



**Standards and Quality
in Special Schools:
1998-2002**

A report by HM Inspectorate of Education



Standards and Quality in Special Schools: 1998–2002

FOREWORD

This report is the first Standards and Quality report dealing with special schools. It makes evaluations based on the published performance indicators which were in use in the period 1998-2002 in school inspections. It should be read in conjunction with the more general survey contained in Standards and Quality in Scottish Primary and Secondary Schools: 1998-2001 and the recent HMIE report, *Count us in*.¹

Provision for pupils with special educational needs has seen a period of significant development since the late 1970s. It is encouraging that, in the inspections covered by this report, HM Inspectors found that special schools played a significant role in the education of pupils who were experiencing a diverse range of learning difficulties and exhibiting challenging behaviour. The report notes the positive ethos and high quality of pastoral care in most special schools. It identifies a number of strengths in learning and teaching, particularly where teachers had high expectations for all pupils. It also recognises the steady progress which has been made in devising and implementing individualised educational programmes for pupils and the emphasis placed on developing effective partnerships with parents. The commitment of staff in many schools in meeting the needs of pupils is impressive.

There are, however, major areas of the work of special schools which require improvement. The structure of the curriculum was a significant weakness in the majority of schools. The shorter length of the school week when compared with mainstream schools, the subject of a recent circular² from the Scottish Executive, still needed to be addressed by many education authorities. In order to encourage all pupils to achieve their fullest potential, improvements were required in aspects of planning, learning, teaching and assessment. Schools generally should improve their approaches to self-evaluation and development planning.

¹ *Count us in* – Achieving Inclusion in Scottish Schools. HMIE, 2002.

² *Length of School Week: Pupils in Special Schools and Units* (Circular 4/2002). Scottish Executive Education Department, April 2002.

The report will be of interest to a broad range of readers. Above all, it is intended to provide a benchmark of good practice which will help schools to improve the quality of education they provide and to enhance the achievements of pupils with special educational needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham H C Donaldson', with a horizontal line underneath.

Graham H C Donaldson
HM Senior Chief Inspector

INTRODUCTION

This report is based on the inspections of 65 special schools which led to individually published reports during the period 1998-2002. Inspections were carried out in establishments across Scotland which provided services for pupils with a very wide range of special educational needs. The sample covered education authority schools and independent schools, including some with residential provision.

During this period notable developments influenced the effectiveness of services for pupils with special educational needs. These included the following:

- *A Manual of Good Practice in Special Educational Needs* (SOED, 1998) was published to provide guidance for developing high quality professional practice to meet the requirements of pupils with special educational needs. It was designed to help professionals evaluate their work, set targets for improvement and include these as part of their on-going programme of development planning. This manual complemented the report by HM Inspectors, *Effective Provision for Special Educational Needs* (SOEID, 1994), which set out features and principles of good practice.
- Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 made statutory the right of every child of school age to be provided with school education by an education authority. It also made clear *the duty of the authority to secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential.*

In assessing standards and quality, HM Inspectors used published criteria in the form of performance indicators which supported their traditional analyses based on collective professional expertise. The indicators relate judgements to four levels of performance:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • <i>very good</i> | major strengths |
| • <i>good</i> | strengths outweigh weaknesses |
| • <i>fair</i> | some important weaknesses |
| • <i>unsatisfactory</i> | major weaknesses |

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

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| • <i>almost all</i> | over 90% |
| • <i>most</i> | 75-90% |
| • <i>the majority</i> | 50-74% |
| • <i>less than half</i> | 15-49% |
| • <i>few</i> | 15% |

SUMMARY

KEY STRENGTHS

- The range and variety of teaching approaches.
- The generally good quality of pupils' motivation in their lessons.
- The steady progress in devising and implementing individualised educational programmes (IEPs).
- The positive ethos and good quality of pastoral care in most schools.
- Partnerships with parents.
- The leadership provided by headteachers in most schools.
- The commitment of staff in accepting the responsibility of dealing with pupils experiencing a diverse range of learning difficulties and exhibiting challenging behaviour.

MAIN POINTS FOR ACTION

Education authorities and governing bodies of independent schools should act on the following recommendations:

- consider how to extend the length of the school week to be in line with that of mainstream schools, taking due account of pupils' needs and the views of parents
- ensure that schools for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties develop effective approaches to improve pupils' inter-personal skills
- take steps to ensure that all teachers in special schools gain appropriate professional qualifications in teaching pupils with special educational needs
- tackle the weaknesses in the leadership of headteachers where this occurs in around 20% of schools.

Schools should act on the following recommendations:

- ensure that pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum which meets their learning needs
- improve pupils' achievements through the use of sufficiently challenging targets
- address weaknesses in learning and teaching by:
 - providing pupils with suitably challenging tasks
 - helping pupils take responsibility for their own learning, for example, by involving them more fully in setting their own targets
 - improving the pace of learning
- assist in improving teachers' planning by providing effective guidance on curricular programmes, teaching approaches and assessment procedures
- ensure that handbooks provide relevant information to parents, including details on the curriculum and opportunities for certification
- in conjunction with support agencies, improve the management of inter-agency collaboration
- take further steps to improve arrangements for staff review and development
- improve self-evaluation and development planning to focus on raising the quality of learning and teaching and levels of pupils' achievements.

THE CURRICULUM

Overall, the structure of the curriculum had important weaknesses in over 45% of schools inspected. There were major weaknesses in around a further 10%. Schools had adopted a variety of arrangements to match the curriculum to the age, stage and needs of their pupils. However, learning experiences were often too limited, particularly at the secondary stages.

In almost all schools inspected, the length of the school week for pupils was shorter than in mainstream primary and secondary schools. This placed constraints on the delivery of the curriculum and restricted pupils' learning opportunities. Schools were generally aware of the need to increase the length of teaching time for their pupils. Together with education authorities or governing bodies of independent schools, they needed to consider how to extend the length of the school week, taking due account of pupils' needs and the views of parents. Education authorities and schools now have advice to guide them in this respect.

At the primary stages the curriculum was generally broad and balanced. Schools used national and local advice to inform their decisions about the content and structure of the curriculum. Almost all schools had made progress towards introducing individualised educational programmes (IEPs) to address their pupils' special educational needs. In most cases, IEPs were beginning to be used effectively to assist in providing appropriate targets for individual pupils. In some schools, however, rigid adherence to individual pupils' targets in language and communication, mathematics and understanding and relating to the environment, and personal and social development had resulted in too little attention being given to other areas of the curriculum. In particular, such schools gave insufficient time to art and design, music, drama, religious and moral education, information and communications technology (ICT) and aspects of environmental studies.

Aspects of the curriculum at the secondary stages required to be improved. In a number of schools the curriculum did not provide pupils with a broad and balanced learning experience. Provision for science and aspects of expressive arts needed to be extended. Only a few schools offered pupils good opportunity to study a modern European language or provided them with a European experience. In a number of schools, pupils at senior stages were offered only a restricted choice of subjects. The limited range did not adequately prepare these pupils for adult life.

Schools in which the curriculum was good or better at the secondary stages offered pupils at S1/S2 a wide range of subjects. At S4 they offered a variety of units within the framework for National Qualifications (NQ). Such schools were continuing to develop positive links with local colleges of further education, and were providing their pupils with appropriate leavers' courses which included worthwhile work experience appropriate to their needs and interests. Most schools had recognised the need to provide opportunities for their pupils to gain certification and were preparing their pupils for an increasing range of awards, particularly at Access Level 2.

Schools for pupils with severe, profound and complex learning difficulties, made good use of guidelines on the elaborated 5-14 curriculum and sensory approaches to the curriculum. However, in some of these schools, programmes were not always appropriate for the age of the pupils. Nevertheless, there were examples of very good integration of key aspects of the curriculum and personal and social development.

The curriculum had major weaknesses in around 20% of schools for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In these schools, while there was an appropriate emphasis on English language and mathematics, insufficient time was devoted to other areas. This was often due to a lack of specialist teachers and facilities in these areas.

Curricular strengths at the primary and secondary stages are shown in Box 1.

Box 1

The main strengths of the curriculum at the primary stages were:

- general breadth and balance
- good attention to the development of pupils' personal and social skills
- generally, effective use of IEPs.

The main strengths of the curriculum at the secondary stages were:

- breadth at S1 and S2
- the provision of an increasing range of NQ units, particularly at Access Level 2.

STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT

When evaluating the standard of pupils' achievements in special schools, HM Inspectors considered:

- pupils' progress in their coursework;
- their achievements in individual targets set within their IEPs; and
- their attainments, where appropriate, in national targets and examinations.

In making their evaluations, HM Inspectors gave careful consideration to the complexity of pupils' special educational needs.

The overall quality of pupils' achievements was good, or better, in around 70% of schools. In schools where the overall quality of achievement was very good, almost all pupils were progressing very well towards meeting their individual targets. Pupils at the secondary stages in such schools achieved success in a good range of National Qualifications at Access Levels. In schools where there were weaknesses in the overall quality of pupils' achievements, this was due to the poor quality of programmes, the structure of the curriculum, and individual targets which were insufficiently challenging for some pupils.

Pupils had achieved very good standards in English language or communication and language in almost 10% of the schools inspected. They achieved good standards in around 55% of schools. There were weaknesses in the quality of pupils' achievements in about 35% of schools. In schools where pupils were making good progress, they interacted well with adults and their peers. Where appropriate, their communication skills were supported and developed by the use of signs and symbols and alternative technology. In some cases pupils achieved Standard Grade and NQ units at Access Level. In a number of schools, there were weaknesses in pupils' writing skills.

In mathematics and understanding and relating to the environment, the quality of pupils' achievement was very good in a few schools. The quality of pupils' achievements was good in approximately 60%. Strengths in schools for pupils with complex learning difficulties included their understanding of, and interaction with, their immediate environment. In mathematics, pupils with moderate learning difficulties generally made good progress in aspects of number work, but there were weaknesses in progress in other aspects of mathematics.

HM Inspectors evaluated provision for personal and social development (PSD) in all schools inspected. Pupils' achievements in PSD were evaluated in those schools which had set targets for PSD within IEPs. In around 25% of the schools which set targets for PSD, pupils were making very good progress in their individual targets. They were making good progress in approximately 65% of these schools. Generally, pupils were making steady progress in developing self-esteem and independent living skills, including independent travel.

Some special schools presented pupils for a limited number of Standard Grade awards. National statistics showed that the number of special schools presenting pupils for Standard Grades had remained fairly constant in the period 1998-2002. From 2000 to 2002, the number of schools with pupils taking NQ units had increased substantially. Schools were gradually developing their procedures for presenting pupils for Scottish Group Awards at Access Level.

QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The overall quality of teaching was found to be very good in approximately 15% of cases, good in around 65% and fair in just under 20%. Teachers prepared their lessons well and used a range of approaches with their classes. Most used good explanations and questioned pupils well to check their understanding. They were patient with pupils and in almost all cases made very good use of praise to build pupils' confidence. Some schools made very effective use of the environment to enhance learning. They provided pupils with a range of practical and real life experiences to develop and apply skills. However, in some cases, teachers' expectations were too low and they gave pupils tasks which were routine and too simple for them. A majority of schools did not give homework regularly or use it effectively to help support pupils' progress and enhance classroom learning across the curriculum.

Pupils' learning was very good in around 8% of cases, good in about 65% of cases and fair in just under 24%. In a few schools, the quality of pupils' learning had major weaknesses. Pupils generally were well motivated and responded positively to their learning experiences. When given opportunities to do so, they were co-operative and worked well with each other. In some schools, teachers helped pupils to take responsibility for their own learning by setting clear targets for them and providing them with suitable individual planners and timetables to help them organise their day. However, in a number of schools, pupils were not being challenged sufficiently. On such occasions, the pace of learning was too slow and pupils were not given enough responsibility for their own learning by being involved in setting their own learning targets. They were given insufficient opportunities to learn through practical activities or to work with others in a variety of circumstances.

Characteristics of effective teaching are shown in Box 2.

Box 2

We found that learning and teaching was most effective where teachers:

- had high expectations of all pupils
- matched tasks, resources and teaching approaches to pupils' needs
- ensured that pupils were clear about what they had to learn
- gave pupils frequent opportunities to think for themselves
- gave pupils regular feedback on progress
- had good relationships with pupils.

TEACHERS' PLANNING AND APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT

Almost all schools had arrangements at group, class or school level for planning short- and long-term learning goals across the curriculum. The quality of teachers' planning had more strengths than weaknesses in around half of the schools inspected. However, there were some important weaknesses in around 45% of cases. In a few schools planning was unsatisfactory. Overall, teachers were making steady progress in using IEPs to plan classroom activities. They used this framework to outline the steps to be taken to enable pupils to achieve personal targets. In the best examples, IEPs were integrated within the school's overall approach to curriculum planning. Some schools needed to improve the design of IEPs to include clear information on the targets to be achieved by individual pupils and on the measures to show that pupils had successfully met these targets. Where there were weaknesses in planning, teachers' approaches did not always ensure consistency and an appropriate focus for all curricular areas. Teachers' plans needed to build more on pupils' previous learning, in and out of school. They also needed to show more clearly what pupils were expected to learn and how their progress would be measured. In some schools, a lack of guidance to staff on programmes of study and teaching approaches made it difficult for teachers to plan broad and balanced learning experiences.

Overall, teachers had a good knowledge of pupils' strengths and developmental needs. However, around 55% of the schools did not have a systematic approach to assessing and recording pupils' progress. These schools also did not make sufficient use of assessment information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning or to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching. Where appropriate, some schools made good use of National Tests to confirm teachers' judgements of pupils' achievements.

Some schools which provided residential care for pupils needed to ensure that pupils' targets within IEPs were linked more appropriately to their care plans.

Inter-agency Approaches to Assessment and Planning

Inspections highlighted the importance of having efficient and effective contributions to assessment and planning by relevant agencies, such as psychological, medical, social work and careers services. This aspect of support was particularly important for pupils with pronounced, specific or complex special educational needs. Schools and individual pupils did not always have adequate

assistance from external agencies. Consequently, approaches to managing behaviour or planning for the future were not always well implemented. Parental responses to questionnaires issued prior to each inspection indicated that, in just under half of schools, parents felt that they did not receive regular, accurate and helpful advice from external support services. Schools, in conjunction with support agencies, should improve the management of inter-agency work to ensure that support for children, young people and their families is delivered in the most effective manner.

SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

The quality of pastoral care of pupils was a strength in almost all schools inspected. It was very good in almost 70% of schools. Staff knew pupils well and were sensitive to their individual needs. They paid good attention to issues of child protection and to matters of pupils' health and safety. Positive features of pastoral care are shown in Box 3. In the few schools where there were weaknesses in aspects of pastoral care, staff had insufficient training in child protection procedures and positive behaviour management.

Around 20% of the schools inspected provided residential care for some or all of their pupils. The provision for care and welfare of residential pupils was very good or good in all these schools. Good attention was paid to pupils' health needs. Almost all schools had good arrangements for ensuring that pupils could consult with their own or local doctors. Schools generally operated a 'key worker' system whereby pupils had a known adult who they could turn to for support or advice. In some schools, the arrangements for care staff and teaching staff to consult and communicate with each other needed to be improved.

The quality of provision for pupils' personal and social development was very good or good in 80% of schools. However, too many schools had only limited programmes for personal and social development, or provided insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop and exercise responsibilities.

Box 3

Positive features of pastoral care included:

- pupils being valued and known well as individuals
- parents, teachers and other staff working together for the benefit of pupils
- good attention to promoting skills for healthy and independent living.

IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Legislation

The management of Records of Needs was very good or good in around 65% of schools. It was fair in over 20% of schools and unsatisfactory in around a further 10%. Weaknesses in the management of Records of Needs included documentation being out of date, Records of Needs not being formally reviewed at appropriate stages, and staff being unsure of statutory duties or best practice. In some cases, senior managers needed to be more familiar with national guidance relating to management of Records of Needs and Future Needs Assessments. In schools for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, many pupils did not have a Record of Needs. Education authorities and schools should review this situation and, where appropriate, open Records of Needs and implement associated IEPs. Examples of good practice in meeting the statutory requirements for Records of Needs are shown in Box 4.

Many of the weaknesses in implementing special educational needs legislation were found in schools for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Nevertheless, procedures carried out in one of these schools was a model of good practice. Such good practice included arrangements for a member of the senior management team to liaise closely with education authorities to ensure that appropriate assessments and reviews of pupils' needs were undertaken.

Box 4

Good practice in meeting the statutory requirement for Records of Needs included:

- the school setting a timetable for review meetings to take place throughout the year
- informative reports being sent to parents before review meetings
- effective involvement of parents, educational psychologists and external agencies in review meetings
- pupils' involvement, where appropriate, in reviews
- pupils' long-term IEP targets being clearly informed by their Record of Needs.

ETHOS

Ethos was very good in over 50% of the schools inspected and good in around a further 40%. Schools had a caring and welcoming environment and staff had fostered a good sense of community. In these schools, relationships between teachers and pupils were positive, praise was used well to encourage pupils to achieve, and pupils and staff identified strongly with their school. Other features of schools where the ethos was positive included strong teamwork amongst the staff and staff feeling that they were valued. Characteristics associated with a good ethos in schools are shown in Box 5.

While staff generally set appropriately high standards for behaviour and challenged pupils to achieve well, in a few schools ethos was less positive. In these schools, staff did not always have high enough expectations of pupils. They did not effectively celebrate success or foster a sense of community, for example, by making regular use of school assemblies for this purpose.

Behaviour was good in most schools for pupils with moderate to severe and complex learning difficulties. Staff dealt well with incidences of challenging behaviour and used a wide range of ways to calm pupils and restore good behaviour. In schools for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, the atmosphere was generally calm. However, aggressive behaviour towards their peers and staff, leading to disrupted lessons, was a recurring problem in a high proportion of these schools. Staff and pupils worked well together in seeking to improve pupils' behaviour in around 50% of the schools.

Box 5

We found that a good ethos was associated with:

- the frequent use of praise
- encouraging positive behaviour
- high expectations and suitable challenge
- good relationships between staff and pupils
- celebration of success.

COMMUNICATION AND PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

Communication with parents was very good in over 40% of schools and good in over 45%. Common strengths included providing regular information for parents on the work of the school and on their child's progress. Schools often made effective use of daily home-school diaries to enable parents to be involved in their child's learning. Some schools, particularly those for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties, made good use of technology by recording the home-school news on tape. In around half of the schools inspected, arrangements for working in partnership with parents or carers were very good. Good examples included participation in reviews of their children's progress and acting as parent helpers. Increasingly, schools were involving parents in setting and reviewing targets for their children's IEPs. However, around 15% of schools had some important weaknesses in their partnership with parents. Schools should ensure that their handbooks provide useful information to parents, including details on the curriculum and opportunities for certification. Box 6 lists some of the features where partnership with parents was of a high standard.

Box 6

We found that schools had a partnership with parents of a high standard where they:

- ensured that parents received regular, detailed information on their child's progress
- provided clear information on the curriculum
- gave advice on how parents could support their child's learning
- sought parents' views on the school's work and responded to these views.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation and facilities were very good or good in around 55% of schools. Features of very good accommodation included the provision of swimming pools, gymnasia, outdoor sports facilities and gardens. Most schools for pupils with profound and complex special educational needs had a suitable range of facilities including hydrotherapy tanks and pools, sensory rooms and soft play rooms. Box 7 provides examples of very good features of accommodation and facilities.

A number of schools had been purpose-built and had accommodation which was well suited to the needs of pupils. Others, however, did not meet needs well due to their remote or isolated location and, in some cases, their lack of easy access for people with a physical disability.

Weaknesses in accommodation included the poor and decaying fabric of some buildings and insufficient storage facilities, particularly for pupils' aids and equipment. In a number of schools, HM Inspectors noted health and safety issues. These included car parking too close to playground areas and inadequate toilet and changing facilities.

Those schools inspected with residential facilities were largely for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Although a majority of these schools had refurbishment programmes in place to improve accommodation for their residential pupils, there remained weaknesses in a large minority of the schools. Examples of such weaknesses included lack of privacy in bedrooms, inadequate facilities to store personal items, and bedrooms being located too close to classroom areas.

Box 7

Where accommodation was very good we found that it:

- was attractive and well maintained
- provided a stimulating learning environment
- suited the physical and academic needs of the pupils
- included good facilities for outdoor play.

RESOURCES

The provision of materials and equipment for learning and teaching was very good or good in 80% of schools. Schools had a good supply of appropriate resources for most areas of the curriculum. However, some schools had gaps in resources for aspects of English language and mathematics, and for science, music, and religious and moral education.

Computer facilities and access to the Internet were good in most schools. However, schools generally were short of appropriate and up-to-date curricular software. Some schools had no system for the planned replacement of computers.

Schools for pupils with severe, profound and complex special educational needs were generally well resourced to meet pupils' requirements. They had technological aids to help pupils communicate, specialist mobility aids for pupils with physical disabilities, and a variety of resources to enhance the sensory aspects of the curriculum. Only around 50% of the schools for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties had sufficient resources to provide for a suitably broad and balanced curriculum.

Almost all schools had responsibility for managing their devolved budgets. Where such procedures were in place, around 95% of headteachers managed these finances very well or well. They appropriately linked funding to priorities in development plans and made effective use of planned savings to enhance learning and teaching.

STAFFING

The provision of staff was very good or good in most schools. Most had an appropriate number of suitably experienced teaching and auxiliary staff. In a number of schools, visiting specialist teachers provided an important contribution to staffing, generally through their contributions to expressive arts, home economics and physical education. Strengths in staffing included the positive contributions made by the committed teaching and other staff. However, around 50% of the schools for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties were unable to recruit or retain a wide enough range of specialist teachers. The resulting shortage of skilled staff restricted the breadth of curricular activities which could be offered. Some schools also faced difficulty in finding appropriately qualified and experienced teachers to cover for staff absence.

Schools usually had teaching staff who had additional qualifications in relevant aspects of special educational needs. However, about 25% had a significant number of staff with insufficient specialist qualifications to teach pupils with special educational needs. Some schools and education authorities were taking steps to remedy such gaps.

Deployment of staff was very good or good in around 85% of schools. Where weaknesses occurred the main reason was due to inflexibility of arrangements for deploying teachers or auxiliary staff to support individuals or groups of pupils.

MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Leadership

The leadership of headteachers had major strengths in over 25% of schools and had more strengths than weaknesses in approximately a further 50%. Headteachers generally demonstrated a high level of professional commitment and had developed positive relationships with parents, pupils and staff. In the best examples, headteachers provided a clear sense of direction, developed effective teamwork and focused their leadership on improving the quality of learning and teaching. However, there were important weaknesses in leadership in just over 15% of the schools inspected and it was unsatisfactory in around 5%. Box 8 shows some areas where leadership was strong.

Box 8

Leadership in schools was strong where it:

- involved staff in developing the curriculum
- ensured that staff had clear guidance on the curriculum and approaches to learning and teaching
- took a systematic approach to monitoring learning and teaching and supporting improvements
- made very good use of the skills of promoted staff to meet the needs of the school.

The effectiveness of other promoted staff was a major strength in over 15% and had more strengths than weaknesses in a majority of schools. Promoted staff were most effective when they worked as a team and shared their professional skills to develop and demonstrate good practice. In some schools the remit of promoted staff did not address the needs of the school or make best use of individual strengths.

Staff Development and Review

While a majority of schools inspected had good arrangements for staff development and review, there were important weaknesses in approximately 30% of schools and arrangements were unsatisfactory in around 5%. Arrangements were most effective when teachers had had their work formally reviewed under the education authority's guidelines, where staff had good opportunities to undertake specialist qualifications, and where opportunities for staff development were well linked to priorities in the development plan.

SELF-EVALUATION

Almost all schools used some form of self-evaluation as part of their approaches to quality assurance. However, approaches to self-evaluation at school level were very good or good in only 40% of schools. Sixty per cent of schools needed to make self-evaluation more systematic, including a clearer emphasis on the quality of learning and teaching. Some schools had made use of the national performance indicators published in *How good is our school?*. Using these indicators helped them to identify how well the school was performing and highlight areas for improvement. Schools used a range of meetings at stage, department or school level to evaluate aspects of their work. In a number of cases, promoted staff needed to ensure that such meetings allowed staff regular opportunities to review key issues. Increasingly, schools were using the information gathered from self-evaluation to produce their own standards and quality reports. Box 9 shows areas in which HM Inspectors offered advice to improve monitoring and self-evaluation.

Box 9

HM Inspectors suggested that self-evaluation could be improved by:

- analysing the achievement and pace of progress of individual pupils
- reviewing how teachers' plans are evaluated and how feedback is provided to them
- providing more effective forms of monitoring learning and teaching with a view to supporting improvement
- making clear the roles of promoted staff in monitoring the work of the school.

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Development planning was well established as an approach to improving school effectiveness. School development plans were very good in around 15% of schools and had more strengths than weaknesses in just over 35%. Some important weaknesses existed in development plans in around 45% of schools and it was unsatisfactory in about 5%. Planning was particularly effective where all staff were involved in setting aims, auditing performance and deciding on the action to be taken. In the best examples, the plan provided clear information including details of staff responsibilities, resources and evaluation procedures. Box 10 highlights some good features of development planning.

Box 10

Good features of development planning included:

- rigorous audit leading to appropriate development projects
- a clear plan detailing the improvements to be made and how these would be achieved
- involvement of staff, pupils and parents
- systematic approaches to measuring the success of development projects.



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