

Part II

Primary Education (Key Stages 1 and 2)

Standards of Achievement

1 Overall standards of pupils' achievement were satisfactory or better in nearly 70% of the lessons inspected. Standards were higher in Key Stage 1 (75% of lessons judged satisfactory or better) than at Key Stage 2 (67%) and there was some evidence of a dip in performance in years 3 and 4. In about 5% of the schools standards were unsatisfactory or poor in the majority of lessons. In over a third of the schools there was considerable under-achievement. Under-achievement was apparent more often in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1 and particularly among the more able pupils, even where overall standards were average or above.

2 Overall standards of achievement were good in nursery schools and classes and were satisfactory or better in almost 80% of lessons in reception classes.

3 Standards of achievement in English were generally satisfactory, though slightly higher in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. Almost all the schools used a mix of approaches to the teaching of reading which included the teaching of phonic skills. The quality of teaching phonic skills varied widely, however, and this is an aspect of work which requires improvement in many classes where pupils are learning to read. Standards achieved in reading were satisfactory in 80% of the Key Stage 1 classes and most Key Stage 2 classes. Standards of writing were mainly satisfactory, although the development of more advanced writing skills, like the development of more advanced reading skills in the Key Stage 2 classes, was not always undertaken adequately. Standards of both spelling and handwriting were broadly satisfactory but higher for spelling than for handwriting.

4 In mathematics, standards were better in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2 where the range of work was narrower. There was a strong emphasis on computation but there were weaknesses in using and applying mathematics generally. In science, most pupils had a sound grasp of a wide range of scientific knowledge. Standards in observing and recording were generally satisfactory in both Key Stages. In design and technology, the majority of lessons were satisfactory or better although much of the work reflected difficulties schools were having in understanding the statutory Order and was much narrower in scope than the full range of National Curriculum requirements. Standards of achievement in information technology capability were modest. In geography and history the standards achieved in two-thirds of the lessons were satisfactory or better. In physical education (PE) and music the standards in more than three-quarters of the lessons were satisfactory or better. Standards in art were satisfactory in about three-fifths of lessons, although slightly higher in Key

Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. Standards were generally unsatisfactory in religious education (RE); a small but significant minority of schools did not teach the subject at all in any identifiable form.

Quality of Learning

5 In about 70% of the lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2 the quality of the pupils' learning was satisfactory or better (see Annex 2). For under-fives the quality of learning was generally good, particularly in nursery schools and classes.

6 In the majority of lessons the pupils listened carefully, concentrated on the task in hand and were generally interested in their work. The quality and pace of learning were strongly influenced by how well the teaching provided clear instructions, explanations and questions which challenged the pupils to think about and discuss the subject-matter, learn and recall facts, investigate problems and ask questions themselves.

7 Despite some improvements in the overall quality of learning in science, pupils, often the most able, sometimes made limited progress. This in part reflected teachers' lack of knowledge and understanding of aspects of science and in part their inability to develop practical work designed to aid understanding.

Efficiency

8 The majority of the primary schools had efficient procedures for administering and checking expenditure. Increased use of IT had improved efficiency but many administrative tasks were still undertaken inappropriately by senior staff. This limited the time they had available for strategic planning, monitoring and evaluating the quality and standards of work. In over one-third of primary schools the links between the identification of aims for curriculum development and budget costing were weak. Some schools had serious resource deficiencies and yet kept large amounts in contingency funds. Overall, very few of the schools evaluated the effects of their expenditure and whether sufficient value for money was being obtained.

Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

9 All schools acknowledged the importance of spiritual and moral development of their pupils. Most of the non-denominational schools, however, tended to be more concerned with general moral issues and behaviour than with spiritual matters. Social and cultural development were also considered important by all schools, but in some the pupils were not given enough responsibility for aspects of their learning, and in many not enough was done to foster the cultural development of pupils through the content of their normal work.

10 At the level of the school as a whole, behaviour and discipline were very rarely less than satisfactory. There were, however, examples of unsatisfactory behaviour in some individual classrooms and in a few schools. Attendance rates were satisfactory or better in more than 90% of the primary schools, including over 50% where they were good.

Major Contributory Factors

11 The **quality of teaching** was a major factor influencing the standards achieved. It was satisfactory or better in 70% of the lessons, including almost a third where the quality was good or very good (see Annex 2). The quality of teaching was slightly better in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2 classes. In the majority of the schools, the teachers used a broad range of teaching techniques but too often follow-up work was not sufficiently differentiated to cater adequately either for the more or for the least able pupils. The vast majority of schools did not form ability groups across classes, though for some year groups in Key Stage 2 a small number formed sets, usually for mathematics and in some cases English. Many more schools formed ability groups within classes, especially for mathematics and, to a lesser extent, English. In Key Stage 1, the teachers often organised work in different subjects for a number of small groups at the same time. The management of this organisation was often over-complicated and made too many demands on the teacher. It also restricted the opportunity for sustained, targeted teaching.

12 Procedures for **recording pupils' progress and achievements** were improving in individual subjects but few schools had effective overall policies for **assessment, recording and reporting** to ensure consistency. Many teachers in Key Stage 1 were developing considerable experience and expertise in assessing pupils' attainments, although they found it difficult to map pupils' progress against the very large number of National Curriculum statements of attainment. The expertise and knowledge gained by the teachers in Key Stage 1 were often not transferred effectively to those teaching Key Stage 2 pupils. In many schools the actual completion of the assessment process rarely left teachers with sufficient time to use the outcomes of assessment to plan future work and so contribute to the improvement of standards.

13 The vast majority of the primary schools provided a broad curriculum, although not always in every class, but only about 30% provided adequate time for all **National Curriculum subjects and RE**. Most of the teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 devoted at least sufficient time to the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

14 Primary schools found it very difficult to teach the full range of National Curriculum subjects and religious education to an appropriate depth. In most schools there was insufficient systematic monitoring of the work to evaluate curricular strengths and weaknesses and to deal with unsatisfactory standards in the quality of teaching and learning. Topic work remained a very common form of curricular organisation in the vast majority of the schools. Long-established weaknesses in this form of organisation were being addressed in many of the schools through the use of more subject-focused work to help improve standards and to ensure coverage, balance and continuity. More work is being taught more frequently through separate subjects, particularly in Key Stage 2. For pre-Key Stage 1 pupils, many more of the schools were producing programmes of work which were informed, but not wholly determined, by the requirements of the National Curriculum.

15 **School development planning** had improved and was making a positive contribution to the standards, quality and ethos of the school. Many of the primary schools had satisfactory plans, produced after appropriate consultation and discussion. The schools were becoming clearer about their aims, and development planning was frequently geared to meeting these. Managers did not monitor and evaluate the work of their schools closely enough to be able to assess whether or not aims and objectives of these plans were being reached. High standards were associated with good subject co-ordination, although curriculum co-ordinators in the primary schools rarely had enough non-teaching time to carry out their leadership roles effectively.

16 In over 80% of the schools pupils were taught by the same teacher for all subjects, although in a small but growing minority the teacher's subject expertise was deployed over a wider range of classes through the use of specialist teaching or the exchange of classes. These arrangements often proved beneficial. A very small proportion of the schools employed subject-specialist teachers, usually on a part-time basis, and for subjects such as music or for aspects such as special educational needs. The contribution of such teachers was often very effective.

17 Almost all primary schools place their pupils in mixed ability classes and most have one or more mixed-age classes. Given the demands of the National Curriculum and its assessment, it is not surprising that many primary class-teachers find it difficult to provide suitably **differentiated work** to meet the range of abilities in all subjects of the curriculum and to set appropriate expectations when assessing pupils' work.

18 In the classes containing pupils under the age of five, the ratios of pupils to teachers and of children to other adults varied considerably between nursery and non-nursery provision. Where there were more teachers and adults better standards were achieved. **Parents and other adult helpers** generally made a positive contribution to work in the classrooms.

19 Although about half the schools were adequately resourced overall, very few had satisfactory **learning resources** for all subjects. Some schools which had shortages of such resources had sizeable reserves of money. In particular, there were shortages of equipment for technology and there remained a need for better-quality and greater numbers of books for English and history. These shortages adversely affected the standards achieved. Resources for information technology had increased and were generally satisfactory in the majority of the schools. Resources for learning were good in nursery schools and generally satisfactory in other forms of provision for children under the age of five.

Issues

20 The implementation of the **National Curriculum** in primary schools has led to a steady improvement in planning, a better focus on the knowledge, skills and understanding to be taught and a more secure place in the curriculum for science, technology, history and geography. These are considerable gains. The National Curriculum and its assessment does, however, present primary schools with some **formidable problems of managing, teaching and assessing all that is required** in each of the core and other foundation subjects while finding room for other important curricular matters. This year, testing at the end of Key Stage 1 was incorporated more easily into normal school and classroom activities and the slimmed-down tasks were more manageable. Nevertheless, the totality of the National Curriculum assessment arrangements has meant that class teachers have been particularly hard-pressed.

21 The issue of an **overcrowded curriculum** relative to the teaching time available in primary schools is not straightforward. Wide variations in teaching time were found so that, in the primary schools inspected, some had five hours more teaching per week than others and some schools were not meeting the recommended teaching hours set down by the Department for Education, especially in Key Stage 2.

22 These **variations in teaching time** throw into sharp relief questions about ‘non-contact’ time in primary schools. While there are some signs of a slight increase in the amount of time available for teachers during teaching hours to engage in important work other than teaching, such as acting as subject co-ordinators, most primary teachers have little, if any, of this so-called non-contact time. Comparisons are often made with secondary schools where the amount of non-contact time is much higher than in primary schools. But this has to be set against the longer teaching week which applies in secondary when compared with primary schools. While there is a case to be made for increasing the non-contact time for primary teachers there is also a need for primary schools to review the length of the teaching week, not least to ensure they are meeting the recommended teaching hours in Circular 7/90.

23 While the National Curriculum has begun to provide more consistency in standards and quality there remain unacceptable variations among schools in similar circumstances and among pupils of similar abilities. **Unevenness in standards** is a crucially important issue which must be addressed by those who teach and those who provide for primary pupils.

24 Broadly speaking, the **match of teaching** to the pupils’ developing abilities was better with the younger than with the older pupils in primary schools. This pattern was strongly associated with the teachers’ depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject-matter to be taught and their skills in teaching it. Schools need to consider how best to deploy the subject and teaching expertise of their staff to enable their pupils, especially the more able ones, to receive teaching which challenges them, develops their capabilities and leads to high standards of achievement. Given the evidence that good-quality specialist teaching is of benefit, particularly for older primary pupils, it is disappointing that many primary schools remain reluctant to break free from the generalist class-teacher mould even when they may have the means to do so. It also has to be acknowledged, however, that some schools have little scope for taking this step because of their small size.

25 Primary schools continue to give priority to **teaching the basic skills** of literacy and numeracy and most teach the early stages of reading, writing and number work successfully. Some of this good work, however, peters out, particularly for pupils whose progress, for one reason or another, is slow in Key Stage 2. Many pupils, particularly in disadvantaged areas, need more focused teaching than they receive to consolidate their grasp of the basic skills and apply them to a broader range of reading and writing tasks and to problem-solving which involves more demanding applications of number skills.

26 Heads and other senior staff should develop and implement strategies for the **systematic monitoring of the work** of their schools in order to evaluate standards of achievement, curricular strengths and weaknesses (including time allocations) and the quality of teaching and learning. In many schools such monitoring might focus particularly on provision and performance in years 3 and 4 since inspection shows that standards of work in these year groups are often lower than in others.

Secondary Education (Key Stages 3 and 4)

Standards of Achievement

27 Overall standards of achievement were satisfactory or better in 74% of the lessons observed (see Annex 2). Relative to their abilities pupils achieved higher standards in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3.

28 Standards in English in Key Stage 3 were higher than in mathematics or science, but some pupils displayed significant weaknesses in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. There were also weaknesses in the higher order skills. In science, for example, pupils could often plan and carry out experiments, record the results and draw conclusions; but too few pupils could form hypotheses and evaluate ways of investigating them. In English, many pupils read independently but their tastes were for a limited range of children's authors. In geography, pupils could understand maps but lacked more fundamental conceptual understanding; and in technology, although most pupils could use tools with confidence and safety, few showed creative flair when designing. There is a need for teachers, once basic skills have been established, to focus the work they set for pupils, and the expectations they have of them, more clearly on these higher levels of achievement.

29 In Key Stage 4 pupils begin their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses, and standards in some aspects of syllabuses show improvement. High standards were often seen where pupils undertook sustained, but well-directed, independent pieces of work. Assignments in geography, for example, were often good and sometimes outstanding; and in art pupils used research and investigation well in the preparation of work for their portfolios.

30 In the GCSE provisional figures (based on all candidates, including students in sixth-form and further education colleges and adults) show the proportion of grades A-C increased again this summer (52.4% of entries in 1993, compared with 51.3% in 1992). However, the proportion of entries gaining A-G dropped slightly (98.2% in 1993, compared with 98.6% in 1992). The quality of examining procedures has improved this year with the introduction of the Mandatory Code of Practice. Standards achieved in examination papers and coursework are often uneven in different aspects of the syllabus, reflecting the unevenness in standards seen in many classrooms. Abler pupils show many strengths, but are often under-challenged in some of the more demanding skills; many average and less able pupils are held back by weaknesses in basic skills.

Quality of Learning

31 The quality of learning in Key Stages 3 and 4 was satisfactory or better in nearly 80% of lessons (see Annex 2). Most pupils showed high levels of interest and

enthusiasm; they worked hard and their attitudes were positive. In the majority of lessons pupils improved their skills and gained in knowledge and understanding. Nevertheless, across both Key Stages there was not enough sustained and robust intellectual challenge of pupils. In those classes or sets containing pupils of lower ability the quality of learning was poorest: teachers' expectations of pupils were too low; work was not well-organised and offered pupils too few opportunities for challenge at an appropriate level.

Efficiency

32 The management of resources was generally efficient in three-quarters of secondary schools. The vast majority of them administered and monitored expenditure thoroughly, but their planning was too short-term. Often a deputy head or bursar was responsible for day-to-day management of finance and resources. However, many of the administrative tasks were inappropriate for senior teaching staff, and limited the time available for strategic planning and evaluation of work in the classroom.

33 Despite the fact that many schools now have 2-3 years experience of financial delegation, they remain cautious in the allocation of resources, both human and material. Many schools sought to improve staffing levels and prevent increase in class sizes, even where this commitment had adverse effects on material resources and/or on the appointment of non-teaching staff. Some schools held large contingency budgets or carry-over funding even where they had considerable resource deficiencies.

34 Where finance sub-committees of governing bodies existed, their influence was more effective when they had direct involvement in planning and provided financial expertise. Many governing bodies used the greater flexibility afforded by LMS to vire funding among the various expenditure headings in order to meet agreed priorities. A few schools, however, still failed to establish priorities between competing demands and many failed to delegate budgets to the appropriate operational level. As a result, criteria for the use of funds within subject areas were often unclear and the purposes and effectiveness of spending inadequately evaluated.

35 Schools are just beginning to develop strategies to increase their efficiency, but as yet little systematic analysis of resource patterns and demands has been carried out. Few consider expenditure in terms of finding the most cost-effective ways of achieving the improvements in standards which they seek. External auditing and inspection are helping some schools to focus on these key issues.

Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

36 Nearly all the secondary schools referred to **spiritual and moral development** in their aims but generally gave more attention in their policies to moral than to spiritual development. The majority were unclear about aspects of spiritual development and had difficulties identifying, interpreting and providing for these dimensions of pupils' educational experience. Within this context the response to promoting moral and spiritual development was satisfactory in about half the schools and good in a further quarter.

37 In only a small minority of schools was the spiritual and moral development of pupils promoted consistently through the curriculum as a whole, although significant aspects were covered in RE, personal and social education (PSE) and English.

38 Few schools fully met the legal requirements for **collective worship**. In the common pattern of a range of whole-school, year-group and tutor-group sessions, individual pupils often received no more than two or three acts of collective worship each week. Most examples of collective worship had a clear moral basis, and set a good tone for the day.

39 The majority of schools were concerned to develop pupils' awareness and understanding of **social and cultural matters**. In about a third of schools this was done through PSE programmes. Schools were less successful in addressing these matters comprehensively and consistently through the subjects of the curriculum.

40 Most of the schools were orderly and the overall standards of the pupils' **behaviour** were satisfactory or better. There was a small number of pupils whose behaviour was unacceptable. Often, though not always, bad behaviour occurred where the teaching was poor. Where this was so, there was often little analysis of the causes of poor behaviour, and too few supporting strategies for improvement. In one-quarter of secondary schools **attendance** rates were unsatisfactory (i.e. below 90%) and in most schools attendance, particularly of girls, declined in Key Stage 4. Many schools were developing strategies to improve attendance and those schools involved in the Attendance Education Support Grant Programme have made substantial improvements.

41 As a final sanction, the majority of schools responded to bad behaviour by excluding pupils. The criteria, however, for such action varied unacceptably between schools and the quality of the alternative provision made for the pupils was poor and a matter of serious concern.

42 Bullying was a matter which affected all schools. Nearly all sought to eradicate it but not all were successful in doing so. It also sometimes occurred when the pupils were off the school premises.

Major Contributory Factors

43 Of the many factors contributing to the standards and quality observed, the most important were the quality of teaching, the quality of management and planning, the quality of staff and the resources.

44 The **quality of teaching** was satisfactory or better in nearly 80% of lessons. The best lessons were characterised by a clear purpose, thoughtful planning and efficiently deployed resources. Such lessons showed rigour, challenge and pace. Teaching was most effective when the activities set took account of pupils' abilities, their existing knowledge and their level of understanding. Although good teaching was found in all types of school, there was too much variation between and within schools and even within individual subject departments. In the weaker lessons, the tasks set were undemanding, and the pace of lessons was far too slow.

45 Teachers' **expectations** of pupils were too variable. Too often teachers allowed their concern for the pupils' social and economic circumstances to override their responsibility to develop their intellectual potential; teachers settled for a pupil's first

draft rather than insisting on completion or further revisions. Conversely, the high expectations of some teachers resulted in hard work and high achievement by the pupils. This was fostered by regularly set, imaginative homework assignments.

46 The National Curriculum has led to improvements in **access** to a broader curriculum for all pupils. However, girls significantly outnumbered boys in the abler sets in English and modern foreign languages. A higher proportion of girls reached higher levels of attainment in English in all Key Stages and maintained this into KS4 and GCSE examinations. Girls' performance in mathematics continued to improve and the proportion of girls taking GCE A-level mathematics continued to increase. Equal proportions of boys and girls now take science leading to a double award at KS4 and attitudes to and achievements in technology by girls have improved. Boys still dominated physics courses at A Level. Girls achieved a higher proportion of the higher grade passes (A-C) at GCSE.

47 Most schools tried to make appropriate provision for **minority ethnic and bilingual pupils** but few schools analysed achievement according to ethnic background. Minority ethnic pupils were often insufficiently extended and challenged. In general they were under-represented in top ability sets.

48 The quality of **management** and planning has improved. Half the secondary schools inspected had good whole-school plans produced after thorough consultation. Success in fulfilling schools' stated aims and objectives, however, depended crucially on the quality of senior management. This was at its best where the roles of individuals were clear and consistent; where management time was not taken up by excessive administration; and where delegation was clear and effective. The main weakness was the failure to keep a close track of what happened in classrooms, in order to raise standards. Other weaknesses were a failure to establish priorities or to set clear targets to be achieved within specific time limits and at specific costs. In general the organisation and administration of schools were effective and made a positive contribution to the standards, quality and ethos of schools.

49 Good standards and the effective implementation of the National Curriculum were associated with good subject management. Effective **heads of department** set out clearly the standards to be achieved in the classroom. They built strong teams, communicated a clear sense of purpose, produced good guidance on work in their subjects and communicated effectively with senior management and subject teachers. The most urgent need was for more consistent assessment policies and practice within the school as a whole, as well as within departments. Without reliable assessment information about pupils' strengths and weaknesses, effective curriculum and lesson planning were very difficult and pupils' achievement was limited.

50 Most subjects were taught by appropriately qualified staff, the vast majority of whom were hard-working and committed. There were recruitment problems in some subjects, such as physics, music and RE. Where non-specialist staff were used, often with younger or lower ability groups, the quality of teaching and standards achieved were adversely affected. The ratio of teachers to pupils decreased in the past year; and teachers also had less preparation time. However, at the same time the number of technicians and other non-teaching staff employed has grown. They were being used effectively to support the work of the school and to take over administrative work from teachers. This development, if maintained, could well lead to a more appropriate deployment of teachers' time.

51 The provision of **resources** in the majority of schools was generally satisfactory or better, though in 30% of schools there were specific shortages which adversely affected standards. Most notable were shortages of textbooks in science and technology. In many cases it was the deployment of resources which needed to be monitored and improved. Library provision remained a serious cause of concern and, where it was poorest, the quality of teaching and learning was adversely affected.

Issues

52 The major issue for many secondary schools centres on the demands of the **National Curriculum and its assessment**. There is general support for a broad and balanced curriculum, and the vast majority of schools are successfully providing this through the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. In addition, science is now studied by all pupils at Key Stage 3 and at Key Stage 4 and, in anticipation of the National Curriculum requirements, more pupils are studying a modern foreign language. However, some apparently intractable problems arise at Key Stage 4. Many schools wish to retain some optional subjects and introduce vocational courses alongside the National Curriculum. One result is an overcrowded curriculum which cannot be accommodated within the time available. This overload is now acknowledged and is being addressed in the Dearing Review.

53 The problem has further highlighted the unacceptably wide variation between schools in the **length of the taught week**. The variation is nearly 20% – almost as much as one day per week more teaching in some schools than in others, or, to put it another way, nearly one additional year in the five years of secondary education. Within this variation there are at least 1,000 schools which are not fully meeting the requirements of DFE Circular 7/90 which recommends a minimum of 24 taught hours per week. The length of the school week as well as the use of the time available requires urgent review. This is a matter requiring action by national policy makers and local providers as well as by the schools themselves.

54 Few schools have a wholly consistent and effective **assessment** policy. Variations in procedures and judgements exist both across and within departments. That said, improvements have been made in the consistency and reliability of assessments. Further efforts are needed if teachers are to have an accurate picture of pupils' achievements and their strengths and weaknesses which they can convey to parents, and use to plan future teaching and learning. At present, too little use is made of assessment data in the planning of work.

55 **Attendance, behaviour and discipline**, while generally acceptable, need to be kept under constant review. The incidence of bullying remains of concern and requires schools to have clear policies to deal firmly and speedily with such unacceptable behaviour.

56 The demands upon senior management have changed in character and increased. The quality of **leadership** offered is crucial, as is the need to link school development planning to the aims and priorities of the school and to financial planning. This co-ordinated planning is not yet as common as it needs to be. Similarly, few schools are considering how to measure the efficiency with which resources are used in relation to the standards and quality of pupils' learning. This is no easy matter and will require the service as a whole to work together.