

## **CURRENT Ofsted PROCESSES – ENGLAND**

(July 2006)

### **Context**

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) is a non-ministerial government department that inspects education facilities throughout England. The office was established in 1993 with the major tasks of overseeing and improving the quality of education provision and to confirm that schools conform to the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Ofsted is also required to provide independent advice to the United Kingdom government and parliament on matters of policy and to publish an annual report to parliament on the quality of educational provision in England.

Ofsted introduced new and amended processes in September 2005 following the release of the Government's Green Paper in 2003 called *Every Child Matters*, the 2004 *A New Relationship with Schools* (NRwS) document and subsequent NRwS publications and the *Ofsted Strategic Plan 2005-2008*. Ofsted's role was subsequently supported in the Government's October 2005 White Paper, *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All*. School inspections are required by law and are carried out under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The total Ofsted budget for 2005/2006 was £221m with the education directorate accounting for £74.6m. Ofsted has set a target for cost savings that will deliver a 20% reduction in the annual budget by the end of March 2008.

In England in 2005, there were 23 054 primary, secondary, nursery and special schools; and pupil referral units. In the autumn term of 2005 over 2000 schools were inspected. Over 6000 inspections were planned in maintained schools for 2005/06.

### **Principles**

Ofsted follows an inspectorial model. It is responsible for inspecting the standards and regulations covering childcare, schools, colleges, children's services, local education authorities, teacher training and youth work. It has no statutory authority over independent schools that are members of the Independent Schools Council (ISC), which undertakes its own inspections.

In Ofsted's view independent inspection is seen to be at the heart of the government's drive for high quality public services. It is also considered to be about ensuring that the users and providers of public services have the information they need.

The NRwS Schools documents jointly developed by Ofsted and the DfES (Department for Education and Skills) describe the importance of, and new requirements relating to, school self-evaluation, improvement planning and the introduction of nationally accredited School Improvement Partners.

*Higher Standards, Better Schools For All* aims to ensure that 'every school delivers an excellent education, that every child achieves to their potential and that the system as a whole is increasingly driven by parents and by choice.'

### **Cycle**

The school inspection occurs every three years. A school usually receives two days notice of the inspection. However, if an inspector is concerned about the safety or well being of students in a school, the right to inspect a school without notice will be exercised. Independent schools that are not members of the ISC are on a six-year cycle.

## **Key Documentation/ Websites**

HM Government. (2005). Higher Standards, Better Schools for All - More choice for parents and pupils. London, Department for Education and Skills.  
(<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/schoolswhitepaper/index.shtml>)

Ofsted Strategic Plan 2005 to 2008, December 2004

Ofsted Business Plan for 2005-06, June 2005.

Ofsted Departmental Report 2005-06, May 2006.

Ofsted and DfES. (2004). A New Relationship with Schools, June 2004

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>

Information in this summary has primarily been obtained from the DfES and Ofsted websites.

For further information on Ofsted refer to the detailed papers available on this website.

## **Inspections**

A school inspection is a process of evidence gathering in order to provide an assessment of how well a school is performing. Inspections are short and focused, and dialogue with senior managers in the school plays a central part. The school's self evaluation provides the starting point for inspectors and account is taken of the views of students, parents and other stakeholders.

Schools are required to complete a School Evaluation Form (SEF) on a continuous basis online. SEFs are available for primary, secondary and special schools (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/schools/sef.cfm>). The SEF requires schools to be aware of strengths and areas for development, and to then implement improvement strategies for the identified areas.

Schools are required to notify parents of the inspection and to include details in the communication of how they may inform inspectors of their views. A brief questionnaire for parents is included in the correspondence.

The size of the inspection team varies, depending on the size of the school, from one to five inspectors. The inspection team spends no longer than two days in the school.

Inspectors use the school's SEF, the School's Performance and Assessment (PANDA) report and the report from the previous inspection to prepare a pre-inspection briefing about the school. The school's SEF is used as the basis for discussions with the school's senior team and school governors.

The inspection is governed by frameworks which outline the principles of the inspection and handbooks which give detailed guidance to inspectors on how to conduct an inspection.

Inspectors report on:

- Description of the school
- Overall effectiveness of the school (including what it needs to do to improve further)
- Achievement and standards (including personal development and wellbeing)
- Quality provision (teaching and learning, curriculum and other activities and care, guidance and support)
- Leadership and management
- The extent to which providers enable learners to be healthy, providers ensure that learners stay safe and learners make a positive contribution

Schools are judged on a 4 point rating scale:

<b>Descriptor</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Outstanding	1
Good	2
Satisfactory	3
Inadequate	4

If a school's overall effectiveness is judged inadequate inspectors must decide whether it requires special measures or a notice to improve.

Schools require special measures when they are failing to give learners an acceptable standard of education, and when the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Schools receive a notice to improve if it is determined they are performing significantly less well than they might reasonably be expected to. A school which is currently failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, but has demonstrated the capacity to improve, will also be in this category.

The school inspection report is published on the Ofsted website. The governing body must send a copy of the report to all parents and carers of students in the school within five working days. A copy of the report must also be made available upon request to members of the public.

Following the inspection and receipt of the report an online questionnaire is available for head teachers, governors and staff. Completing the survey contributes to the evaluation and improvement of inspections. Schools may access a complaints procedure if they are unable to resolve any concerns with the lead inspector.

### **PANDA, PAT and RAISEonline**

PANDA reports are provided annually to schools by Ofsted to assist with self-evaluation, target setting and the development of plans to raise standards. The report gives an overview of each school's performance in relation to other schools using data from DfES, Ofsted and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). There are different types of PANDA reports for primary, secondary and special schools. Throughout the PANDA, school performance is shown in comparison with national averages and pupil progress is shown using contextual value added measures. The PANDA report is confidential and not made publicly available by Ofsted.

The Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT) software has been made available to all schools since October 2003. The PAT is a tool to support assessment for learning which enables teachers to analyse performance data. It is also considered useful for target setting. PAT enables schools to look back at their own performance results and compare them to the results of students in other schools across the country.

RAISEonline (Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School Self Evaluation) a single source of school data and analysis, is a web based interactive tool developed by Ofsted to replace the PANDA report and the PAT. It will be available to schools from the Autumn term 2006.

RAISEonline provides users with a wide range of analytical information to support the review of performance data in greater depth as part of self-evaluation and target setting. Users will also be able to 'drill down' from the school level performance information to see how individual students have contributed to this performance. It is not mandatory for schools to use this product, however, inspectors will be using the analysis and data in the product to develop their own hypotheses and act as a starting point for discussions with schools. RAISEonline will provide the opportunity to look at contextual value added (CVA) progress to Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.