Boards and are thus failing to meet their duty to cooperate: for example Connexions services, Cafcass and the youth offending service.

377 Few Local Safeguarding Children Boards have set themselves effective measures on safeguarding; those that have not cannot yet demonstrate the impact of their work.

378 A clear focus on specific vulnerable groups of children is lacking in most local authority areas. Few Local Safeguarding Children Boards are giving a high enough priority to targeting groups such as looked after children, those in private fostering arrangements, asylum-seeking children in the community, children in mental health settings and children in secure settings, especially when placed outside their home area.

Joint working and the duty to cooperate

379 Partnership working to safeguard children has improved since 2005 and is underpinned effectively by the five Every Child Matters outcomes. All areas have produced Children and Young People's Plans and are reviewing them at least annually. In nearly all areas, these are leading to more effective targeting and better coordinated provision of services for children and young people. Nevertheless, joint commissioning of services for all children in need remains weak.

380 Children's Trusts are now established in all areas, although the quality of relationships between partners and the extent of different agencies' involvement vary between areas. Most Children's Trusts are at too early a stage of development for judgements to be made about their impact on outcomes for children.

381 The extent to which relevant agencies work together to manage the risks posed by sexual and violent offenders through multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) is inconsistent. Good operational arrangements exist between MAPPA and children's social care services to identify and protect children and young people who might be at risk. However, the extent to which Local Safeguarding Children Boards participate actively in MAPPA or monitor the impact of MAPPA on children and young people varies considerably. Child protection processes and offender management programmes in the area are therefore not sufficiently well coordinated.

Safe recruitment and vetting

382 The effectiveness of vetting arrangements for people whose activities bring them into contact with children and vulnerable adults has long been a matter of concern.

383 Recruitment vetting practices for centrally employed staff are adequate or better in nearly all local authorities; Criminal Records Bureau checking for new recruits and contract staff is generally well established in children's services. Nonetheless, weaknesses in recruitment practices remain. For example, checks on people who apply for approval as adopters are not always timely, which delays decisions by adoption panels. The 2008 Safeguarding children review raised concerns about variations in the extent to which agencies have carried out checks on staff who were in post before the Criminal Records Bureau was set up in 2002 and who have remained in the same post. Similar concerns arise about staff who have had Criminal Records Bureau checks on appointment but who have not been re-checked after three years, the time frame accepted as good practice. However, Ofsted recognises that only in some settings is there a requirement for re-checking after three years, and also that in schools there has never been any requirement to conduct Criminal Records Bureau checks on staff who were in post before 2002 and have not moved since. Ofsted's guidance to its inspectors recognises that if

schools are complying with the regulations and guidance they are doing all that can be required of them.⁶²

The wider safeguarding role of public services

384 Agencies that work with children and young people now have a better understanding of their role in keeping them safe from accidents, crime and bullying, and actively promoting their welfare in a healthy and safe environment. Nearly all have prioritised safeguarding and reinforced this focus through the increased integration of education, health and social care services, stronger joint working arrangements with health services, police and the voluntary sector and the adoption of the principles of Every Child Matters. However, a shared understanding of safeguarding is still to be developed, particularly between social care services and agencies of the criminal justice system. This is most evident for children in secure settings, where the focus remains disproportionately on containment and does not apply a proper balance between security and welfare.

The majority of settings where children are educated or cared for comply with requirements and regulations for keeping children safe.

Providing and promoting a safe and healthy environment

385 There are examples of good partnership working to prevent accidents to children. This, and other targeted action, has contributed to the year-on-year reduction in serious injuries to and deaths of children in road accidents. According to the Tellus3 survey, the majority of children feel very safe or quite safe when going to school or in school (88%) (see i, p.120).⁶³

386 Children and young people feel less safe around their local community (75% quite safe/very safe) and on public transport (70%). Bullying and the fear of bullying are major preoccupations for many children and young people. In the Tellus3 survey, 56% said they had never been bullied at school, while 6% said they had been bullied in school on most days. However, 75% of respondents said they had never been bullied in places other than school, although 3% stated that they are bullied out of school on most days. While nearly all schools and children's services have policies to prevent bullying and oppressive behaviour, 44% of Tellus3 respondents said incidents of bullying in schools were not dealt with well. Consultations by the Children's Rights Director reinforce these findings (see xxxiv, xxxv, p.121). Multi-agency strategies to tackle bullying exist in some areas, but other areas rely on individual schools and services to develop their own.

387 Increasing numbers of schools are taking part in the National Healthy Schools programme, although their involvement varies considerably between areas. Children recognise the concept of leading a healthy lifestyle but many have yet to adopt it in practice. The development of multi-agency strategies to reduce obesity in children is at an early stage and existing strategies have not yet made a significant impact.

388 The majority of settings where children are educated or cared for comply with requirements and regulations for keeping children safe. Few maintained schools and further education colleges are judged inadequate on the aspects of provision related to safeguarding and welfare that Ofsted inspects. However, around 8% of non-association independent schools inspected by Ofsted in 2007/08 offer inadequate provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety.

⁶² See *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (DfES/04217/2006), DfES, 2006.

⁶³ For more information on Tellus3, see footnote 21, p.26.

Safeguarding children continued

389 Although care providers, especially early years providers, have made considerable year-on-year improvements, there are still concerns about standards in certain regulated care settings. Foster care is the most common form of placement for looked after children; in March 2008, around 42,300 children were in foster care. Five per cent of independent and 6% of local authority fostering agencies were judged to be inadequate in relation to staying safe (July 2007 to August 2008), and similar levels of concern arise about children's homes, which looked after around 5,100 children in March 2008. Seven per cent were judged inadequate during the same period in relation to helping children to stay safe.

390 Progress on improving compliance with requirements for carers to notify their local council of children in private fostering and for local councils to provide support for these children is slow. Initiatives to raise public awareness have often had little impact and the number of children privately fostered remains unknown in nearly all local authority areas. Inspections judged private fostering arrangements in six out of 16 areas as inadequate. This is a serious concern.

Identifying needs and providing preventative services

391 There is better identification of needs at an early stage, and more children and young people have access to increasingly effective preventative and earlier intervention services. These services are wide-ranging. Many are provided by children's centres and include programmes such as tackling substance misuse by children and young people, and parenting classes. However, their impact is yet to be effectively demonstrated. Reductions in teenage pregnancies are lower than the national target despite a wide range of dedicated programmes. The continuity of funding for local preventative services is uncertain and, in some instances, constrains their provision. Examples include community programmes to promote sexual health and the youth inclusion programme, which was having a positive effect on reducing youth offending.

392 Most areas are making progress towards the comprehensive provision of child and adolescent mental health services. Service provision is increasingly appropriate to the age of the children concerned; children's centres are

helping to promote mental and emotional health through support for parents to improve bonding and communication with their children. However, a lack of adequate provision for children and young people with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities continues.

Tackling domestic violence

393 Domestic violence has both a direct and an indirect impact on the everyday lives of children and young people. Successful intervention depends largely on identifying risk early on, but the degree of under-reporting of domestic violence is known to be high and data on the scale of the problem are limited. Most Children and Young People's Plans identify domestic violence as a high priority area for action, yet individual agencies vary significantly in their approach to, and knowledge and understanding of, domestic violence. For example, Cafcass plays an important part in identifying and safeguarding children who are affected by domestic violence, but despite national initiatives by this service to improve practice in handling cases of domestic violence, inspections have found inadequate performance, including some serious mistakes, in this area.

394 Joint working arrangements to combat domestic violence have been strengthened, particularly between local authorities, the police and health services. Local Safeguarding Children Boards are represented well on Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.⁶⁴ A fifth of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards surveyed by Ofsted also identified combating domestic violence as a high priority. However, they have not yet demonstrated the impact of this work through improved outcomes for children and young people.

Safeguarding groups of vulnerable children

395 Some groups of children are particularly vulnerable, such as those who are looked after or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspections show evidence of improved outcomes and better inter-agency working to support vulnerable children since the 2005 *Safeguarding children* report.⁶⁵ Despite this, progress for some groups of children, including looked after children and care leavers, is slow. Considerable concerns also persist about the welfare of asylum-seeking children in immigration removal centres, in which Ofsted inspects the educational provision.

⁶⁴ Responsible Authorities are required to work together to reduce crime and disorder and produce community safety strategies for each local authority area; Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

⁶⁵ *Safeguarding children: the second joint chief inspectors' report on arrangements to safeguard children*, Commission for Social Care Inspection, 2005, www.safeguardingchildren.org.uk.

Looked after children and care leavers

396 At 31 March 2008, 59,500 children and young people were looked after by local authorities. These children are still more likely to underachieve and/or to enter the criminal justice system than children who live with their families. Well targeted family support, such as family conferences, children's centres for assessing parenting skills and rapid response teams for family breakdown, can be successful in reducing the numbers of children taken into care. However, access to such services is very variable.

397 Services for looked after children and care leavers are slowly improving and greater attention is paid to safeguarding them. Children's services are planning their placements in care better, and there is greater stability of placements, with fewer children being subjected to three or more placement moves in a year. The number of children placed out of their home area has reduced. Children are increasingly allocated to named and qualified social workers (97% nationally in 2007/08 compared with 93.4% in 2004/05). Monitoring of the health and well-being of looked after children has also improved in nearly all local authority areas. Those services that are judged outstanding share an important characteristic: they perform well across the spectrum of services that have an impact on the lives of looked after children and young people.

398 Nevertheless, some looked after children are still not served well enough and need special attention to ensure that they are properly safeguarded. Of children's homes, 7% are judged inadequate in keeping children in their care safe; for the sum of independent and local authority fostering agencies the figure is 5%. Inspections of these services highlight a lack of experienced and competent staff and insufficient compliance with requirements for staff supervision. The choice of placement remains limited for most children, and some feel it is hard to influence decisions that involve them. Children and young people in most areas continue to experience frequent changes of social worker. The resulting lack of continuity has an adverse effect on the implementation of their care plans.

399 Arrangements to support looked after children in education are good in almost all areas, but despite this, their rates of educational attainment, school attendance and post-school employment, education or training remain unacceptably low compared with those of other children. For example, in 2007, 13% of looked after children achieved five or more A* to C grades at GCSE compared with 62% of all 16-year-olds, and 64% gained at least one GCSE compared with 99% of all 16-year-olds. The proportion of looked after children who missed at least 25 days of school rose from 12.6% in 2005/06 to 13% in 2007/08. The percentage of care leavers who were in employment, education or training at age 19 in 2006/07 was about three quarters of that of all 19-year-olds.

400 The majority of local authorities have improved their compliance with statutory requirements to provide pathway plans and personal advisers for care leavers. However, most local authority areas lack suitable accommodation for care leavers generally and young people leaving custody. In addition to the risks this poses to their safety, it is also a factor limiting their ability to succeed in life.

Children and young people who go missing

401 Services are working together better to identify children and young people who go missing from home, care or education and to share information about them. Some Local Safeguarding Children Boards have developed guidance to help staff across agencies identify the potential causes of children going missing, such as forced marriages, bullying and sexual abuse. They are also paying greater attention to reintegrating them into schools and children's homes when they are found. This has contributed to a reduction to 7% nationally in the numbers of young people aged 16–18 years who leave school and whose situation is unknown – still a cause for concern.

402 Local authorities are responsible for maintaining statistics on the numbers of children who are missing from home or school, but because the statistics are collected inconsistently and the information is not compiled nationally, knowledge and understanding of the scale of the problem are fragmented. More should be done to monitor the numbers of children who go missing.

Staying safe, one of the five Every Child Matters outcomes, forms a key dimension of Ofsted's inspection work to improve safeguarding arrangements for children and young people.





Every Child Matters: change for children, the Children Act 2004 and a range of other initiatives have provided a much-needed impetus for changes to the landscape of children's services in the past few years.

Safeguarding children continued

Young carers

403 Children who provide care for a parent or relative may miss out on educational and leisure opportunities and their health and welfare may be at risk. Support is particularly important for young carers when the needs of the person for whom they care change or the person dies. There is a lack of reliable data to show how many children act in this role. Children's services and schools now have a greater awareness of the needs of young carers, and support for them to attend school and take advantage of leisure services has improved. However, systems for identifying young carers are not good enough, which makes it difficult to plan the capacity to meet the potential demand for services.

Children in family justice proceedings

404 Cafcass has a statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in family justice proceedings in England where their welfare is, or may be, in question. These involve, for example, care proceedings, adoption, contact or residence arrangements for children whose parents are separating or divorcing, and young people going through the courts because of criminal activity. Cafcass is involved with around 100,000 children every year.

405 At a strategic level, Cafcass now pays much greater attention to safeguarding children. Cafcass issued a Safeguarding Framework in 2007 to inform practitioners' work, pulling together all its procedures and guidance relating to the duty to safeguard and promote children's welfare. Cafcass has also made progress in expediting the allocation of cases and increasing children's participation. However, it continues to have difficulties in translating policies and procedures into front-line practice. Inspections in 2007 found aspects of practice to be inadequate in the East Midlands and South East regions, potentially putting some children at risk (see xvii, xviii, p.120). Individual failings were compounded by a lack of clarity about the accountability of managers and poor quality assurance processes.

Children in secure settings

406 Young people may be placed in local authority secure children's homes if there are serious concerns about their welfare or as an alternative to custody and if they are at risk of harming themselves or others. Each of the 20 establishments operating between April and December 2007, which housed around 100 children, was judged to be adequate or better. However, the adequacy and supervision of staff remain areas for concern, particularly given the complex needs of this group of young people.

407 Four secure training centres in England provide 301 places for young people. They house increasing numbers of young people who have committed serious, often violent, offences. Three of the four centres offer a safe, secure environment for young people, and focus on providing child-centred care; the fourth centre was judged to be inadequate overall.

408 During 2007, inquests were conducted into the deaths of two young people in two secure training centres. In one case, the inquest revealed failings in the authorised means of restraint in secure training centres, 'physical control in care'. The other case brought to light several safeguarding issues including the training of staff in the management of suicidal and self-harming behaviours. Following the coroner's recommendations, the Government agreed to commission an independent review of the use of restraint on young people in youth offender institutions and secure training centres.

409 Continuing education, healthcare and accommodation arrangements for young people leaving secure establishments to return to their communities are too variable and range from good to inadequate. This reduces the prospects for young people to make the transition successfully. Local authorities and establishments need to pay greater attention to transition planning so that continuity in providing both mainstream services, such as health and education, and specialist services, notably those to combat drug and alcohol misuse, can be assured.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

410 Agencies are working together better to provide services across health, education and social care for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Early identification of needs for very young children is mostly good and multi-agency assessment has improved. Children with the most complex needs are normally well supported but, in many areas, high thresholds restrict access to services for children with moderate levels of learning difficulty and/or disability. Provision is particularly limited in specialist therapeutic and respite services, speech and language therapy, child and adolescent mental health services, access to specialist equipment, and services for children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or autism.

411 Provision of education for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is generally satisfactory or better. Transitions between early years and full-time education and transfers between schools work successfully overall. Arrangements for young people moving into further education or employment are less consistently effective. Transition planning is hindered in some areas by ineffective working arrangements between children's services and adult social care and health services. In regulated care settings, safeguarding was found to be adequate or better. Residential special schools' overall current compliance with national minimum standards has improved considerably since their introduction in 2002–03.

Agencies are working together better to provide services across health, education and social care for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Children seeking asylum

412 Local services are now providing better support to asylum-seeking children, especially those arriving unaccompanied. There are examples of good targeted services, especially in health, and child and adolescent mental health services. These are particularly important since many children have specific physical and mental health needs associated with deprivation and trauma arising from repression and conflict in their home countries. The best authorities have undertaken work directly with these young people to develop effective approaches to providing health assessments and treatment or counselling services.

413 However, the quality of provision for asylum-seeking children who are looked after is sometimes more variable than for other looked after children in the same area. Their options for accommodation are more limited and asylum-seeking children are frequently placed outside their host areas, increasing the risk of poor safeguarding and support. For example, in some areas care leavers who are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are less likely to have an effective pathway plan than other care leavers in the same area.

414 The UK Border Agency can detain people in immigration removal centres whose applications for immigration are under consideration or whom it plans to remove from the country. Two immigration removal centres in England accommodate families with children. Ofsted inspects educational provision in these centres in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

415 Recent inspections show that both centres have made only limited progress in providing education for children; teaching staff tended to concentrate their time and resources on the adult population. Children have inadequate access to outside recreational areas during detention. One shorter stay centre made no attempt to offer children any educational guidance or support at all. At the other centre, the range of ages and abilities in the two classes provided was very wide. Teachers were unable to spend sufficient time with individual children and there were no learning support assistants to help them do so. Despite good efforts by teaching staff, some school-aged children did not receive a formal education.

Safeguarding children continued

Children from minority ethnic groups

416 Local services increasingly recognise the varying needs of children from minority ethnic groups. Nearly all areas have carried out a Race Equality Impact Assessment of their children's services. These have led to a wide range of specifically designed services being available to respond to the needs of individual groups, including support for recent immigrants from Eastern Europe and for children from Traveller communities. There is also increasing involvement of community and faith groups in planning services. However, in some areas these developments are not reflected in front-line practice.

417 Assessments of the needs of individual children and young people do not always deal with issues relating to ethnicity or cultural differences. This may result in a limited understanding of the child's safeguarding needs and impede the effectiveness of interventions or service provided.



Local services increasingly recognise the varying needs of children from minority ethnic groups.

Children and young people and the armed forces

418 Children and young people under 18 may be dependants of a service family or may themselves be in the armed services as recruits or trainees. Where children of armed forces personnel are in the UK, local authorities have the same statutory responsibility for safeguarding them and promoting their welfare as for all other children in their area. The armed services are represented on Local Safeguarding Children Boards in 19 areas where there is a significant concentration of service personnel. However, the needs of children of armed services families are rarely considered separately in local Children and Young People's Plans for the areas in which they are based.

419 When service families are based overseas, the Ministry of Defence has responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of their children in accordance with national guidance and the Children Act 2004. However, arrangements for the inspection of safeguarding provision for these children are inconsistent; whilst all schools and adoption services are inspected, there is no clear remit for the inspection of the social work service, including fostering and child protection. There is a need for clarification of responsibilities in this area.

420 Inspections of military establishments providing training for young armed services recruits show that the management of their safeguarding and welfare has improved significantly since 2005. Notable achievements include the integration of welfare and risk management into initial training. Support services for recruits under 18 are better organised, highly effective and integrated within the military chain of command.

Child protection

421 Effective child protection is a fundamental part of safeguarding children and young people, and the previous two safeguarding children reports showed that considerable improvements were needed in this area. In 2006, the Government introduced revised guidance for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.⁶⁶ Inspection has identified many improved arrangements to support inter-agency responses to child protection concerns.

Compliance with 'Working together to safeguard children'

422 Nearly all local authority areas have revised their child protection procedures in line with the new guidance. Some Local Safeguarding Children Boards have worked together to develop joint procedures which increase consistency across local authority boundaries. Access to procedures and guidance to staff are generally good across agencies and designated staff are mostly in place. For example, schools generally comply fully with requirements to designate specific staff with responsibility for leading on child protection matters. Some areas report difficulties in recruiting designated doctors for child protection work.

423 Despite the evidence of progress, there are continuing concerns that some practitioners show less knowledge and understanding of child protection and welfare needs than others, including some front-line staff of Cafcass and providers of early years care (mainly childminders).

Serious incidents and serious case reviews

424 The 'Quality and standards' section of this report noted that there are often long delays in producing the findings of serious case reviews (see p.69). Only one in 10 are completed on time; six in 10 have taken between one and two years to complete, and three in 10 have taken between three and four years to complete. This level of delay severely restricts the potential of the learning from the serious case review to improve practice.

425 Most of the lessons from these recent serious case reviews show that learning from previous reviews has not resulted in continuous improvement of the effectiveness of inter-agency joint working arrangements. Lessons learned continue to highlight the importance of sharing information and communication, accurate records of the order in which events happened, clarity of planning and roles, having good strategies to work effectively with families whose circumstances make them hard to reach or resistant to help, and the quality of assessment. A lack of early recognition, by mainstream services such as schools or health services, of the children who need protection is a frequent failing. Several reviews also highlight significant difficulties in communication and the planning of intervention between adult or child mental health services and the core teams who implement child protection plans.

Lessons learned continue to highlight the importance of sharing information and communication, accurate records of the order in which events happened, clarity of planning and roles, having good strategies to work effectively with families whose circumstances make them hard to reach or resistant to help, and the quality of assessment.

⁶⁶ *Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children* (13 978 0 11 271187 2), DfES, 2006.

Safeguarding children continued

Identifying children at risk or in need

426 Nearly all local authority child protection services are judged to be satisfactory or better. Responses to referrals of child protection concerns are safe and appropriate in nearly all areas. Most local authorities have established clearer thresholds for access to children's social care services. However, there is evidence that these thresholds are still not well understood by referring agencies. Thresholds for services are broadly consistent for children who are at risk of harm or of family breakdown. However, the threshold for accessing support services to promote the welfare of children and young people is less consistent. The result is that children have different access to support or preventative services depending on where they live. Furthermore, there is some evidence that local authorities sometimes raise the threshold for social care services and limit provision when demand is high or when there are staffing shortages and financial pressures. Examples include access to respite care or support for families who are managing challenging behaviour.



Information sharing between agencies on child protection or welfare concerns has improved at an operational level.

The Common Assessment Framework and information sharing

427 The Common Assessment Framework for children and young people is a shared assessment tool for use across all children's services. It aims to assist the early identification of a child's additional needs and promote joined-up service provision.

428 Most areas are making good progress with developing the Common Assessment Framework. However, staff in agencies other than social care are not always keen to accept responsibility for completing assessments. Community health centres, schools and children's centres are making most progress. In some places there is also a perceived blurring of the distinctions between the assessment processes for children in need and those for children at risk of significant harm. Whilst this helps to reduce the stigma of child protection intervention for families, inspections have found some examples where a lack of a clear focus on child protection has resulted in agencies failing to recognise risks and delaying intervention inappropriately.

429 Information sharing between agencies on child protection or welfare concerns has improved at an operational level. There are well established information-sharing protocols between many agencies, especially between the police and social services. However, sharing of health information is less effective, and information sharing overall is often a weakness where serious incidents occur.

The numbers of social workers leaving and vacancies for social worker posts have reduced overall, although this masks variations between areas and retaining skilled and experienced staff remains a problem.

Management and accountability

430 The integration of children's services is helping to promote better attention to safeguarding and child protection. Management oversight and supervision have improved in local authority children's services. Front-line staff have access to good quality supervision in most areas. The numbers of social workers leaving and vacancies for social worker posts have reduced overall, although this masks variations between areas and retaining skilled and experienced staff remains a problem.

431 The provision of child protection training for staff in nearly all local authority children's services is generally good. However, access to child protection training for some key groups of front-line staff is limited. In particular, it is limited for staff in youth services and children's homes who experience workload pressures or staffing shortages. This needs to be tackled by managers.

Conclusion

432 Inspection has identified many improvements to safeguarding arrangements over the past three years. It has also noted successful, innovative practice across the range of settings. The framework provided by the Children Act 2004 and the five Every Child Matters outcomes underpins these improvements and achievements.

433 However, a number of recurring issues indicate that some children and groups of children are still not well enough served by public services. Particular concerns persist about safeguarding arrangements for looked after children and the welfare of children in secure settings.

434 There is still much to do to ensure that all children are properly safeguarded. *Safeguarding children* made recommendations to the Government and to local services, which aim to improve safeguarding arrangements for children and young people. If implemented, these recommendations would support the ambitions of the Government's Children's Plan and help improve the quality of life for children and their families.

KEY THEMES

Skills for working lives



Skills for working lives



Introduction

435 The commentary on the 2006/07 Annual Report referred to the need to prepare young people and adults more effectively and systematically for the world of work (see xxvii, p.120). Ofsted is well equipped to judge how effectively skills are taught in the classroom and the workplace, to report on the involvement of employers in shaping the process, and to evaluate whether the most disadvantaged groups receive the support and guidance they need to increase their employability.

436 This section draws on the findings of Ofsted's inspection of provision related to skills for working lives across a wide range of settings. It demonstrates the central importance of providers working with employers to identify their needs and to find ways in which employers can contribute directly to programmes for learners.

Main findings

437 The following are key features found in the most successful provision.

- ✦ Strong links with employers greatly enhance the relevance of programmes; learners see this and their motivation is improved.
- ✦ Staff with the knowledge, skills and, in many cases, the professional experience outside education are able to teach work-related skills confidently.
- ✦ Clear and well understood aims, targets, assessment and monitoring procedures ensure that programmes produce tangible outcomes in terms of learners who are better equipped for employment.
- ✦ Well targeted support is provided for learners from disadvantaged groups, with particular attention given to identifying and tackling problems with literacy and numeracy.
- ✦ Learning environments are equipped with high quality resources and industry-standard equipment.

Skills for working lives continued

438 Concerns, however, include the following.

- ✘ Provision across the 14–19 age range is not yet coherent; in practice, discontinuity at the age of 16 still exists for many young people.
- ✘ Equality of access to a full range of relevant post-16 programmes is not yet guaranteed for all young people.
- ✘ The engagement of looked after children, and of those leaving care, in education, employment or training remains low.
- ✘ In provision for adults in employment, too much emphasis is given to accrediting existing skills rather than developing participants' skills and understanding to a higher level.



Equality of access to a full range of relevant post-16 programmes is not yet guaranteed for all young people.

Context

439 Raising the skills level of the nation is a major government priority. Great importance is attached to ensuring young people and the adult workforce are appropriately prepared to meet the new and emerging demands of what is variously described as the knowledge or global economy. In the current climate of economic uncertainty, following a sustained period of economic growth, skills development is seen as central to enhancing the nation's productivity and competitiveness and to contributing to improvements in social inclusion and cohesion.

440 *World class skills: implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England* sets out the Government's strategy to realise its vision for the UK as a 'world leader' in skills by 2020.⁶⁷ The measures it introduces to promote further a demand-led approach to training will require employers and individuals to take much greater responsibility for developing their own skills and for a correspondingly higher level of responsiveness from providers to meet identified needs.

441 This section examines the effectiveness of provision to promote learners' understanding of the world of work and the development of skills for working lives in four key aspects:

- ✘ developing new vocational pathways for learning at 14–19
- ✘ the quality of vocational provision in the best performing colleges
- ✘ promoting the skills development of adults in work
- ✘ supporting adults into employment.

New vocational pathways for learning at 14–19

Key messages

- ✦ 14–19 partnerships are making a difference in raising achievement and increasing participation, particularly when they match provision carefully to targeted groups, engaging employers in the curriculum and working with providers of work-based learning.
- ✦ The relatively low levels of participation in education for the 16–19 age group, however, make it imperative to do more to strengthen the coherence and relevance of what is offered. Discontinuity of provision at age 16 still exists, with unequal access to some programmes.
- ✦ The pace of preparation for the new Diplomas is variable. In the best cases, strong links between institutions are strengthening the planning for the Diplomas prior to their introduction at the start of the 2008/09 academic year.⁶⁸
- ✦ Transition to work remains difficult for more disadvantaged groups of young people. Despite improvements in gaining qualifications, many young people's levels of literacy and numeracy remain too low. More providers need to follow the lead of the best in working with employers to develop worthwhile opportunities for experience of the workplace.

14–19 partnerships are making a real difference in raising achievement and increasing participation.

442 At the end of 2007, the proportion of 16–18-year-olds in England not in education, training or employment was estimated at 9.4% of the total cohort, an improvement on the 2006 figure of 10.4%.⁶⁹ Although the number of young people not in education, employment or training has reduced overall, the picture across the country is very variable.

443 Critical to raising participation rates are:

- ✦ improving the coordination of 14–19 provision
- ✦ extending vocational options through local partnerships
- ✦ promoting the 14–19 curriculum entitlement effectively
- ✦ bringing clarity to progression routes at a local level.

444 In the local authorities inspected as part of the survey of 14–19 reforms and through joint area reviews of services for children and young people, most partnerships to provide education and training for 14–19-year-olds are well established (see xiv, p.120). Strategic direction is clear and a strong commitment to joint working exists amongst many providers. The best local strategies have a positive impact: they increase participation in education and training, raise achievement and improve progression to further study, employment or training. The best partnerships provide an effective curriculum for particular groups, including young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those at risk of disengagement. In the best provision, the involvement of employers in the curriculum is strong, but this is not found consistently. Overall, providers of work-based learning are not sufficiently involved in 14–19 partnerships.

445 The first five of the new Diplomas began in September 2008; they call for effective collaborative arrangements between providers. In most areas, local 14–19 partnerships and consortia are making progress in preparing for the Diplomas, often building on effective practice established in delivering the Increased Flexibility Programme. The most advanced planning tackles common concerns about staff training and skills development, timetabling and transport for learners.

⁶⁸ The Diploma is a new qualification that combines theoretical study with practical experience. Diplomas are being developed in 17 subjects or lines of learning.

⁶⁹ Source: *Participation in education, training and employment by 16–18 year olds in England*, Statistical First Release (SFR 22/2008), DCSF, 2008.

Skills for working lives continued

446 Although government reforms have been intended to establish coherent provision across the 14–19 age range, in practice there is still a discontinuity at the age of 16 for many young people. In particular, the opportunities and the range of options to make progress on vocational programmes from the age of 14 through to 19 are insufficiently clear. Initiatives for curriculum development, other than those associated with the new Diplomas, remain split into the traditional key stages of 14–16 and 16–19, rather than being planned for the whole 14–19 age range. Collaboration to develop a wide range of provision is generally weaker post-16 than at Key Stage 4. Competition amongst institutions is still a significant feature post-16.

447 Equal access to a full range of relevant post-16 programmes is not yet guaranteed for all young people. While 14–19 opportunities are increasing, they are not always available for all young people in an area. Sufficient and appropriate provision of apprenticeships, courses at entry level and level 1 post-16 (see Glossary, p.135) and opportunities for work-based learning for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are of particular concern.⁷⁰

448 The engagement of looked after children in education, employment or training remains low. Evidence from the Children's Rights Director indicates that the support from care providers varies too much. The Children's Rights Director's report on young people's views on leaving care notes that, in applying for work, many young people had a clear sense that they could be discriminated against for having been in care.⁷¹

449 Concerns continue about the impartiality of information, advice and guidance provided in 11–18 schools covering the full range of post-16 provision available locally. Monitoring systems in partnerships, to ensure that all learners are receiving their education or training entitlement, are insufficiently robust. Most areas have introduced an online prospectus describing the curriculum, but not all young people are aware of this.

450 The Entry to Employment programme is intended to support young people who have left school but who have not yet been successful in making the transition to further training or employment. Amongst this group are young people who have significant barriers to overcome. Increasing numbers of Entry to Employment learners are achieving a wider variety of qualifications at level 1 and some at level 2. The use of work tasters and placements has increased, and liaison with external support agencies is particularly effective. In the better providers, links with employers result in well planned opportunities for learners to experience the world of work. But in too many providers, few learners have the opportunity to spend time with an employer. The number of learners working towards but not achieving adult literacy and numeracy at level 1 is high. Although there has been a small improvement in progression rates, the overall profile for positive progress is still poor. Fewer than half of leavers progress into work-based learning or further education.

451 Even though the rise to 18 in the compulsory participation age will be staged, meeting the demands implicit in this will require much work to be done to improve the standards of current programmes to re-engage young people and to devise new and imaginative pathways for them.

452 Some partnerships or individual schools are taking innovative approaches to providing more vocational centres, as in the following example.

108 ⁷⁰ For an explanation of levels of qualifications see the Glossary, p.135.

⁷¹ *Young people's views on leaving care: a Children's Rights Director's report*, Commission for Social Care Inspection, 2006; this report is available from www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Case study: Examples of partnerships extending opportunities for vocational programmes

A school for 11–16-year-old pupils has recently leased workshop premises in the centre of town. These premises are being restored and renovated by the school and its partners. The workshop houses facilities for courses in construction, beauty therapy, and travel and tourism. Imaginative budgeting and fund-raising enable the school to pay for the upkeep of the premises. Spare capacity on courses is offered to other schools in the area. The new facility is clearly motivating pupils very well and the school is well poised to support the proposed diploma in construction from September 2008. An added advantage is that the premises are perceived as neutral territory for pupils requiring re-engagement. Its town centre location provides a good base for monitoring work experience as it is close to many beauty and tourism employers locally. Excellent links have already been forged with business neighbours such as a furniture restoration business in an adjacent unit. This has led to a business partnership and the acquisition of specialist tools. Further links are being negotiated with the proprietor of a gym nearby. The local authority is supporting the project with expertise on health and safety matters, for example, and has provided around £10,000 of funding.

The quality of vocational provision in the best performing colleges

Key messages

- ✦ Success starts with recruiting learners carefully to the course that is most appropriate for them. More needs to be done to encourage young women to apply to some types of course.
- ✦ Close links with industry benefit courses by ensuring that curricula are relevant and give access to strong workplace experience.
- ✦ College learning environments benefit from high quality resources that give learners access to industry-standard equipment and current working practices.
- ✦ Teachers with personal knowledge of the vocational area are essential in developing students' competence and professional skills, and identifying requirements for additional support.
- ✦ Teachers' imaginative and varied learning activities skilfully mix practical and knowledge-based work to engage and motivate learners.



Skills for working lives continued

453 Many young people enrol at the age of 16 on college programmes to develop the skills required for employment or progression to further study in particular vocational areas. Surveys of good practice have been published in five of these areas this year: agriculture, horticulture and animal care (see xii, p.120); business, administration and law (see ix, p.120); construction, planning and the built environment (see xi, p.120); engineering and manufacturing technologies (see x, p.120); and science (see xiii, p.120).

454 The best colleges all had strong links with industry and related classroom learning closely to the demands of the workplace. Teachers' first-hand knowledge of the vocational area and their ability to use examples to illustrate current working practices were particularly effective. A wide variety of learning activities and stimulating enrichment opportunities challenged and engaged learners, developing their understanding of and interest in the subject and its practical application. Teachers had developed imaginative ways of checking individual learners' progress. Tutors' skilful questioning was an important feature of good teaching and learning. It helped to engage learners' attention, improved their motivation and developed a productive rapport in the group sessions.

455 Learners produced work of a professional standard and developed the wider skills valued by employers. Participation in skills competitions was a strong motivational factor, particularly in construction.

456 Well established links with industry ensured many learners became familiar with current working practice through visits and work placements. Collaboration with employers and business also helped colleges gain sponsorships or donations of products, tools and equipment. Resources were good or outstanding and, at many colleges, learners studied in industry-standard working environments.

457 Most colleges went further to tailor their provision to meet the needs of employers by providing training on company premises, broadening the curriculum to offer additional vocational qualifications relevant to learners' future employability, or providing courses in specialist areas. Many learners in land-based provision were involved in commercial enterprises on campus.

458 Careful consideration was given to ensure learners were recruited to courses at an appropriate level. In the best

practice, learners completed course-specific aptitude tests before being offered a place and the monitoring of their progress on programmes was thorough. Where learners had identified the need for additional support, this was dealt with promptly and involved staff who, in the best examples, also had a good understanding of the vocational programme.

459 The departments were well managed with an established culture of critical self-evaluation and continuous improvement. In some areas, such as construction, subject coaches were used effectively to support staff relatively new to teaching.

460 Despite these high levels of performance, there were still some areas for improvement. There was scope for better use of information learning technology, particularly to enliven theory classes and support independent learning. Technical updating and industrial secondment were given insufficient attention. The proportion of females recruited to the engineering centres was very low. There was not enough monitoring of learners' destinations to ensure they took up employment or progressed to further study at a level appropriate to the skills they had acquired.

Case study: Working with local employers to develop learners' understanding of business

Students studying GCE A level applied business completed a range of assignments which involved visits to and research with small- and medium-sized enterprises locally. They had to identify a company and negotiate with its managers to agree a suitable research project. They showed a good understanding of business resources by analysing the ways in which their chosen organisation's resources might be deployed more effectively. One student had worked with a local restaurant, recording and analysing the fluctuations in demand. The data were used to devise a more efficient arrangement for employing staff, based on well presented analysis. Students developed their relationships with their chosen organisations and used them to complete further assignments. Critical to the success of this arrangement was the teacher's thorough briefing of the students, who could explain how most organisations, however small, could benefit from an objective analysis of their current practices.

Promoting the skills development of adults in work

Key messages

- ✦ Excellent work-based learning providers structure courses and support to enable learners on apprenticeship programmes to develop their professional skills well beyond the confines of a particular qualification and to experience professional responsibility while still learning.
- ✦ The close involvement of employers and workplace supervisors in monitoring and assessing progress is central to learners' motivation.
- ✦ Programme-led apprenticeships have improved the prospects and pace of learning for some groups of learners, and have been valued by employers, but insufficient promotion of them has led to falling numbers.
- ✦ Train to Gain has strengthened general work skills for many employees, and has enabled some who would not otherwise have done so to achieve a qualification. Further work is required to broaden the range of participating employers, to promote qualifications at a higher level, and to tackle problems of literacy and numeracy where these are identified.



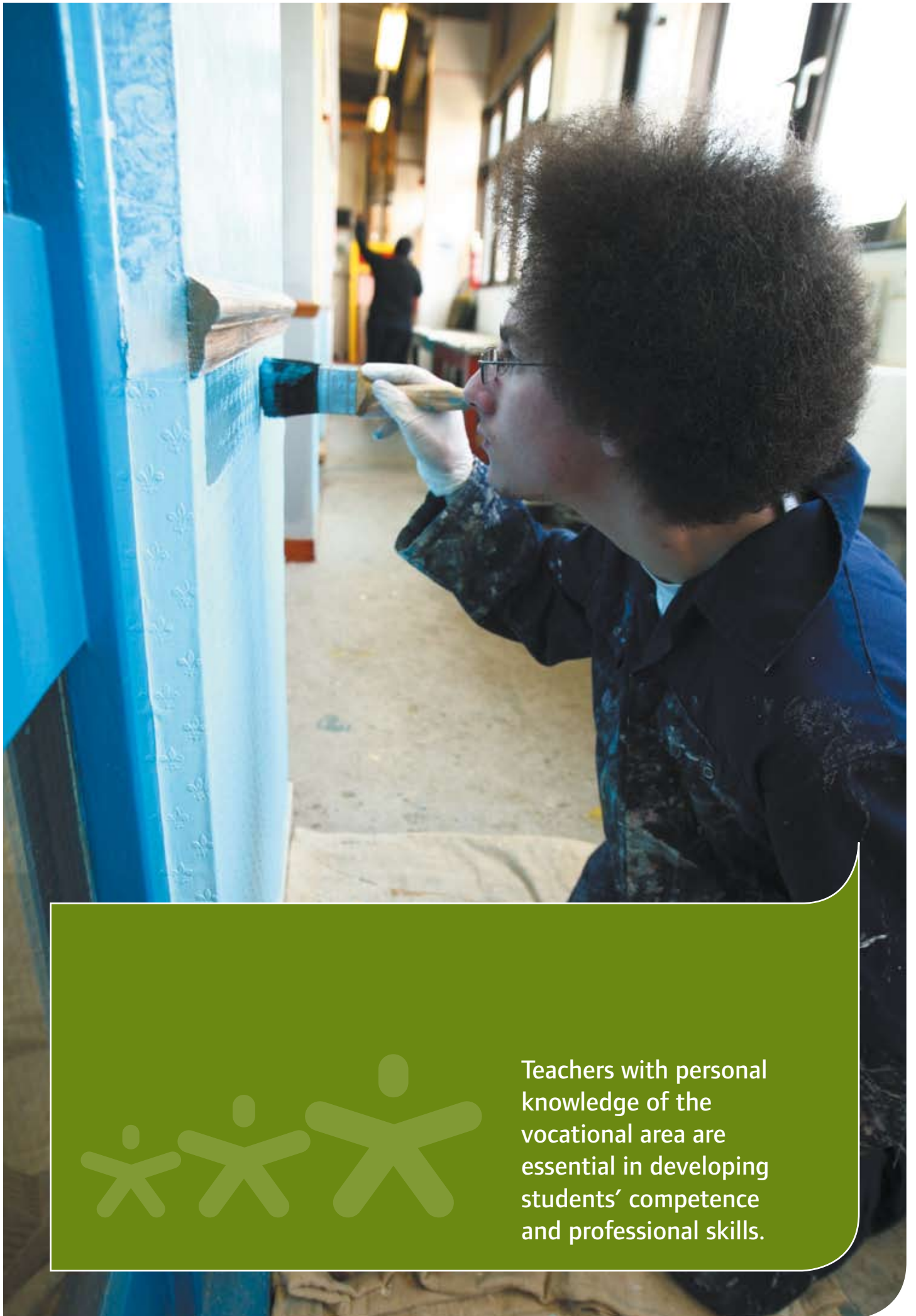
Developing skills in the workplace

461 The best providers of work-based learning routinely take learners on apprenticeship programmes well beyond the specification of the qualification, providing them with a wide range of highly professional employment skills. For many, trust in and respect for their learners are cornerstones of their approach. For example, engineering apprentices with a national gas company were given significant responsibility for carrying out complex tasks at work under the supervision of qualified engineers. Rigorous on- and off-the-job training helped them quickly to develop skills in fault diagnosis and installation. A large hairdressing employer encouraged its apprentices to adopt a highly professional and confident approach to client consultation, technical services and product promotion. Clients came to trust learners' skills and judgements. In the best apprenticeship provision, learners progress sequentially to higher level qualifications and to positions of responsibility at work.

462 Programme-led apprenticeships offer an alternative to the more traditional, employer-led apprenticeship route. They provide an important opportunity for young people who have found it difficult to gain employment or for those who require an initial period of planned training before employment. A recent survey found that learners on programme-led apprenticeships were better prepared and were more likely to achieve the full apprenticeship framework in a shorter time period (see xxx, p.120). Employers found that the initial period of planned training enabled apprentices to settle more quickly into their work roles. Work placements gave a valuable opportunity for young people to start an apprenticeship where there were insufficient employers offering apprenticeships or where they needed work experience before being employed. Page 41 in the 'Quality and standards' section of this report gives further information on inspection findings on apprenticeship programmes.

Close links with industry benefit courses by ensuring that curricula are relevant and give access to strong workplace experience.





Teachers with personal knowledge of the vocational area are essential in developing students' competence and professional skills.

Skills for working lives continued

463 Institutional inspections of Train to Gain and findings from surveys showed that most employees' general work skills, motivation to learn, self-confidence and self-esteem had all improved as a result of the programme (see xxxi, p.120). For many, Train to Gain offered their first opportunity to gain a qualification and they took great pride in their success. Providers generally offered highly flexible training and assessment arrangements to meet employers' needs and to minimise disruption at work.

464 In the main, more training was carried out under Train to Gain than under the previous scheme, the Employer Training Pilot. However, few employees gained new technical or vocational skills on Train to Gain-funded training at level 2. Most were being accredited for the vocational skills they already had. While this increases the proportion of the workforce with a level 2 qualification, it does not necessarily increase the nation's skills base unless learners also have the opportunity to progress to level 3. Employees did not routinely receive guidance on career development or information about further study.

465 Although few employers involved in Train to Gain had systems for measuring the impact of training on their employees, almost all could identify benefits from training, such as improved work performance or reduced staff turnover. A few believed it had made them more successful in competitive environments. For example, they found that they were more successful in competitive tenders because their workforce was qualified.

Slow progress towards completion of apprenticeships is a symptom of many learners' lack of commitment to acquiring full qualifications.

Barriers to progress

466 Skills development can be hindered by a range of factors. Slow progress towards completion of apprenticeships is a symptom of many learners' lack of commitment to acquiring full qualifications. It raises the question of whether the sector is offering programmes and qualification outcomes that all learners value sufficiently to complete. Some workplace supervisors are insufficiently well informed about how they can contribute to training and learners' written work is frequently not at the same standard as their practical work.

467 Learners on programme-led apprenticeships who spend too long on a work placement without the prospect of securing employment lose motivation and are more likely to leave the programme. Recruitment to programme-led apprenticeships has declined over the last two years. The programme had not been widely promoted and its full potential is not sufficiently well understood.

468 The survey of Train to Gain provision found that almost all employees had an initial assessment of their existing skills but this rarely led to training in literacy and numeracy, even where these were identified as a need. Employers were reluctant to broach these issues with their staff and few providers had strategies, or sufficient confidence, to promote literacy and numeracy training with employers and employees.

469 Most providers and employers found that the eligibility criteria for Train to Gain limited their ability to offer training and accreditation to those who needed it. In part, this has been alleviated by increased provision of level 3 qualifications, but this is not necessarily helpful to those who already have a level 2 qualification gained some time ago, or gained in an unrelated occupational area.

470 The survey found that very few of the employees on Train to Gain provision had been recruited by brokers. The brokerage service is not yet effective in engaging particularly hard to reach employers, who would benefit most from developing training for their employees. Much of the recruitment to Train to Gain was the result of promotional work by providers. There is clearly some way to go before the system can be genuinely described as 'demand-led'.



Supporting adults into employment

471 This section considers the development of work-related skills in three contexts: New Deal and Workstep provision funded by the Department for Work and Pensions; family learning and projects funded by the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities programme; and learning and skills in prisons.

New Deal and Workstep provision

Key messages

- ✘ In order to improve job outcomes in an economic climate which has recently become far more challenging and much less predictable, New Deal providers need to provide tailored support to participants, to offer them work experience and to work more closely with employers to identify their requirements.
- ✘ Many aspects of the Workstep programme for adults with complex disabilities are strong, but where participants have been identified as ready to move into unsupported employment, providers need actively to encourage them to do so.

472 New Deal participants generally improve their employability and personal skills, often through gaining job-related additional qualifications such as food hygiene certificates, health and safety awards, lift truck and light vehicle driving licences, and owner-manager qualifications. In the best New Deal providers, participants receive particularly effective personal and work-related support and the identification of barriers to employment is good. However, very few providers actively involve local employers in delivering jobsearch activities or discussing with employers what they expect from their employees. Jobsearch activities for Workstep participants not placed with employers are improving but, in some cases, participants remain in the jobsearch phase for too long.

473 Under arrangements introduced this year, Jobcentre Plus conducts an initial assessment of literacy and numeracy skills and those identified as in need of further support are directed to an appropriate local course before joining the New Deal programme. However, not all providers take account of the varying levels of participants' skills in literacy and numeracy when planning and delivering jobsearch and other workshop activities. In Workstep, identifying and supporting participants' literacy and numeracy skills are now given a far greater priority, with improvements in initial screening and the use of diagnostic assessments. The best providers link an individual's literacy and numeracy development very closely to specific employment skills and the particular work role the participant will or might play with an employer.

474 Too few New Deal providers offer work experience to participants. By contrast, in Workstep, better partnership working with employers is improving access to opportunities in the local job market and work placements. Employers often become directly involved in the programme, for example conducting real or practice interviews with participants, or telling participants what employers expect of employees.

Skills for working lives continued

475 Workstep employment officers offer effective support by working alongside participants when they start a new job or placement, or when changes are made to job content. They identify and help employers source adapted equipment such as voice software and Braille switchboard equipment. However, too many Workstep participants are set targets for development that they do not fully understand, or which are not measurable. The best providers work closely with host employers to agree and monitor the milestones necessary to achieve progress, either by using many short reviews or frequent informal contacts with individual participants and supervisors.

476 Overall, rates of progression into jobs are too low. There has been some improvement on last year's figure of 20%, with most New Deal prime contractors now achieving local targets of 35–40% progression into employment. Programme centres often struggle to achieve this level of outcome. In contrast, Employment Zones achieve higher rates of job entry at around 50%, and good rates of retention.

477 In Workstep, progression into unsupported employment is still slow in too many cases. Providers are identifying participants who are ready for unsupported employment in a more systematic and structured way and customising the support they need to enable this to happen. However, participants are not completing the final stage into unsupported employment, often because providers are reluctant to put pressure on them to take the final step. As not enough participants progress to open employment, many providers have few vacancies on the programme for new participants.

The best providers work closely with host employers to agree and monitor the milestones necessary to achieve progress.

Family learning and extended services in schools and children's centres

Key messages

- ✦ Family learning produces real benefits for parents and children from disadvantaged groups, and should be promoted more strongly. Opportunities to work with parents pays dividends in terms of children's learning.
- ✦ Providers funded through the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities programme should work with employers to identify skills needs in their area, matching these with progression routes and monitoring actual progression to further training or employment.

478 The provision of family learning, partly funded through adult and community learning and often available as part of extended services in schools and children's centres, can be effective in supporting adults into employment. Evidence from inspections and from a recent Ofsted survey of extended services in schools and children's centres found that children and adults in the settings visited had heightened aspirations and developed more positive attitudes to learning (see vii, p.120). The self-assurance gained from attending sessions helped parents to feel more confident about approaching staff to talk about their children and also to take further accredited courses to prepare for employment. Some parents progressed from participating in activities at the school or children's centre their children attended to becoming volunteers in the settings or with community groups. They developed skills in preparation for wider work opportunities and some moved on to further vocational training or paid employment.

479 Many settings provided good opportunities, particularly for women, to develop the necessary confidence and skills either to take up employment for the first time or to return to work. Some settings ran very successful sessions just for fathers in order to overcome concerns or embarrassment about joining female-dominated groups. However, there remained a need for more active recruitment from under-represented groups. Jobcentre Plus, working from the children's centres, played a key role in helping to raise parents' aspirations before they decided on a career path,

while local colleges provided a range of opportunities for progression. Support for parents was less well developed in the schools in the survey than in the children's centres, which saw work with parents as integral to their work with children.

480 Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC), introduced in 2002, is a strand of the Learning and Skills Council's funding for providers of adult and community learning. The fund is designed to support the development and delivery of learning opportunities for people living in targeted neighbourhoods, and to build the capacity of voluntary and community organisations to undertake this work. Recently revised guidance has required a stronger focus on employability as a main outcome. A survey of this work found that much of the provision was successful in preparing individual learners for further training, employment, or both, but definitions of skills for jobs differed widely amongst providers and there was little sense of the overall impact of such work (see xxxii, p.120). The provision of suitable progression routes and evidence of actual progression to further training and/or employment beyond the NLDC provider itself remained a challenge for many providers.

481 Much NLDC work promoted pre-vocational and vocational skills well. Taken in its broadest sense, involvement in and commitment to a project helped learners to develop the 'softer' skills, such as self-confidence, interpersonal skills and reliability that are essential for successful and sustained engagement in work. Some providers worked in a more targeted way with employers or used employment-related data to identify the need for specific skills in their local area. For example, work with new employers moving into one area had led to the development of pre-recruitment courses to help prepare potential employees to apply for jobs and cope successfully with interviews. Many of the course participants had been successful in gaining jobs.

482 The following case study from an NLDC-funded project illustrates pre-employment outcomes; the value of information, advice and guidance; and entry to paid or unpaid employment.

Case study: Alternatives (Lighthouse Project)

Alternatives (Lighthouse Project) is a voluntary sector training provider in Knowsley that specialises in work with ex-offenders and people recovering from alcohol and substance misuse. They provide learning activities in skills for life, hospitality and catering, furniture making, information technology, hair and beauty, and metalwork. One particularly successful aspect of their work is the Alleygates Project, which teaches welding and fabrication skills in the production of security gates for the ends of alleys. The use of these gates has reduced the incidence of break-ins from the back of buildings significantly. In hospitality, participants learn how to cook balanced meals economically using fresh ingredients. In hair and beauty, participants learn about personal presentation skills to help them take a pride in their appearance that will benefit them when they are ready to apply for work. Woodwork participants make furniture of a very good standard that they use to furnish their homes as their lives become more settled.

A key aspect of the project is the degree of structure and support provided to reshape the lives of people with previously chaotic lifestyles. The core of this is a commitment to attendance and respect for themselves and others. Participants sit down together in a social environment to eat the freshly cooked, well balanced meals produced in hospitality. Many would not previously always have had the money or inclination to eat properly. This structure provides sound routines and self-discipline for people with life experiences shaped by institutions or self-neglect. One participant had been a heavy drug user for many years. The high level of commitment and concentrated activity required to attend the project and complete qualifications had helped him to give up the habit. The project had promoted a change in lifestyle to one with a positive future and had helped the participant restore good relationships in family life.

Skills for working lives continued

Resettlement: learning and skills in prisons

Key messages

- ✦ Prison managers are becoming more aware of the benefits of good liaison with outside organisations and employers as part of their planning for resettlement.
- ✦ Some prisons are effective in identifying skills shortages in areas where learners are due for release, and learning and skills development focuses on increasing employability skills to meet the needs of employers.
- ✦ Often, the range of training and work activities provided in a prison is extensive but not all activities are available to all offenders. Too much workshop activity contributes little to developing offenders' employability skills.

In the better prisons, all offenders new to the prison have a one-to-one interview with a trained adviser, and learners and staff work effectively together to identify needs.

483 Many training programmes help offenders to develop generic employment skills such as team-working, problem-solving, time-keeping and maintaining appropriate standards of work. Learners develop good occupational skills and they are able to complete a wide range of different practical techniques to a good commercial standard. For example, one prison runs a programme for chefs in partnership with an international hotel chain to help learners gain employment on release; training in catering is provided, along with employability training such as interview techniques. Learners on this course can apply for jobs with the hotel chain.

484 The use of workshops to provide only unskilled assembly and packing work persists. Some workshops help prisoners to develop good commercial skills but offer no qualifications. More prisons are applying for accreditation for this work but too much workshop activity continues to contribute little towards offenders gaining an appropriate range of employability skills in preparation for their release.

485 In the better prisons, all offenders new to the prison have a one-to-one interview with a trained adviser, and learners and staff work effectively together to identify needs. But there are still examples where services providing information, advice and guidance for resettlement and support for employment are very weak. In some cases there are no links with external support or jobsearch agencies. Guidance is available only at induction, and offenders have few opportunities to discuss and plan suitable learning and resettlement strategies for their time in custody and beyond.

486 Generally, arrangements to support offenders' literacy and numeracy needs are at least satisfactory. Managers have introduced effective measures to expand literacy and numeracy support into all areas of prisons, including work areas, workshops and the residential wings. This has widened participation and engaged learners who otherwise would not attend classes. Too many prisons are still failing adequately to identify and meet offenders' additional support needs, such as dyslexia.

Conclusion

487 Overall, the quality of provision in the learning and skills sector is improving. Increasing numbers of young people and adults are completing their programmes successfully. However, a number of the impediments to progress identified in the 2006/07 Annual Report feature again this year. Given the importance of raising the skills level of the nation and ensuring the workforce is effectively supported in meeting the challenges of changing economic circumstances and a more volatile labour market, inspections will continue to report on the full range of government-funded provision of education and training. Particular attention will be paid to several issues central to improving skills for working lives:

- ✦ revisions to the 14–19 curriculum and its impact on improving the participation of, and outcomes for, young people
- ✦ the further expansion of provision to support the skills development of those moving into employment and those currently employed, working more closely with employers, particularly those with little recent experience in training
- ✦ ensuring learners in all settings receive appropriate support to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy
- ✦ the provision of high quality advice and guidance so that young people and adults can make informed choices about the most appropriate education and training to support their personal and professional development at all stages of their working lives.



Given the importance of raising the skills level of the nation and ensuring the workforce is effectively supported in meeting the challenges of changing economic circumstances and a more volatile labour market, inspections will continue to report on the full range of government-funded provision of education and training.

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Annex 1. Definitions

Table 1. Inspection frameworks

Type of inspection	Framework	Effective since	Legislation
Childcare and nursery education in registered childcare provision	Inspecting outcomes: inspections of childcare and, where applicable, funded nursery education in registered provision	April 2005	Section 79 of the Children Act 1989 as inserted by the Care Standards Act 2000 and as further amended by the Children Act 2004 and the Education Act 2005; and section 122 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by the Education Act 2005
Maintained schools	Every Child Matters: framework for inspection of schools in England	September 2005	Section 5 of the Education Act 2005
Independent schools	The framework for inspecting independent schools	September 2003	Section 162(a) of the Education Act as amended by the Education Act 2005
Post-16 education and training (FE colleges, independent specialist colleges, work-based learning, adult and community learning, nextstep, learndirect, Department for Work and Pensions employment programmes)	Common inspection framework for inspecting education and training	April 2005	The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (123–126) Employment and Training Act 1973
Initial teacher education	Framework for the inspection of initial training for the award of qualified teacher status 2005–11	September 2005	Section 18A of the Education Act 1994 as inserted by the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998
Children's social care	Inspecting for better lives – delivering change is the Commission for Social Care Inspection framework, adapted by Ofsted for inspections of social care provision	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

Type of inspection	Framework	Effective since	Legislation
Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass)	Framework for inspection of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) 2007	April 2007	Sections 143–145 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
Local authority children's services	Every Child Matters: framework for the inspection of children's services	September 2005	Sections 20–24 of the Children Act 2004

Inspection judgements

Inspectors make judgements about pupils'/students' achievements and the quality of provision 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 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 2.

Table 2. 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

Annex 1. Definitions continued

Ofsted’s powers to investigate complaints about schools

The Education Act 2005, as amended, gives Ofsted powers to consider whether to investigate certain complaints, known as qualifying complaints, made about maintained schools in England. Ofsted may investigate qualifying complaints made by any person.

To qualify, a complaint must relate to whole school rather than individual issues, such as when:

- ✘ the school is not providing a good enough education
- ✘ the pupils are not achieving as much as they should, or their needs are not being met
- ✘ the school is not well led and managed, or is not using its resources efficiently
- ✘ the pupils’ personal development and well-being are being neglected.

However, 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 whole school concerns
- ✘ 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

Joint area reviews

Ofsted undertakes joint area reviews in partnership with the following inspectorates:

- ✘ the Audit Commission
- ✘ the Healthcare Commission
- ✘ HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
- ✘ HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
- ✘ HM Inspectorate of Prisons
- ✘ HM Inspectorate of Probation.

Inspectors carrying out joint area reviews make judgements on the basis of a common grading scale, set out in Table 3.

Table 3. Common grading scale for joint area reviews

Grade	Descriptor
Grade 4: Outstanding	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for children and young people, is innovative and cost-effective, and fully contributes to raising expectations and the achievement of wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 3: Good	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for children and young people, has some innovative practice and is increasingly cost-effective while making contributions to wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 2: Adequate	A service that delivers minimum requirements for children and young people, but is not demonstrably cost-effective nor contributes significantly to wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 1: Inadequate	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for children and young people, is not cost-effective and makes little or no contribution to wider outcomes for the community.

Annex 2. Inspection evidence

Table 4. Number of inspections⁷²

	Period covered	Number of inspections
Childcare and nursery education		
Day care	July 2007 to August 2008	11,000
Childminders ⁷³	July 2007 to August 2008	20,000
Total		31,000
Maintained schools and pupil referral units		
Nursery schools	September 2007 to July 2008	137
Primary schools	September 2007 to July 2008	6,075
Secondary schools without sixth forms	September 2007 to July 2008	546
Secondary schools with sixth forms ⁷⁴	September 2007 to July 2008	608 ⁷⁵
Academies	September 2007 to July 2008	10
Special schools ⁷⁶	September 2007 to July 2008	352
Pupil referral units	September 2007 to July 2008	138
Total		7,866
Non-association independent schools		
S162A inspections ⁷⁷	September 2007 to August 2008	433
School registration visits	September 2007 to August 2008	124 ⁷⁸
Material change visits	September 2007 to August 2008	16
Emergency visits ⁷⁹	September 2007 to August 2008	72
Total		645
Colleges of further education		
General further education colleges, tertiary colleges, specialist further education colleges and the further education provision in higher education institutions	September 2007 to June 2008	80 ⁸⁰
Sixth form colleges	September 2007 to June 2008	33

⁷² These were the inspections for which Ofsted held data in September 2008.

⁷³ Excludes the inspections of approximately 2,000 childminders that were deemed to have no children on roll at the time of inspection.

⁷⁴ Includes city technology colleges.

⁷⁵ Includes one school that has had a reinspection.

⁷⁶ Includes 28 section 5 inspections of non-maintained special schools.

⁷⁷ These are full inspections of independent schools carried out under the S162a framework.

⁷⁸ Nine schools were visited twice so in total 115 schools had registration visits.

⁷⁹ Emergency visits cover announced and unannounced visits, as well as visits to follow up S162 concerns.

⁸⁰ Includes seven full reinspections of general further education colleges.

Annex 2. Inspection evidence continued

Table 4. Number of inspections continued

	Period covered	Number of inspections
Independent specialist colleges	September 2007 to June 2008	22 ⁸¹
Dance and drama schools	September 2007 to June 2008	15
Total		150
Adult learning⁸²		
Work-based learning (including Train to Gain)	July 2007 to August 2008	257
Adult and community learning providers	July 2007 to August 2008	49
New Deal (prime contractors), Programme Centres and Employment Zones	July 2007 to August 2008	49
Workstep	July 2007 to August 2008	38
learndirect	July 2007 to August 2008	59
nextstep	July 2007 to August 2008	14
Reinspections ⁸³	July 2007 to August 2008	14
Total		480
Children's social care		
Adoption support agencies	July 2007 to August 2008	1
Boarding schools (care only)	July 2007 to August 2008	187
Children's homes ⁸⁴	July 2007 to August 2008	3,874
Further education colleges (care only)	July 2007 to August 2008	19
Independent fostering agencies	July 2007 to August 2008	233
Local authority adoption service	July 2007 to August 2008	49
Local authority fostering service	July 2007 to August 2008	127
Private fostering arrangements	July 2007 to August 2008	59
Residential family centres	July 2007 to August 2008	34
Residential special schools	July 2007 to August 2008	207
Voluntary adoption agencies	July 2007 to August 2008	11
Total		4,801

126 ⁸¹ Includes four full reinspections of independent specialist colleges.

⁸² During the period July 2007 to August 2008, there were 23 'multi-remit' inspections of providers where more than one type of provision was inspected on the same occasion. The overall effectiveness of each component was separately graded and the data are included in this report in the relevant type of provision table.

⁸³ These are full reinspections of adult learning providers found inadequate at their previous inspections.

⁸⁴ Children's homes registered at the start of the inspection cycle will have received at least two inspections during the year.

Table 4. Number of inspections continued

	Period covered	Number of inspections
Education and training for children and young people in secure settings⁸⁵		
Secure children's homes	July 2007 to August 2008	7
Secure training centres	July 2007 to August 2008	6 ⁸⁶
Total		13
Care for children and young people in secure settings		
Secure children's homes	July 2007 to August 2008	18
Secure training centres	July 2007 to August 2008	9 ⁸⁷
Total		27
Offender learning and skills		
Juvenile establishments ⁸⁸	July 2007 to August 2008	2
Prisons (adult and young offender) ⁸⁹	July 2007 to August 2008	35 ⁹⁰
Probation offender management ⁹¹	July 2007 to August 2008	13
Youth offending teams ⁹²	July 2007 to August 2008	44
Total		94
Other inspections		
Joint area reviews of children's services in local authorities	September 2007 to May 2008	44
Initial teacher education	September 2007 to July 2008	87
Inspection of service provision by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) to children and families	June and July 2007 November and December 2007 February 2008	East Midlands South East South Yorkshire ⁹³

⁸⁵ Education and training inspections took place as part of the care inspections for secure settings providers.

⁸⁶ Total number of inspections includes four key (full) inspections, one random (interim) inspection and one monitoring visit.

⁸⁷ Total number of inspections includes four key (full) inspections, four random (interim) inspections and one monitoring visit.

^{88,89} Jointly inspected in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

⁹⁰ Includes the full reinspections of six prisons.

^{91,92} Jointly inspected in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.

⁹³ This was a thematic inspection which looked at the experience of Cafcass service users in family courts in South Yorkshire.

Annex 3. Other analyses

Inspection results by school phase^{94, 95}

Table 5. Primary schools

Aspects of the school	Percentage of schools ⁹⁶			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness				
How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	13	50	33	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	30	58	11	0
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	15	64	20	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	17	57	25	2
Achievement and standards				
How well do learners achieve?	13	50	33	4
The standards reached by learners ⁹⁷	10	38	47	6
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	13	50	33	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	14	55	28	3
Personal development and well-being				
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	35	55	10	0
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	34	56	10	0
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	36	57	7	0
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	33	59	7	0
How well learners enjoy their education	41	52	7	0
The attendance of learners	11	44	43	2
The behaviour of learners	37	56	7	0

128 ⁹⁴ Main inspection judgements include all section 5 inspections – both standard inspections and reduced tariff inspections.

⁹⁵ These are inspections for the full 2007/08 academic year.

⁹⁶ Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

⁹⁷ Grade 1 – Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 – Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 – Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 – Exceptionally low.

Table 5. Primary schools continued

Aspects of the school	Percentage of schools ⁹⁸			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	35	53	11	0
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	20	44	33	3
The quality of provision				
How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	12	52	34	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	19	50	30	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	28	48	23	1
Leadership and management				
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	15	52	31	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	19	50	29	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	16	50	31	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	17	54	26	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	17	49	31	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	14	51	31	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	13	53	32	2

⁹⁸ Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Annex 3. Other analyses continued

Table 6. Secondary schools⁹⁹

Aspects of the school	Percentage of schools ¹⁰⁰			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness				
How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	17	40	34	9
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	36	51	13	0
The effectiveness of boarding provision	75	25	0	0
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	23	52	22	3
Achievement and standards				
How well do learners achieve?	15	41	35	8
The standards reached by learners ¹⁰¹	14	28	49	9
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	15	42	35	8
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	17	44	33	6
Personal development and well-being				
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	29	48	22	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	27	49	23	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	27	57	16	0
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	27	56	17	1
How well learners enjoy their education	29	49	22	1
The attendance of learners	16	36	41	6
The behaviour of learners	23	49	26	2

130 ⁹⁹ Includes academies and city technology colleges.

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

¹⁰¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Table 6. Secondary schools continued

Aspects of the school	Percentage of schools ¹⁰²			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Personal development and well-being				
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	35	48	17	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	23	42	30	5
The quality of provision				
How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	10	48	37	5
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	24	50	25	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	30	46	22	1
Leadership and management				
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	20	46	30	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	23	44	29	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	20	43	32	5
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	22	48	26	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	22	42	31	5
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	20	41	31	8
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	20	48	29	3

¹⁰² Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Annex 3. Other analyses continued

Table 7. Special schools

Aspects of the school	Percentage of schools ¹⁰³			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness				
How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	26	54	18	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	55	38	6	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	44	46	8	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	38	55	8	0
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	28	54	16	2
Achievement and standards				
How well do learners achieve?	23	58	18	2
The standards reached by learners ¹⁰⁴	0	0	13	87
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	23	57	18	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	23	57	18	2
Personal development and well-being				
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	57	36	6	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	55	37	7	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	56	37	7	0
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	50	41	7	2
How well learners enjoy their education	62	31	5	1
The attendance of learners	16	62	18	3
The behaviour of learners	49	42	8	1

132 ¹⁰³ Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

¹⁰⁴ Grade 1 – Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 – Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 – Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 – Exceptionally low.

Table 7. Special schools continued

Aspects of the school	Percentage of schools ¹⁰⁵			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	53	38	9	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	41	45	13	1
The quality of provision				
How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	21	59	18	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	33	50	16	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	51	38	10	2
Leadership and management				
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	27	54	17	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	34	47	16	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	27	45	25	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	26	54	18	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	35	48	15	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	29	54	15	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	22	51	24	3

¹⁰⁵ Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Annex 3. Other analyses continued

Schools causing concern

Table 8. Numbers and proportions of schools in different categories of concern at 31 August 2008

		Primary		Secondary		Special		PRU		Total	
		06/07	07/08	06/07	07/08	06/07	07/08	06/07	07/08	06/07	07/08
Special measures	No.	181	157	47	50	9	14	9	12	246	233
	%	1.0	0.9	1.4	1.5	0.8	1.3	2.0	2.6	1.1	1.1
Notice to improve	No.	203	168	86	70	7	2	9 ¹⁰⁶	1	305 ¹⁰⁷	241
	%	1.2	1.0	2.5	2.1	0.6	0.2	2.0 ¹⁰⁸	0.2	1.4	1.1

Table 9. Numbers of schools placed in, and removed from, each of the categories of concern in inspections in 2007/08, and those that closed while in these categories at 31 August 2008

		Primary		Secondary		Special		PRU		Total	
		06/07	07/08	06/07	07/08	06/07	07/08	06/07	07/08	06/07	07/08
Special measures	In	137	102	30	34	11	7	7	8	185	151
	Out	83	120	35	27	6	2	6	3	130	152
	Closed (while in SM)	10	5	2	4	2	0	3	2	17	11
Notice to improve	In	175	153	76	68	5	1	9	2	265	224
	Out	179	183	87	74	1	6	9	8	276	271
	Closed (while in Ntl)	1	4	6	5	0	0	0	2	7	11

Annex 4. Glossary

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
Childcare and early learning	
Ofsted registers the following types of childcare:	
Childminding	This is provision that takes place on domestic premises for a total period, or periods, of more than two hours a day, excluding the hours of 18.00 to 02.00.
Crèches	Crèches provide occasional care on particular premises for more than two hours a day, on more than five days a year, for example when parents are shopping or attending a conference.
Full day care	Provision of care for a continuous period of four hours or more.
Sessional day care	Provision for children attending part time for no more than five sessions a week, each session being no more than four hours in any day.
Multiple day care	Provision of more than one type of day care on the premises.
Out-of-school care	Provision for children aged three and over, operating before and after school or during the school holidays.
Other terms used in the childcare and early education section of this report	
Early education	In this report, early education refers specifically and only to publicly funded early education. Ofsted inspects all settings in receipt of public funding to deliver free early years education for children aged three and four. These settings are required to deliver the Foundation Stage curriculum, which focuses on the distinct needs of children aged three until the end of the reception year of primary school.
Six areas of learning	<p>The Foundation Stage curriculum in operation in the period covered by this report was organised into the following six areas of learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✘ personal, social and emotional development ✘ communication, language and literacy ✘ mathematical development ✘ development of knowledge and understanding of the world ✘ physical development ✘ creative development. <p>The early learning goals set out the expectations of what most children will achieve by the end of the Foundation Stage.</p>

Annex 4. Glossary continued

Term	Definition or explanation
Every Child Matters	<p>The Children Act 2004 identifies the following outcomes in relation to improving children's well-being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ physical and mental health and emotional well-being ✧ protection from harm and neglect ✧ education, training and recreation ✧ the contribution made by them to society ✧ social and economic well-being.
Registration of providers	<p>The Childcare Act 2006 sets out the arrangements for two registers held by Ofsted. The Early Years Register is for those who are required to register to provide care for children aged from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. The Childcare Register has two parts: a compulsory part for those who are required to register to provide care for children from the 1 September following their fifth birthday until they reach their eighth birthday; and a voluntary part that people may choose to join if they provide care for which compulsory registration is not required, for example nannies and short-term care such as crèches; or those that provide care for children aged eight to the age of 18.</p>
Maintained schools	
Categories of concern	<p>There are two Ofsted categories of concern: (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.</p>
Core subjects	<p>The three core subjects of the National Curriculum are English, mathematics and science.</p>
Every Child Matters	<p>See above.</p>
Key Stages	<p>These are the five stages of the maintained school curriculum between the ages of three and 16 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Foundation Stage: 3–5 years ✧ Key Stage 1: 5–7 years ✧ Key Stage 2: 7–11 years ✧ Key Stage 3: 11–14 years ✧ Key Stage 4: 14–16 years.

Term	Definition or explanation
Pupil referral unit (PRU)	Pupil referral units provide education to children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, exclusion or otherwise, are unable to attend a mainstream or special school.
Youth justice system	
Youth offending teams (YOTs)	The youth justice system aims to prevent offending by children and young people aged between 10 and 17 years. Youth offending teams work in coordinated ways at a local level to achieve that aim.
National qualification levels	
Explanation of national qualification levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Level 1 includes qualifications at level 1 and level 'E' (entry level), such as NVQs, foundation GNVQs and other foundation or pre-foundation qualifications. ✦ 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. ✦ 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.
Adult 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 courses for those who have not participated in learning for some years and courses leading to qualifications, especially those that contribute to level 2 qualification targets.
Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships are work-based learning programmes for young people below the age of 25. 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.
Employment Zones	Employment Zones, located in areas of high deprivation and need, receive more funding than New Deal programmes, and provide particularly intensive support.

Annex 4. Glossary continued

Term	Definition or explanation
learndirect	learndirect provides flexible online courses and qualifications that can be taken from home, work or through local centres and university partners (www.learndirect.co.uk/aboutlearndirect).
New Deal	These programmes, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, are designed to help people improve their employability skills and find work. There are one or more prime contractors in each region, which receive funding and distribute it among a variety of subcontractors.
nextstep	nextstep is the national information, advice and guidance service for adults. There is one main nextstep contractor in each of the local Learning and Skills Council areas. 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.
Prime contractors	Prime contractors receive funding from the Department for Work and Pensions to offer employability training; they allocate this to a range of subcontractors, according to local need.
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.
Ufi	Ufi (University for Industry) was established in 1998 and set up learndirect, the e-learning network, to support the skills development and employability of the working population.
Workstep	This is provision for learners with a disability and/or learning difficulty. 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.

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ID5925677 11/08

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