

**Standards and Quality in Primary and  
Secondary Schools: 1998-2001**

## Foreword

This is the fourth national report on standards and quality in primary and secondary schools and covers the period 1998-2001.

All published reports on individual schools include HMI evaluations of the performance indicators awarded during the inspection. These evaluations form the evidence base for this national Standards and Quality report. The report is based on the evidence collected from inspections in more than 500 primary schools and over 160 secondary schools as well as from inspections which investigated particular aspects of education.

*Standards and Quality in Primary and Secondary Schools 1998-2001* assesses standards of performance across the seven key areas of schools' work described in *How good is our school?* Use of these thirty-three performance indicators in school self-evaluation has increased over the past three years. More schools are now also making explicit the links between the self-evaluation process at school level, planning for improvement, target setting and the publication of their own standards and quality reports for parents and the community they serve. The structure of this national report should, therefore, be readily recognisable and enables schools to reflect on their own performance, as recorded in their own standards and quality reports, against the national picture reported here.

The quality of performance described in this report shows that there continues to be a great deal to be proud of in Scottish schools.

Our primary schools provide a broad curriculum. Learning and teaching is of high quality for many pupils. Standards of attainment achieved are high in many areas of the curriculum, particularly at P1-P4. An ethos of achievement is becoming established in primary schools, partly as a result of the *Raising Standards – Setting Targets* initiative. However, teachers' expectations of pupils' work and behaviour could be improved further, particularly in P5-P7. Planning for continuous improvement is a feature in many schools, and there has been increased use of non-teaching staff to support learning. More schools also have stronger links than previously with parents, other schools and the community.

Similarly, secondary schools provide a broad curriculum and there has been a continuing rise in attainment in National Qualifications. The quality of learning and teaching in S5/S6 continues to be of high quality and the ethos in almost all secondary schools is a positive strength. Schools have also taken steps to develop and strengthen their relationships with parents and carers and School Boards, and links with other schools and agencies. New Community Schools are beginning to provide a good model in this respect. Self-evaluation, strategic planning and a focus on improvement through implementing action points in school development plans are increasingly effective features of schools' work.

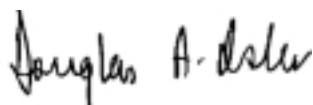
The focus on continuous improvement which is central to the National Improvement Framework, developed as a result of the *Standards in Scottish Schools etc (2000) Act*, provides a clear direction for school improvement in the future. The National Priorities, local improvement plans and targets, and school development plans provide a coherent framework within which schools and education authorities can raise standards in all aspects of their work. This will be a challenging period for schools, but recent experience, reflected in this report, shows that schools are well placed to meet the challenges.

Part of the challenge will be to ensure that those aspects of schools' performance which require further improvement are addressed. The transition from primary to secondary education continues to be difficult for many pupils. S1/S2 remains a problem of long-standing which HMI have raised consistently in reports over the last 15 years. There remain important weaknesses in 40% of S1/S2 subject courses and pupils' attainment in S1/S2 was fair or unsatisfactory in 45% of subject departments. Assessment and meeting pupils' needs are weaker in S1/S2 than elsewhere in secondary education. Schools must ask themselves why it is that many pupils who perform well in P7 mark time or even regress in S1/S2. Having asked the question, they must all then take action to address this issue as some are already doing. Although attainment is rising in upper secondary, there is reason to expect that it could be much better if the quality of learning and teaching in S1/S2 matched the best available at other stages of primary and secondary education.

Similarly, although the leadership of headteachers in many primary and secondary schools is good or very good, leadership remains fair in around 13% of schools and unsatisfactory in 2%. If the figures from the inspection sample are true of all schools, it means that leadership has important weaknesses in around 300 primary schools and around 80 secondary schools. This has a significant negative effect on the quality of education for pupils in these schools.

In taking forward the use of *How good is our school?* in school self-evaluation, schools now need to give more attention to how the performance indicators might be used at the various stages in primary schools and at departmental level in secondary schools. An increased focus on the quality of learning and teaching, and on attainment, should be a feature in planning for improvement in all schools. More rigorous success criteria also need to be applied to measure success. Links between school development plans and financial management need to be more explicit in order to ensure Best Value is achieved by schools.

While there are many positive aspects of Scottish education recorded in this report, there is still much to be done. The recent introduction of inspections of the education functions of local authorities which emphasise partnership between parents, schools and education authorities to improve standards and quality, should provide an impetus for further improvement. The *Quality Initiative in Scottish Schools* involves everyone with an interest in raising standards and improving quality. If Scotland is to compete in the increasingly competitive global environment of the twenty-first century, and if Scottish school leavers are to have the best possible opportunities to succeed in that environment, schools must be at the centre of the improvement process. They have a key role in ensuring every pupil leaves school having achieved the best possible outcomes to participate as active citizens in Scotland, Europe and beyond in the century ahead.



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Introduction

## Introduction

This report is based on the inspections of more than 500 primary schools and over 160 secondary schools, including schools in the independent sector, which led to individually-published reports during the period 1998-2001. HMI also inspected schools for tasks which did not result in individually-published school reports and made specialist subject visits to schools. Hence this report uses evidence from more than 13,000 class visits in primary schools and 16,000 in secondary schools.

In assessing standards and quality, HMI use published criteria in the form of quality indicators which support our traditional analyses based on collective professional expertise. The indicators relate judgements to four levels of performance:

- 4 very good (major strengths)
- 3 good (strengths outweigh weaknesses)
- 2 fair (some important weaknesses)
- 1 unsatisfactory (major weaknesses)

This report uses the following word scale to assist the reader's understanding and to ensure consistency:

- |                             |           |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| • almost all                | over 90%  |
| • most                      | 75-90%    |
| • majority                  | 50-74%    |
| • less (or fewer) than half | 15-49%    |
| • few                       | up to 15% |

Improvements in primary schools since the report on *Standards and Quality in Scottish Schools 1995-1998* included:

- > programmes for writing, science and other world religions
- > almost all schools provided a modern European language at P6, P7 or both
- > greater emphasis on oral and mental mathematics
- > raised attainment at P1-P4, particularly in English language and mathematics
- > more emphasis on direct, interactive teaching
- > use of non-teaching staff to support learning
- > pastoral care and personal and social education
- > links with other schools and the community
- > planning for improvement.

## Primary Schools

The key strengths in primary schools were:

- a broad curriculum
- standards of attainment in:
  - listening, talking and reading in English language
  - information handling, number money and measurement, and shape position and movement in mathematics
  - music and physical education in expressive arts
  - Christianity in religious and moral education
  - health education
- most aspects of learning and teaching
- personal and social development and pastoral care
- support for learning, including provision for pupils with records of needs
- ethos, including an ethos of achievement in many schools
- partnership with parents and carers
- planning for improvement in most schools
- leadership provided by headteachers in most schools.

### Primary schools and education authorities should:

- improve programmes of study in aspects identified in this report to ensure better progression in learning from stage to stage
- raise attainment in the following aspects:
  - writing in 45% of schools
  - problem solving and enquiry in 50% of schools
  - geography in 40% of schools, people in society in 60% of schools and technology in 55% of schools
  - drama in 40% of schools
  - other world religions in 55% of schools
  - ICT in 50% of schools
- tackle weaknesses in learning and teaching by:
  - using homework more effectively
  - using assessment information to set pupils next steps in learning
  - improving the quality of assessment and recording of pupils' attainment
  - increasing the pace of work, particularly at P5-P7
  - providing more stimulus and challenge to higher attaining pupils
  - using ICT across the curriculum areas
- attend to the continuing weaknesses in accommodation and health and safety
- implement arrangements for staff development and review
- further develop self-evaluation in 40% of schools to give more systematic attention to monitoring the quality of learning and teaching, and pupils' attainment
- improve the processes for planning for improvement in 20% of schools
- tackle continuing weaknesses in the leadership of headteachers in 15% of schools.

Improvements in secondary schools since the report on *Standards and Quality in Scottish Schools 1995-1998* included:

- > examination results at Standard Grade or equivalent National Qualifications, SCQF levels 3, 4 and 5
- > examination results at Higher A-C, SCQF level 6
- > meeting pupils' needs in S5/S6, through the introduction of new National Qualifications
- > arrangements for the pastoral care of pupils and their personal and social development
- > more schools promoting an ethos of achievement
- > the monitoring of pupils' progress by guidance staff
- > partnership with parents and carers
- > more effective self-evaluation
- > planning for improvement.

## Secondary Schools

The key strengths in secondary schools were:

- a broad curriculum
- the quality of learning and teaching at S5/S6
- arrangements to help pupils make decisions about course choices and future careers
- ethos in almost all schools
- relationship with parents and carers and the School Board
- links with other schools and agencies
- management of devolved budgets and provision of resources for learning and teaching
- effective deployment of teaching staff
- leadership provided by headteachers in most schools.

## Secondary schools and education authorities should:

- tackle the main curriculum weaknesses outlined in this report (important weaknesses remain in 15% of schools)
- improve courses in S1/S2 in 40% of schools
- improve standards of attainment in S1/S2 in 45% of schools
- tackle weaknesses in learning and teaching by:
  - raising expectations of pupils' performance
  - increasing the pace of work, particularly at S1/S2
  - providing more stimulus and challenge to higher attaining pupils
  - taking greater account of assessment information and pupils' prior attainment, particularly at the transition from primary to secondary school
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning
- develop pupils' skills in the use of ICT more systematically
- improve arrangements for religious observance
- improve procedures for tracking pupils' progress to target support to raise attainment
- attend to the weaknesses in accommodation and health and safety
- continue to work with parents and carers to minimise absence
- continue to develop school self-evaluation (important weaknesses in 45% of schools) with an increased focus on the quality of learning and teaching and pupils' attainment
- further develop processes for planning for improvement in 45% of schools
- tackle continuing weaknesses in the leadership of headteachers in 20% of schools.



Primary Schools

# Primary Schools

## 1.1 The curriculum

All primary schools offered a broad curriculum which included English language, mathematics, environmental studies, expressive arts, religious and moral education, health, personal and social development (PSD) and information and communications technology (ICT). Almost all schools provided a modern European language at P6, P7 or both. An increasing number of schools made effective use of the flexibility available to them to support initiatives to raise standards. Most headteachers provided guidance to staff on suitable time allocations for each curriculum area, but some needed to monitor the implementation of this advice more closely.

In English language and mathematics, most aspects within the national 5-14 guidelines continued to receive due emphasis. In English language, the main strengths were in the programmes for *reading* and *listening*. Although the proportion of schools with very good or good writing programmes had increased, *writing* remained the weakest aspect. The main strengths in mathematics courses were in *shape, position and movement* and in *number, money and measurement* where a better emphasis was now placed on oral and mental mathematics. The most common weaknesses were in programmes for *problem-solving and enquiry*, and in opportunities to use ICT in mathematics.

In environmental studies, the majority of schools had very good or good courses in *science, history and geography*. More schools had very good or good *science* programmes than in the 1995-98 period. *People in society* was the most common weakness within the social subjects. Courses in *technology* had important weaknesses or were unsatisfactory in 65% of schools. Overall, there continued to be notable weakness in environmental studies courses in many schools.

In the expressive arts, courses were very good or good in *physical education* in most schools. The majority of schools provided very good or good courses in *music*. Fifty percent of schools had very good or good courses in *art and design*. In *drama* fewer than half the schools had very good or good courses. Programmes for *drama* often lacked progression from stage to stage and still needed to provide pupils with more opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings in dialogue and role-play.

In religious and moral education most schools gave due emphasis to Christianity and a majority did so for *personal search*. More schools now had very good or good programmes for *other world religions*, but 45% of schools still needed to make improvements to this aspect.

The majority of schools still lacked progressive programmes for ICT. Programmes for health education were very good or good in a majority of schools. Personal and social development continued to be a strength in almost all schools.

Table 1 shows the percentages of primary schools in which certain aspects of courses were weak overall. The weaknesses were mainly in ensuring continuity and progression in pupils' learning from stage to stage.

*Table 1: Percentage of schools in which certain aspects of courses were weak overall*

|                             | 1998-2001 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Problem-solving and enquiry | 50%       |
| Science                     | 45%       |
| People in society           | 55%       |
| Technology                  | 65%       |
| Drama                       | 65%       |
| Art and design              | 50%       |
| ICT                         | 65%       |
| Other world religions       | 45%       |

## 1.2 Standards of attainment

In evaluating the overall quality of pupils' attainment HMI took account of classwork, progress through national attainment levels, quality of learning and how well pupils' needs were being met. In English language and mathematics HMI also evaluated standards against the attainment levels in 5-14 guidelines.

Tables 2 and 3 indicate for the different aspects of English language and mathematics the percentage of schools in which the overall quality of pupils' attainment was very good or good. Early intervention initiatives in all education authorities were contributing to raising standards at the P1 to P4 stages. Across the primary stages, attainment in mathematics had improved slightly in *information handling* and in *problem-solving and enquiry*. In English language, better programmes for *writing* had raised attainment in some schools but had not yet achieved a notable improvement in national standards. Arrangements for setting targets for pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics had contributed to an improvement in monitoring their progress and levels of attainment in these areas.

*Table 2: Percentage of schools where attainment was very good or good: English language*

|           | 1998-2001 |
|-----------|-----------|
| Listening | 80%       |
| Talking   | 75%       |
| Reading   | 75%       |
| Writing   | 55%       |

## Standards of attainment: English language

Standards of pupils' attainment remained higher in *listening, talking* and *reading* than in *writing*. Most pupils listened attentively and were able to talk confidently and clearly during classwork. They were weaker in *listening* and *talking* during group discussions. In *reading*, most pupils could read fluently. Although pupils' understanding of what they had read was generally good, there had been a slight reduction in their attainment in this aspect. Some pupils needed to read more widely for pleasure and to develop their skills in reading for information. In about half of the schools, pupils needed to develop their ideas at greater length and extend their skills in different types of *writing*.

**Table 3: Percentage of schools where attainment was very good or good: mathematics**

|                               | 1998-2001 |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Information handling          | 75%       |
| Number, money and measurement | 75%       |
| Shape, position and movement  | 80%       |
| Problem-solving and enquiry   | 50%       |

## Standards of attainment: mathematics

Standards in mathematics were best at the P1 to P4 stages with pupils making slower progress from P5 to P7. In *information handling*, most pupils were competent in organising and displaying data and interpreting graphs and tables. Their skills in using databases and spreadsheets to organise and display information were weak. In *number, money and measurement*, pupils were best at carrying out written calculations in number and money. Lower attaining pupils often did not know their tables and number bonds well enough. Standards were good in *shape, position and movement* with particular strengths in aspects such as symmetry and co-ordinates. Pupils' performance in using different strategies to solve mathematical problems had improved, but remained the weakest aspect of attainment in mathematics.

## Standards of attainment: environmental studies

Standards in environmental studies continued to vary widely across schools. It was a major strength in only a few schools. *Technology* and *people in society* remained the weakest areas with fair or unsatisfactory standards in a majority of schools. In *science, geography* and *history* standards were very good or strengths outweighed weaknesses in the majority of schools. (See Table 4.)

In *science*, pupils showed most understanding of *living things and the processes of life*. There were significant weaknesses in their understanding of *energy and forces* and *earth and space*, and in their investigative skills.

In *history*, pupils had a good understanding of similarities and differences between the periods that they had studied and the present day. In *geography*, mapping skills and pupils' understanding of their local area were strengths. Pupils' knowledge of aspects of the geography of Scotland, Britain and the wider world was a strength in some schools but was very limited in others. Pupils' understanding of *people in society* was often restricted to aspects which related to their everyday experience, such as ways of resolving playground disagreements or the needs of different groups in the local community, but did not extend sufficiently to Scotland, Europe and beyond.

In *technology*, in only a minority of schools, pupils were skilful in designing and making and had a good understanding of the impact of technology on society.

**Table 4: Percentage of schools where attainment was very good or good: environmental studies**

|                   | 1998-2001 |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Science           | 65%       |
| Geography         | 60%       |
| History           | 70%       |
| People in society | 40%       |
| Technology        | 45%       |

### Standards of attainment: expressive arts

The overall quality of pupils' attainment was very good or good in *physical education* in 95% of schools, *music* in 85%, *art and design* in 65% and *drama* in 60%. In *physical education*, pupils attained well in a variety of activities including movement, gymnastics and dance. In *art and design*, pupils used their observations well in drawing and painting. In *music*, they sang well and used instruments appropriately to accompany their singing. In *drama* they showed good skills in mime, improvisations and role-play. Across the expressive arts, pupils needed encouragement to make use of their own ideas and imagination and to evaluate their work.

Table 5: Percentage of schools where attainment was very good or good: expressive arts

|                    | 1998-2001 |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Physical education | 95%       |
| Music              | 85%       |
| Art and design     | 65%       |
| Drama              | 60%       |

### Standards of attainment: religious and moral education

In religious and moral education, pupils' knowledge and understanding was best in *Christianity*, where attainment was very good or strengths outweighed weaknesses in 75% of schools. This was an improvement since the previous report. Although standards in *other world religions* had also improved, pupils' attainment still had some important weaknesses or was unsatisfactory in 55% of schools. Attainment in *personal search* was very good or good in 60% of schools. Pupils needed help to make better links between *personal search* and their studies of *Christianity* and *other world religions*.

### Personal and social development, health and ICT

Pupils achieved very good or good standards in health education in 80% of schools, an improvement since the 1995-98 report. Strengths included the understanding of key aspects of safety and the role of healthy eating, exercise and relaxation in promoting good health. Drugs education and education about personal relationships, including sex education were often weaknesses.

Standards in ICT had some important weaknesses or were unsatisfactory in 50% of schools with little evidence of improvement since the previous report. Pupils were most confident in using computer programs and word processing. Their skills in using computers for data handling in mathematics and for research in environmental studies were weaker.

**Box 1:**  
Learning and teaching was most effective where:

- > teachers had high expectations and set high standards for pupils' work
- > teaching approaches provided opportunities for explanation, questions and discussion, practical work and investigation
- > lessons were well organised and well structured
- > teaching was conducted at a brisk pace with good opportunities for interaction with pupils
- > teachers matched tasks and resources to pupils' strengths and needs
- > teachers observed pupils well during teaching and supported them when they needed help
- > teachers used assessment information to plan future learning
- > pupils received appropriate praise and feedback about their work.

**Box 2:**  
There were weaknesses in learning and teaching where:

- > teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work or behaviour were too low
- > teachers' plans did not help them to clarify what they intended pupils to learn
- > the pace of lessons was too slow
- > pupils were given undemanding tasks
- > the needs of higher attaining pupils were not met
- > pupils needed more opportunities to learn independently and to work together on tasks.

## 1.3 Quality of learning and teaching

### Learning and teaching

HMI evaluated the overall quality of learning and teaching in relation to the quality of learning, the quality of teaching, how well pupils' needs were being met, and assessment as part of teaching. Account was also taken of evaluations of individual lessons observed during inspections. The overall quality of learning and teaching was very good or good in almost all schools, but a few had some important weaknesses.

Teachers were generally well organised and used a good variety of whole class, group and individual teaching approaches. They provided pupils with clear explanations and instructions and used questions well to focus their attention and check understanding. In all but a few schools, pupils responded very well during lessons. They were well-motivated, hardworking and responsive to their teachers. Teachers planned activities carefully to match tasks to pupils' differing needs, mostly in English language and mathematics. The main strengths and weaknesses in learning and teaching are set out in Boxes 1 and 2.

Most lessons were purposeful and well organised. Inspection reports noted an increasing use of lively, interactive, direct teaching. Teachers set regular homework to consolidate and extend classwork. However, in some schools homework tasks needed to be more varied and stimulating and drawn from across the curriculum, rather than solely from English language and mathematics.

### Assessment and recording

Teachers regularly assessed pupils' attainment in English language and mathematics, and overall had a good knowledge of their strengths and development needs in these areas. Assessment in environmental studies, expressive arts and religious and moral education, however, continued to have important weaknesses. Few schools were assessing pupils' attainment against national levels in these areas. Overall, schools made insufficient use of assessment information to track pupils' progress, evaluate the effectiveness of learning and teaching, or identify appropriate next steps in pupils' learning.

Almost all schools continued to use National Tests in reading, writing and mathematics. Most schools used National Tests appropriately to confirm teachers' assessment of pupils' progress. However, some schools continued to test pupils before they were ready, while others delayed testing even though pupils were competent in the coursework required for the test.

## 1.4 Support for pupils

The quality of pastoral care and personal and social development continued to be a major strength in schools. Pastoral care was very good in 80% of schools and good in 20%. Personal and social development was very good in 60% of schools and good in 40%. Overall, teachers were sensitive to the needs of their pupils and promoted good relationships and positive behaviour. Box 3 shows some key strengths of pastoral care and personal and social development.

The effectiveness of learning support was very good in 35% of schools and good in 50%. Schools generally had effective systems to identify pupils' strengths and needs, although more could be done to provide specific support for higher attaining pupils. Class teachers, classroom assistants, visiting specialists, auxiliary staff and promoted staff collaborated well to meet the needs of groups and individuals. Box 4 indicates the most common strengths in learning support.

In 90% of schools, the quality of support for pupils who had a Record of Needs was very good or strengths outweighed weaknesses. Schools had good procedures for reviewing and implementing Records. Although most schools had started to develop individualised educational programmes (IEPs) for pupils experiencing difficulties, some needed to set more specific learning targets.

### Box 3:

Provision for pastoral care and personal and social development was effective where teachers:

- > knew their pupils as individuals
- > were sensitive to pupils' needs
- > emphasised the need for good personal and social skills
- > promoted good relationships and positive behaviour
- > developed good procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety.

### Box 4:

Strengths in arrangements for learning support included:

- > effective procedures to identify pupils' strengths and needs
- > good liaison amongst staff involved
- > well-targeted support for groups and individuals
- > good individualised educational programmes for pupils requiring significant support.

**Box 5:**  
An ethos of achievement was associated with:

- > high expectations of pupils' attainment, behaviour and attendance
- > positive staff-pupil relationships
- > the effective use of praise to encourage pupils to achieve their best
- > opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, support charities and express their views through pupil councils
- > the use of assemblies to encourage pupils to take a pride in their school and celebrate success.

## 1.5 Ethos

The overall quality of ethos was very good or good in almost all schools. In schools with the best ethos, pupils were polite and standards of behaviour were high. Teachers showed a commitment to their pupils and set high expectations for attainment and behaviour. (See Box 5.) Relationships within schools were positive, and almost all created a welcoming and friendly environment.

Schools used assemblies very effectively to develop pupils' self-esteem and encourage pupils to take a pride in their school. They helped pupils celebrate their many achievements and provided a useful setting for the provision of religious observance. Pupils were encouraged to take responsibilities within the school, and many supported younger pupils either at break times or in activities such as paired reading. An increasing number of schools gave pupils the opportunity to influence school policies through their involvement in pupil councils. Many schools involved pupils in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and encouraged them to support others through fundraising for local, national and international charities.

The level of attendance in primary schools remained relatively stable between 1998/99 and 2000/2001. Average attendance was 95%, and almost all absence was authorised. There continued to be wide variations across schools. Between 1997/98 and 2000/2001 the average number of half days absence per pupil reduced from 21 to 20.

At May 2000, 83% of education authority schools had a School Board, an almost identical number as at May 1998. School Boards were seen as being supportive, and as having a key role to play in the life of schools. Similarly, parent-teacher associations provided valuable support for schools, particularly in organising social events and fund-raising.

Almost all schools had positive relationships with parents, carers and School Boards. Many schools produced helpful newsletters and bulletins to keep parents and carers informed about the life of the school. They also organised useful meetings to inform them about the curriculum. Many had established very good induction programmes for pupils entering P1. Almost all schools produced well-written reports to parents and carers on their child's progress, and arranged meetings to discuss these reports.

Parents and carers were actively involved in many schools, helping, for example, with school trips or organising libraries and lending books to pupils. A number of schools had sought the opinion of parent and carers on issues such as ethos, homework or communications. Many had yet to gather the views of parents and carers.

Links with other schools and the wider community were very good in 70% of schools and strengths outweighed weaknesses in the remainder. Some schools had developed useful links with local businesses, while others had begun to develop valuable links with local pre-school centres in order to ease the transition of children into P1.

## 1.6 Resources

### Accommodation

Accommodation and facilities were very good or good in 85% of schools. Education authorities had given good overall priority to improving school security, but this continued to be a problem in around one-fifth of schools. Weaknesses in accommodation most frequently related to lack of attention to maintenance, leading to water leaks and poor quality of fabric. In a small number of schools there were safety concerns related to uneven playground surfaces and control of vehicles in and around school entrances.

Almost all schools managed their accommodation and resources effectively, often, for example, creating interesting learning environments through display of children's work. In a number of schools there had been notable efforts to create attractive and useful learning areas through development of school grounds and gardens.

### Resources for learning and teaching

Almost all schools were well resourced for learning and teaching, particularly so in the cases of English language and mathematics. In a few schools there were gaps in resources for environmental studies, particularly in science and technology. Increasingly schools were becoming better equipped with computer hardware. This was noted as a specific strength in around quarter of schools. In September 2000 there was one computer for every 18 primary school pupils. The supply and effective use of computer software lagged behind provision of hardware in a few schools.

Schools' management of their own budgets was very good in almost all schools. The administration of finances was effective and appropriate allocations of resources were given to support the implementation of school development plan priorities, including improvements to schools' environments.

### Staffing

Almost all schools had an appropriate number of suitably qualified staff. Staff were deployed effectively. Many schools had additional staffing for early intervention initiatives. Visiting specialist teachers, mostly in aspects of expressive arts and in support for pupils, provided an important contribution to staffing in almost all schools. Their support, and that of non-teaching staff, was highly valued by schools. Classroom assistants were increasingly making a notable contribution to supporting pupils learning.

**Box 6:**  
Where staff development was very good, it was:

- > based on good knowledge of individual staff needs through professional review
- > well balanced between school priorities and individual staff needs
- > provided for teaching and ancillary staff
- > well planned to support new staff and probationers.

**Box 7:**  
Weaknesses in staff development existed where:

- > it was not founded on rigorous self-evaluation
- > activities were too general and did not match school priorities or the needs of staff.

**Box 8:**  
Features of strong self-evaluation included:

- > active participation of staff in agreeing methods and outcomes
- > use of a number of evaluation methods with cross-checking
- > analysis of attainment data to focus evaluation
- > consistency in evaluations by using performance indicators
- > clear feedback to staff.

Staff development and review was very good in 30% of schools and good in 45% of schools. An increasing number of schools had made good progress in implementing formal staff review under education authority schemes. However, around a quarter of schools had still to implement arrangements for staff review in full.

Staff development was planned well in almost all schools. Staff frequently had good access to school and education authority courses designed to relate to local and national priorities. In a small number of schools, staff development in ICT lagged behind the supply of new technology. Boxes 6 and 7 show some of the strengths and weaknesses in staff development.

## 1.7 Management and quality assurance

### Self-evaluation

There was some improvement in the quality of schools' approaches to self-evaluation. It was very good or good in the majority of schools. There remained some important weaknesses in 35% of schools and major weaknesses in 5% of schools.

Schools used a range of different methods of evaluation. In almost all schools, promoted staff scrutinised teachers' forward plans and made informal visits to classrooms. Other, less frequent, examples of evaluation by promoted staff included sampling pupils' written work and visiting classes to monitor aspects of learning and teaching. A few schools involved parents and pupils in evaluating aspects of their work. However, many schools still had important weaknesses in respect of systematic evaluation of the quality of learning and teaching and of pupils' attainment.

The number of schools using the performance indicators published in *How good is our school?*<sup>1</sup> to support their work in self-evaluation had increased. In some cases this process was just beginning or the performance indicators were used in a very broad way. Towards the end of the three-year period, it was noted that an increasing number of schools were producing reports on the standards and quality of their provision. Further improvements in self-evaluation require a broader range of evidence, including performance data, to be gathered and analysed in a systematic way. There should also be more emphasis on evaluating the relationship between planning and delivering learning and teaching, and pupils' achievements. Boxes 8 and 9 show some of the strengths and weaknesses in school self-evaluation.

<sup>1</sup> *How good is our school? – Self-evaluation using performance indicators* (Audit Unit – HM Inspectors of Schools, SOEID, 1996)

## Planning for improvement

The quality of school development planning had improved since the previous report. Planning was now very good or good in most schools. The percentage of schools with unsatisfactory or important weaknesses in planning had declined from 45% to 20%. Weaknesses continued to include insufficient focus on improving pupils' attainment and poorly defined measures of success. A few schools had begun to involve their School Board and parents and carers in the development planning process.

Most schools were also very good or good at implementing their plans, with around 35% of schools demonstrating major strengths in this aspect of their work. In the best examples, the implementation of plans resulted in a demonstrable impact on the quality of pupils' experiences and their attainment. For example, some teachers set termly targets for groups within their classes, which contributed to meeting the school's overall targets as part of the *Raising Standards, Setting Targets* initiative. Box 10 shows the most frequent strengths in development planning.

## Leadership

The leadership of headteachers was very good in 45% of schools and good in 40%. The high levels of commitment of headteachers to their schools and communities and their professional competence were clear strengths. Effective headteachers were successful in creating a spirit of teamwork amongst staff and had established good relationships with parents and pupils. Where leadership was of a high quality, headteachers were successful in combining a caring, positive ethos with a clear sense of direction. They sought to ensure that learning and teaching and pupils' achievements were central to the life of the school. However, headteachers' leadership in 15% of schools still had some important weaknesses or was unsatisfactory. A significant number of headteachers needed to give greater attention to projecting a vision for improving the school's performance and for monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching and the curriculum.

The effectiveness of other promoted staff was very good or good in most schools. They provided strong support for headteachers and other staff. In around a quarter of schools headteachers needed to review the remits of promoted staff more regularly to ensure that their work was focused on current school priorities.

### Box 9: Weaknesses in self-evaluation continued where there was:

- > insufficient focus on the school's success in raising pupils' performance
- > a limited range of methods
- > lack of systematic coverage of the full range of the school's work
- > lack of clarity about the purposes and outcomes of class visits by promoted staff
- > insufficient emphasis on evaluating the pace and challenge in learning and teaching
- > limited use of data about pupils' progress and attainment.

### Box 10: Strengths in development planning included:

- > staff involvement in identifying priorities and implementing improvements
- > a clear link between self-evaluation and development projects
- > a balance amongst school, local and national priorities
- > priorities clearly linked to improvements in learning and teaching and pupils' attainment and achievement
- > clear measures of success
- > projects with well-thought-out and clearly specified action plans.



Secondary Schools

## Secondary Schools

### 2.1 The curriculum

The structure of the curriculum was very good or good in 85% of schools. However, in 15% of schools the curriculum structure had some important weaknesses or was unsatisfactory. At S1/S2 this was usually as a result of schools taking insufficient account of advice in 5-14 national guidelines and/or pupils' primary school experience. In S3/S4 it was mostly due to schools not ensuring that pupils studied a sufficiently broad and balanced range of subjects. Almost all courses in S5/S6 were designed well. Almost all subject departments had made improvements in meeting pupils' needs in S5/S6 through the introduction of new National Qualifications (NQs). However, only a few schools had clear plans for introducing Scottish Group Awards (SGAs) and for ensuring that all pupils developed core skills. A continuing weakness was the inadequate attention paid to religious and moral education from S1 to S6.

Although almost all schools had recently improved their provision of ICT resources, there was a general need to develop pupils' skills in ICT more systematically.

Almost all schools offered programmes in personal and social development. The majority offered pupils opportunities for certification in this aspect of the curriculum, mainly through work experience. An increasing number gave pupils good opportunities to gain NQs in personal and social development.

Most school timetables worked efficiently. A small number of schools had begun to take advantage of the opportunities arising from the relaxation of restrictions on when pupils could be presented for NQ examinations.

The quality of courses was very good in 20% of subject departments and strengths outweighed weaknesses in a further 60%. There remained important weaknesses in 40% of S1/S2 subject courses which did not provide pupils with a good balance of knowledge, understanding, skills and experiences. Most departmental courses in S3/S4 and almost all in S5/S6 were well designed. Almost all subject departments had introduced new NQs in S5/S6. In a few departments, units and courses in new NQs were delivered through open learning in some cases with on-line tutorial support provided by further and higher education institutions.

An increasing number of English and mathematics departments were taking account of pupils' experience in primary school in planning their S1 courses. An increasing number of subjects were also making greater use of advice in 5-14 national guidelines to plan S1/S2 courses. A few departments, notably in mathematics, were taking advantage of units and courses in new NQs to meet pupils' needs in S3/S4. Box 11 shows good features found in the curriculum and Box 12 shows aspects which required improvement.

#### Box 11:

Good features in the curriculum included:

- > fewer shared classes in S1/S2
- > a reduction in the number of different teachers S1/S2 pupils had each week
- > use of advice in 5-14 national guidelines to enable pupils to make appropriate progress
- > more schools offering eight Standard Grade subjects to improve attainment
- > use of new NQs to provide pupils with a better curriculum
- > more use of open learning to increase the range of subjects in S5/S6.

#### Box 12:

Improvements required in the curriculum included:

- > greater use of 5-14 national guidelines to improve the quality of courses
- > greater account taken of pupils' primary school experience in S1
- > more effective delivery of core skills and SGAs in S5/S6
- > more systematic development of ICT skills at all stages.

**Box 13:**

Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more Standard Grades or equivalent National Qualifications in S4.<sup>2</sup>

|   | 1995 | 1998 | 2001 |
|---|------|------|------|
| SCQF Level 5<br>5+ SGs (1-2) or<br>Int 2 A-C        | 27%  | 31%  | 33%  |
| SCQF Level 4<br>5+ SGs (1-4)<br>or Int 1 A-C        | 70%  | 74%  | 77%  |
| SCQF Level 3<br>5+ SGs (1-6) or<br>Access 3 cluster | 89%  | 90%  | 91%  |

**Box 14:**

Percentage of S4 roll gaining 3+ and 5+ Highers (A-C) in S5.

|                                  | 1995 | 1998 | 2001 |
|----------------------------------|------|------|------|
| SCQF Level 6<br>3+ Highers (A-C) | 20%  | 20%  | 22%  |
| SCQF Level 6<br>5+ Highers (A-C) | 6%   | 6%   | 9%   |

**Box 15:**

Percentage of the relevant S4 roll gaining 3+ and 5+ National Qualifications at level 6 or better, and 1+ qualification at level 7 or better, by the end of S6.

|   | 2001 |
|---|------|
| SCQF Level 6<br>3+ Highers (A-C) or better            | 31%  |
| SCQF Level 6<br>5+ Highers (A-C) or better            | 19%  |
| SCQF Level 7<br>1+ Advanced Higher<br>(A-C) or better | 11%  |

## 2.2 Standards of Attainment

When evaluating the overall quality of pupils' attainment, HMI took account of classwork, results in national examinations, the quality of learning and how well pupils' needs were being met. In English and mathematics at S1/S2, pupil performance against the levels in 5-14 guidelines was taken into account.

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in S1/S2 was very good in only 5% of subject departments. It was good in 50% and had some important weaknesses in 45% of subject departments. Arrangements for meeting pupils' needs showed important weaknesses in 50% of subject departments. Despite an increased focus on S1/S2, lack of continuity, challenge and pace in many courses continued to be a weakness, resulting in pupils making insufficient progress at these stages.

In S3/S4, the overall quality of pupils' attainment was very good in 20% of subject departments and good in 50%.

Box 13 shows the percentage of pupils gaining five or more Standard Grade awards at (1-2), (1-4) and (1-6) or equivalent NQ's in S4 in 1995, 1998 and 2001. The trend in the five or more awards figures is upward in all these cases.

The percentage of all presentations for Standard Grade examinations, which resulted in Credit awards (Grade 1 or 2), rose from 39% in 1998 to 43% in 2001.

In S5/S6, the overall quality of pupils' attainment was very good in 15% of subject departments and good in a further 55%.

Attainment at Higher (A-C), SCQF level 6, improved over the period 1998-2001. In 2001, the percentage of the S4 roll gaining 5 or more Highers at A-C in S5 had risen by 3 percentage points compared to 1998. In 2001, the percentage of the S4 roll gaining 3 or more Highers at A-C in S5 was 22%, an increase from 20% in 1998.

Between 1998 and 2001, the percentage of all presentations at Higher which resulted in a Band A award rose from 17% to 21% and those resulting in a Band B award stayed steady at 25%.

Box 14 shows the percentage of S4 roll gaining 3 or more and 5 or more Highers at (A-C) in S5.

The percentage of S4 pupils who stayed on in school beyond Christmas of S5 rose from 64% in 1998-99 to 65% in 2000-01. The percentage of S4 pupils who stayed on in school to S6 rose from 42% in 1998-99 to 43% in 1999-2000. In 2000, school leavers' qualifications enabled 32% to go into higher education, an increase of 2 percentage points from 1997. Nineteen percent went into further education, 7% went into training, 26% went directly into jobs and 13% moved into other known destinations.

Box 15 shows the percentage of the relevant S4 roll gaining 3+ and 5+ National Qualifications at level 6 or better, and 1+ qualification at level 7 or better, by the end of S6, in 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

Level 7 Advanced Higher at A-C

Level 6 Higher at A-C

Level 5 Intermediate 2 at A-C, Standard Grade at 1-2

Level 4 Intermediate 1 at A-C, Standard Grade at 3-4

Level 3 Access 3 cluster, Standard Grade at 5-6

## 2.3 Quality of learning and teaching

When evaluating the overall quality of learning and teaching, HMI took account of the quality of learning, the quality of teaching, how well pupils' needs were being met and assessment as part of teaching. They also took account of evaluations of individual lessons observed during inspections. The overall quality of learning and teaching was very good or good in most departments, but there were some important weaknesses in around a fifth. It was unsatisfactory in only a very small number of departments. The quality of learning and teaching was best in the upper stages of secondary school. Boxes 16 and 17 show some of the main strengths and weaknesses in learning and teaching.

Arrangements for meeting pupils' needs were strongest in subject departments in S5/S6 where they were very good or good in 80% of departments. In S3/S4, 70% of departments made very good or good provision for meeting pupils' needs. Arrangements were weakest in S1/S2 where only 50% of departments were very good or good and the remaining 50% had important weaknesses.

Arrangements for assessment were very good or good in 75% of departments. However, in 25% of departments, the results of assessments were not used to ensure appropriate challenge and to direct further work. In some cases, not enough use was made of information on prior attainment in setting appropriate targets for pupils in S1/S2. Overall, assessment arrangements were best in S5/S6, and weakest in S1/2. Almost a third of English and mathematics departments were still not using National Tests to confirm teachers' judgements. Over a third of departments did not take sufficient account of advice on assessment and reporting in S1/S2.

### Box 16:

#### Features of good quality learning and teaching included:

- > well-planned lessons incorporating a range of methods and approaches
- > teachers providing clear explanations and instructions, and sharing objectives of lessons with pupils
- > effective direct, interactive teaching and good use of questioning and discussion
- > well-planned programmes of homework.

### Box 17:

#### Weaknesses in learning and teaching included:

- > insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils
- > too low expectations of standards of pupils' work
- > the slow pace of some lessons, particularly in S1/S2
- > few opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their work or to take responsibility for their own learning
- > lack of consistency in the application of homework policies across departments
- > insufficient use made of assessment information to identify pupils' learning needs
- > too little account taken of pupils' prior attainment.

## 2.4 Support for Pupils

The quality of pastoral care had improved and was very good in 75% of schools. In a further 20% strengths outweighed weaknesses. Few schools had important weaknesses in this area. Strengths included high levels of staff commitment to pupils' care and welfare and effective steps by guidance staff to maintain regular contact and to get to know pupils well. Increased attention was being given to pupils' health and safety, particularly to aspects of child protection and bullying. Links with external agencies and parents strongly underpinned the most effective practice.

Personal and social development (PSD) courses in S1-S4 were very good or good in 80% of schools. Courses in S5/S6 were less well developed. They had important weaknesses or were unsatisfactory in 30% of schools. The best courses provided well-designed and balanced programmes, often with a good focus on careers development and aspects of pupils' health and safety. Weaknesses included inconsistent development of pupils' skills from stage to stage and lack of systematic assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. Some schools needed to involve pupils more in evaluating PSD courses.

Arrangements to help pupils make decisions about course choices and future careers were very good in 45% of schools, and good in a further 45%. There were important weaknesses in 10%. Careers advice was often very well co-ordinated with a range of other activities to develop pupils' wider understanding of the world of work. Work experience made a strong contribution to best practice. The quality of advice in S4 and S5, particularly about new NQs, required further refinement in some schools.

The effectiveness of guidance staff in monitoring pupils' progress and attainment had improved and was very good or good in most schools. Weaknesses included a lack of systematic procedures to track attainment as pupils moved from stage to stage. Target-setting arrangements in many schools had strengthened procedures for the overall monitoring of pupils' progress and attainment. However, in many schools there was a need to enhance further the tracking of pupils' progress across all of their subjects, to ensure that individuals could be given targeted support to raise their attainment.

The effectiveness of learning support was very good in 35% of schools and strengths outweighed weaknesses in a further 50%. Strengths included clear arrangements for identifying and reviewing pupils' needs and close liaison with primary schools and external agencies. The best arrangements demonstrated a wide and well-balanced range of services for pupils. In some schools learning support was focused too narrowly on a limited range of needs. Learning support staff generally worked well with subject teachers to identify appropriate programmes for pupils, assist course development, and provide co-operative teaching. Overall, tutorial support was planned well. Areas requiring further improvement included co-ordination between learning support, guidance and subject staff, support for higher achieving pupils and arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress.

Increasing numbers of schools were making good progress in introducing individualised educational programmes (IEPs) to meet pupils' special educational needs and raise attainment. Weaknesses in IEPs often included imprecise targets or the limited involvement of pupils and parents in the target-setting process.

An increasing number of schools had developed effective strategies for health promotion and promoting positive behaviour.

Special units or support bases in schools generally provided good support for pupils with learning difficulties. They increasingly also addressed social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Support for pupils by staff working in such units or bases, including the strong contribution of many auxiliary staff, was often a strength of school provision. In general, the needs of pupils with Records of Needs were met well in most schools. Reviews were generally managed effectively and pupils received appropriate support. However, in a significant number of cases schools and education authorities needed to improve arrangements for ensuring that Records were updated.

**Box 18:**  
Features of a good school ethos included:

- > a strong sense of identity with the school
- > effective approaches to promoting positive behaviour
- > high and consistent teacher expectations of pupils' attendance, behaviour and achievement
- > close monitoring of progress and attainment
- > opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and participate in decision making
- > frequent praise and celebration of success.

**Box 19:**  
Effective partnership with parents, carers and School Boards included:

- > use of a wide range of methods of communication
- > regular communication on the curriculum and learning and teaching
- > encouraging them to be involved in supporting learning
- > effective handling of enquiries
- > seeking and responding to their views
- > close working with School Boards and parent-teacher associations.

## 2.5 Ethos

Ethos was very good in 40% of schools and good in a further 50%. Classroom relationships were very good or good in almost all schools. Schools were increasingly implementing positive behaviour and anti-bullying strategies effectively. Increasingly, schools made good use of assemblies to foster a sense of community, promote achievement and celebrate success. More opportunities were provided for pupils to take on responsibilities and participate in decision-making through pupil councils. Pupils also took part in a range of extra-curricular activities. They continued to make significant contributions to charities through a wide range of fund-raising activities. Many schools had taken positive steps to promote an ethos of achievement. However, many teachers needed to set higher expectations of the quality of pupils' work and attainment. Box 18 shows some features that contributed to a good school ethos.

Many non-denominational schools continued to make insufficient provision for religious observance.

The level of attendance in secondary schools remained stable between 1998/99 and 2000/2001 at 89%. Almost all absence was authorised. Attendance continued to vary considerably between schools and across year groups in the same school. Between 1997/98 and 2000/2001 the average number of half days absence per pupil remained steady at 43.

Partnerships with parents, carers and School Boards, were very good or good in 95% of schools. Arrangements for parents and carers to contact guidance and support for learning teachers had improved. Parents and carers were increasingly involved in the life of schools. Schools consulted them effectively on a range of matters affecting their child's education. Boxes 19 and 20 show some of the strengths and weaknesses of partnerships with parents, carers and School Boards.

At May 2000 96% of secondary schools had a School Board, an almost identical number as at May 1998. Schools benefited where there were positive relations with the School Board, particularly when the Board regularly gathered and communicated the views of parents.

Links with other schools and agencies were very good in 45% of schools and good in a further 45%. There were continuing improvements in the links with primary schools on transfer arrangements between P7 and S1, continuity in pupils' learning and sharing of information on pupils' attainment. Productive links with local businesses and organisations continued to make an important contribution to education for work.

## 2.6 Resources

### Accommodation

Accommodation and facilities were very good or good in 55% of schools. There were important weaknesses in 45% of schools. Recent refurbishment of buildings and facilities had taken place in around a third of schools. However, the number of schools where there were important weaknesses in accommodation had increased. The most frequent concerns related to poor maintenance and repair and inadequate lighting, heating or ventilation in classrooms. In around a quarter of schools, security arrangements were still under review. Lack of social areas for pupils and cramped dining areas were reported in around a third of schools. Inadequate or unhygienic toilet facilities were encountered in around a fifth of schools.

Accommodation was unsatisfactory in 5% of subject departments. The main weaknesses were the poor or inadequate facilities for physical education, lack of sufficient specialist rooms and small classrooms. Lack of appropriate storage space was reported in around a third of schools inspected. Facilities for guidance provision continued to improve. Despite constraints imposed by the buildings in many schools, teachers made good use of available space to display pupils' work.

### Resources for learning and teaching

The supply of textbooks and equipment was very good or good in almost all schools. Over the period of the report the availability of ICT resources increased substantially, and many schools and education authorities had plans to extend the provision of computers and develop networking. In September 2000, there was one computer to every seven secondary school pupils. Access to, and use of, the library continued to vary considerably from school to school.

Almost all subject departments made good use of available resources to support learning and teaching. However, in 15% of departments, more resources were needed to support subject developments, and in a few cases the organisation of resources needed to improve. Limited access to computers and the Internet, or in some cases too little use of available ICT, were identified by HMI in many departments. This improved over the period of the report.

Procedures for allocating funds and resources were effective in almost all schools. Headteachers managed their devolved budgets very well, and were often able to manage budget savings to provide additional staffing or purchase computers.

#### Box 20:

Partnership with parents, carers and School Boards could be improved further by:

- > more helpful written reports on pupils' progress, particularly in S1/S2
- > earlier warning when pupils were making slow progress
- > seeking their views on school priorities for development
- > seeking their views on strategies for raising attainment.

**Box 21:**  
Some features of good staff development and review were:

- > knowledge of staff and school needs, based on thorough self-evaluation and review
- > links with departmental self-evaluation
- > activities linked to school priorities and plans for improvement
- > a clear focus on improving learning and teaching and raising attainment
- > effective sharing of good practice
- > well-planned support for new staff and probationers.

## Staffing

Almost all schools had an appropriate number of teachers in line with education authority policies. Staffing levels were good, with a suitable balance of experienced and recently-qualified staff. Where there were shortages of qualified teachers it was most often in religious and moral education, modern languages and support for pupils. In around a fifth of schools there was a high turnover of staff. This was often due to long-term illness and difficulties in obtaining supply teachers, particularly in more remote areas.

Within subject and guidance departments, staff deployment was very good or good in almost 90% of schools. The deployment of staff to support learning was very good or good in 70% of schools. Non-teaching staff made valuable contributions to the work of the majority of schools. However, in a few cases there was a lack of technician support for ICT. The latest figures show that the national pupil-teacher ratio had risen slightly from 12.8 to 13.0 pupils to one teacher and that the proportion of full-time equivalent staff holding a promoted post remained at 56%.

Staff development and review was very good in 10% of schools and good in 35% of schools. An increasing number of schools had effective procedures for identifying staff development needs and implementing programmes to meet them. Although more schools had made progress in introducing education authority schemes for staff review, many had still to implement programmes in full. Box 21 shows some of the strengths of staff development and review procedures.

## 2.7 Management and quality assurance

### Self-evaluation

The overall quality of self-evaluation had improved. It was very good or good in 55% of schools. In the best practice schools had developed a strong culture of self-evaluation leading to the publication of a report on standards and quality. Arrangements were rigorous, clearly shared and understood, and involved all staff in using performance indicators or other means of benchmarking. However, procedures for self-evaluation still had some important weaknesses or were unsatisfactory in a further 45% of schools. In many cases arrangements were not sufficiently systematic or clearly based on rigorous audits of provision or use of available performance data. In particular, too little attention was given to establishing clear evaluations of the overall quality and consistency of learning and teaching.

Well-focused links between departments and members of the senior management team were a key factor in establishing effective school self-evaluation. Headteachers were usually involved in annual meetings with each principal teacher to discuss examination performance, although these meetings did not always have clearly defined outcomes. Increasingly other senior staff were involved in such discussions and in consideration of departmental development plans. Senior staff, however, were often insufficiently involved in monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching in classrooms.

Monitoring and evaluation within subject departments was very good in only 10% of cases, although strengths outweighed weaknesses in a further 40%. Similarly, monitoring and evaluation arrangements in guidance and learning support departments was very good in only 10% of cases and good in 40%.

Box 22 shows some features of good self-evaluation.

Many schools had an appropriate set of aims which provided a clear framework for school improvement. Most schools involved staff well in making policy. However, a clearer focus was often required on how agreed policies were to be implemented more consistently, particularly to improve learning and teaching and attainment.

#### Box 22:

Some features of good self-evaluation were:

- > a strong culture of self-evaluation across the school
- > systematic approaches based on performance indicators
- > good use of performance and benchmarking data
- > clear quality assurance responsibilities for senior staff and principal teachers
- > direct monitoring of learning and teaching
- > links with processes for planning for improvement, staff development and reporting on standards and quality.

**Box 23:**  
**Features of effective planning for improvement included:**

- > priorities and targets based on rigorous audit procedures
- > a manageable number of clear targets
- > linking departmental targets to school targets
- > planning for continuing work as well as new projects
- > a clear focus on improving learning and teaching and raising attainment
- > clear timescales and measures of success for each project
- > clear identification of funding
- > involving all staff and, where appropriate, pupils and parents.

## Planning for improvement

Development planning was making an increasingly effective contribution to school improvement. In 55% of schools the development plan was of very good or good quality. The best plans were based on rigorous audit procedures which identified clear and appropriate priorities. However, in 45% of schools planning for improvement had important weaknesses or was unsatisfactory. Common weaknesses included the need for priorities to be more sharply focused on improvements in pupils' learning experiences and attainment and for plans to include clearer measures of success. Overall progress in implementing school development plans had improved.

Development plans were very good or good in 55% of both guidance and learning support departments. However, in subject departments plans had significant weaknesses or were unsatisfactory in 60% of cases. Departmental plans were often not sufficiently well aligned with school priorities. Many also needed to give more attention to the impact of development projects on pupils' learning and attainment. Departmental plans sometimes varied significantly in quality within the same school, with insufficient attention given to sharing good practice.

The extent to which the priorities in development plans were implemented was a clear strength in schools and demonstrated the widespread commitment of staff to achieving identified targets. In 80% of schools and departments the implementation of development plans was very good or good. Box 23 shows some of the features found where planning for improvement was most effective.

## Leadership

Headteachers' leadership was very good in 40% of schools and good in a further 40%. Overall, headteachers were well regarded within their school communities and had successfully promoted positive relationships with pupils, parents and staff. The most effective leaders provided a strong personal and professional example and inspired confidence. They had a clear vision for the improvement of their schools and successfully promoted teamwork at all levels to make the vision a reality. They gave close attention to staff development needs and used the strengths of colleagues effectively through clear delegation. However, headteachers' leadership still had some important weaknesses in 20% of schools. The main weaknesses occurred where they focused unduly on day-to-day management and administration at the expense of providing more strategic direction. Some headteachers gave insufficient attention to raising pupils' and teachers' expectations for achievement and managed the overall pace of change too slowly.

In 15% of schools the senior management team's contribution to the effectiveness of the school was very good and in a further 75% strengths outweighed weaknesses. The most effective senior staff provided headteachers with strong support, through a consistent approach and a clear sense of teamwork. They maintained supportive links with departments but also provided objective evaluations and challenge. Weaknesses included remits which were too closely directed to administrative tasks and lacked sufficient focus on monitoring and improving the quality of pupils' learning and attainment. A number of senior staff needed to take a more direct role in the quality assurance of departments with which they were linked.

The leadership of principal teachers of subjects was very good in 30% of departments and good in a further 50%. The most effective principal teachers demonstrated very good professional knowledge linked to the ability to promote teamwork and provide strategic direction. Weaknesses included insufficient monitoring of practice across the department, lack of involvement of colleagues in quality assurance and limited steps taken to address inconsistencies in practice across the department. Senior teachers generally had appropriate remits and discharged them effectively.

The leadership provided for guidance departments was very good in 45% of schools and good in a further 40%. Similarly, in learning support departments, leadership was very good in 45% of schools and strengths outweighed weaknesses in a further 40%.

Box 24 shows the main areas where leadership needed to be improved.

### Box 24:

#### Leadership needed to be improved through:

- > headteachers providing more strategic direction
- > headteachers placing a stronger focus on raising attainment
- > headteachers raising expectations among pupils, parents and teachers
- > an increased involvement of senior staff in quality assurance
- > principal teachers monitoring the quality of work across the department and ensuring consistent best practice.

## Selected Further Reading

- A Route to Health Promotion: Self-Evaluation Using Performance Indicators. HMIE, 1999.
- Better Behaviour – Better Learning. HMIE, 2001.
- Early Intervention: 1998-2000. HMIE, 2001.
- Improving Reading at the Early Stages 5-14. HMIE, 1998.
- Improving Science 5-14. HMIE, 1999.
- Improving Writing 5-14. HMIE, 1999.
- Improving PE in Primary Schools. HMIE, 2001.
- Improving Leadership in Scottish Schools. HMI Standards, Quality and Audit Division, 2000.
- Making it happen using performance indicators. HMI Audit Unit, 1998.
- Setting Targets – Raising Standards in Schools. HMIE, 1998.
- Standards and Quality in Primary and Secondary Schools 1994-98: Modern Languages. HMIE, 1998.
- Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools 1995-1999: Mathematics. HMIE, 1999.
- Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools 1994-97: English. HMIE, 1999.
- Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools 1995-1999: Modern Studies. HMIE, 2000.
- Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools 1995-1999: History. HMIE, 2000.
- Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools 1995-2000: The Sciences. HMIE, 2000.
- Standards and Quality in Primary Schools: Mathematics 1998-2001. HMIE, 2001.
- Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools: Religious and Moral Education 1995-2000. HMIE, 2001.
- Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools: Computing 1995-2001. HMIE, 2001.
- Taking a closer look at guidance. HMI Audit Unit, 1998.
- The use of ICT in Learning and Teaching. HMIE, 2000.



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