

This document is a distillation of the Introduction to HMCI's annual report on Schools, one of the four parts of his annual report, which are published as separate documents. Each of the documents can be downloaded in full from the Ofsted website. The language of the report has been retained, but with some shortening shown by .....

### Introduction: Schools are getting better (pages 4-7)

- Schools in England have improved considerably over the last decade, with some areas such as Inner London witnessing a dramatic improvement as a result of London Challenge. Seventy per cent of all schools are now good or better compared with 64% five years ago.** The overall picture is one of largely effective schools with committed and competent leadership.....
- Standards are rising steadily.** There is a much stronger focus on the attainment and progress of children and young people. Assessment of pupils' progress is highly refined in many schools, informing planning and prompting intervention if pupils' progress falters.....
- Inadequate schools are being transformed successfully.** Schools usually improve rapidly after an inadequate inspection judgement. Support now commonly comes from other schools, as well as local authorities, academy sponsors and chains and other avenues. Ofsted has raised the bar for inspections and has replaced the 'satisfactory' judgement with 'requires improvement'.
- Some schools achieve very well despite challenging circumstances.** These schools refuse to let perceptions of disadvantage or the social or cultural background of pupils and their families reduce in any way their aspirations for these children and expectations of what they can achieve. Such schools provide a powerful example of what can and should be done in disadvantaged communities, but there are not enough of them. In addition, some of these schools are succeeding despite poor local political leadership.....
- Sponsor-led academies can make a positive difference, especially where they are part of a well-managed group or chain of schools.** Of the sponsor-led academies inspected by 31 August 2012, 25% of those in chains were judged outstanding, compared with 8% not in chains. Converter academies have yet to make the most of their freedoms and contribute significantly to the system. It is important that these good and outstanding converter academies do more to support and improve other schools and the system as a whole.

### Grounds for optimism

- A growing number of the most effective school leaders are impressively committed to the improvement of schools beyond their own.** The policies of identifying system leaders, national support schools and teaching schools, together with the opportunities provided by structural reforms, have generated an important force for improvement. However, there is still not enough local authority drive – and in some cases there is active resistance – to make use of good leadership, stronger schools and academy chains to improve weaker schools and improve local provision.
- School management is generally efficient and instructional leadership is improving.** Schools are generally well-managed places in terms of their organisation and arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment, the well-being, behaviour and safety of pupils, and the leadership, support and professional

development of staff. Governors have a greater role to play in this respect. Effective leadership of teaching is a feature of better schools, and Ofsted's new inspection framework prioritises this aspect of leadership.....

- The elements of effective teaching are understood more fully and newly qualified teachers arrive as more effective teachers. Test and examination outcomes have improved. Pupils benefit from support from a wider range of adults. Behaviour has improved and schools are now much better at helping pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. ....

### The main challenges

- There are too many schools judged satisfactory and that require improvement.** Over two million children – 31% of the school age range – attend schools that fall short of being good or outstanding. While some of these schools are inadequate, most are not; they are just not good enough. Ofsted's new framework will focus more attention and support on these schools, and we expect that their numbers will fall over the coming years.
- More needs to be done to reduce attainment gaps.** The gulf between the average attainment of most pupils and those from the least prosperous backgrounds is narrowing slightly in primary schools but has remained constant in secondary schools. The biggest worry is those schools in which disadvantaged pupils form a relatively small minority of the population..... The pupil premium needs to be used particularly well in these schools, and Ofsted will pay particular attention to this issue.
- There is marked inequality of access to a good school across the country.....** [This paragraph identifies those authorities that are weakest.] Although local authorities react quickly when a school is judged inadequate, not all use the levers available to them at an earlier stage, such as the issue of warning notices. ...
- Looking at a child's experience from the ages of four to 16, some local areas deliver poor provision across both primary and secondary phases of education, severely damaging the life chances of their young people.** For example, 13 local authorities are in the bottom 25% for both primary and secondary school inspection results. By contrast, 14 local authorities are in the top 25% for both primary and secondary school inspection results.

### Changes to inspection and the work of Ofsted

- Ofsted's role is changing.** A new framework was issued in January 2012 that raised expectations of schools and required inspectors to focus more intensively on the quality of teaching and learning. Ofsted's plans for the future are designed to help the system meet the challenges identified above. From September, the judgement that a school 'requires improvement' replaces 'satisfactory'. In addition, the

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