



Best Practice in Raising Achievement: Evidence from Ofsted Inspections

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HMCI in 2012

The key to improvement can be summed up in one word: leadership. That's why I have made leadership such a central feature of my first annual report.

Leaders change things.

Leaders move things on.

Leaders determine the culture and ethos of the institution.

HMCI in 2013

Twenty or thirty years ago, when I was a teacher and later a head-teacher there, inner London schools were the worst achieving in the country. Today, in 2013, the capital is not only leading the way in terms of raw attainment scores but also in narrowing the attainment gap between rich and poor.

A couple of decades ago no-one – least of all me - would have believed a transformation on this scale could ever happen.

So what drove this revolution in London? There were three vital ingredients, in no particular order: leadership, leadership and leadership.

Planning for learning



‘ Inspectors are interested in the effectiveness of planning rather than the form it takes. ’

We don't specify:

- § how planning should be set out
- § the length of time it should take
- § the amount of detail it should contain.

And we don't need to see individual or previous lesson plans.



Self-evaluation

6 Choose a format that's right for your school. 9

Self-evaluation should be part of the school's business processes – not just for inspection.



Grading of lessons



‘ We don’t grade the quality of teaching or outcomes in the individual lessons visited. ’

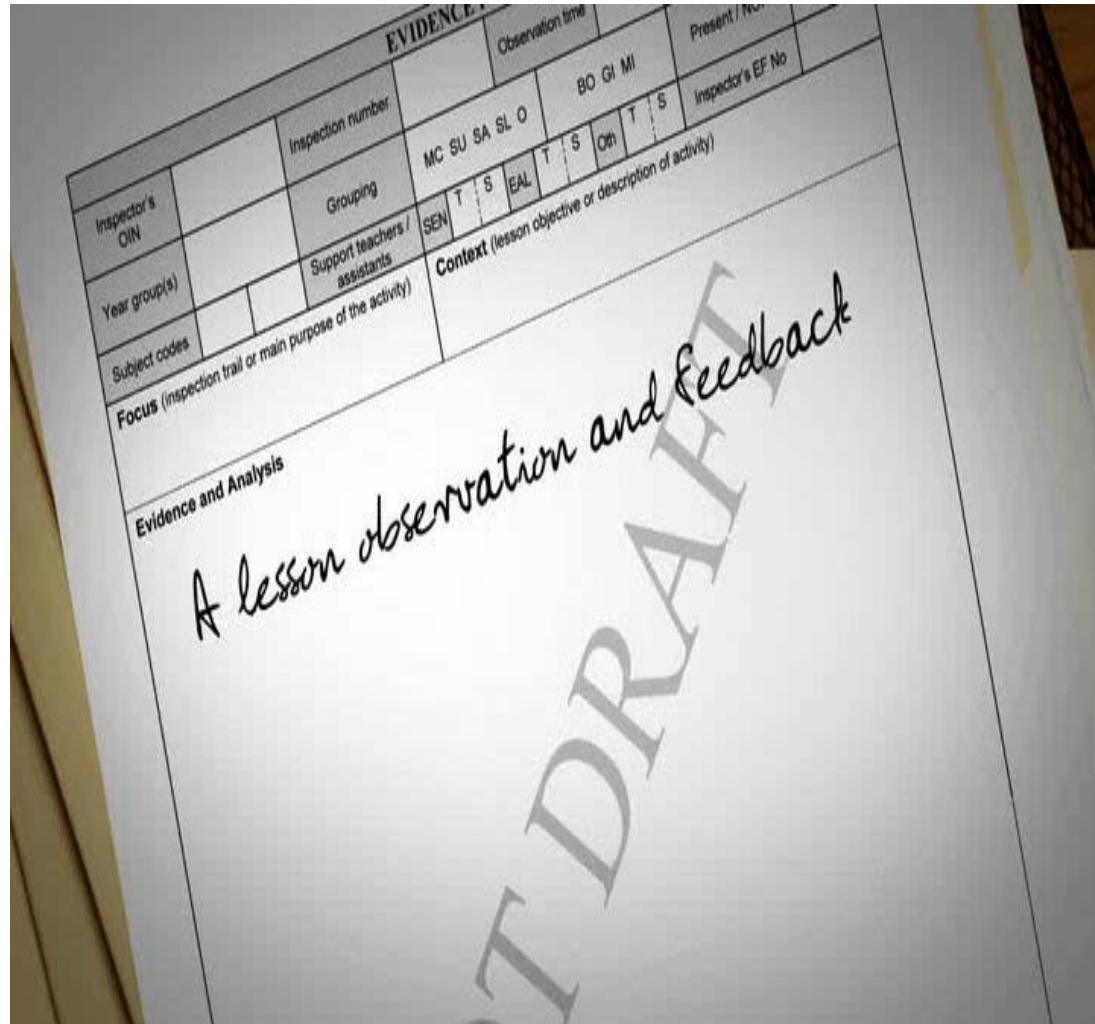


Lesson observations

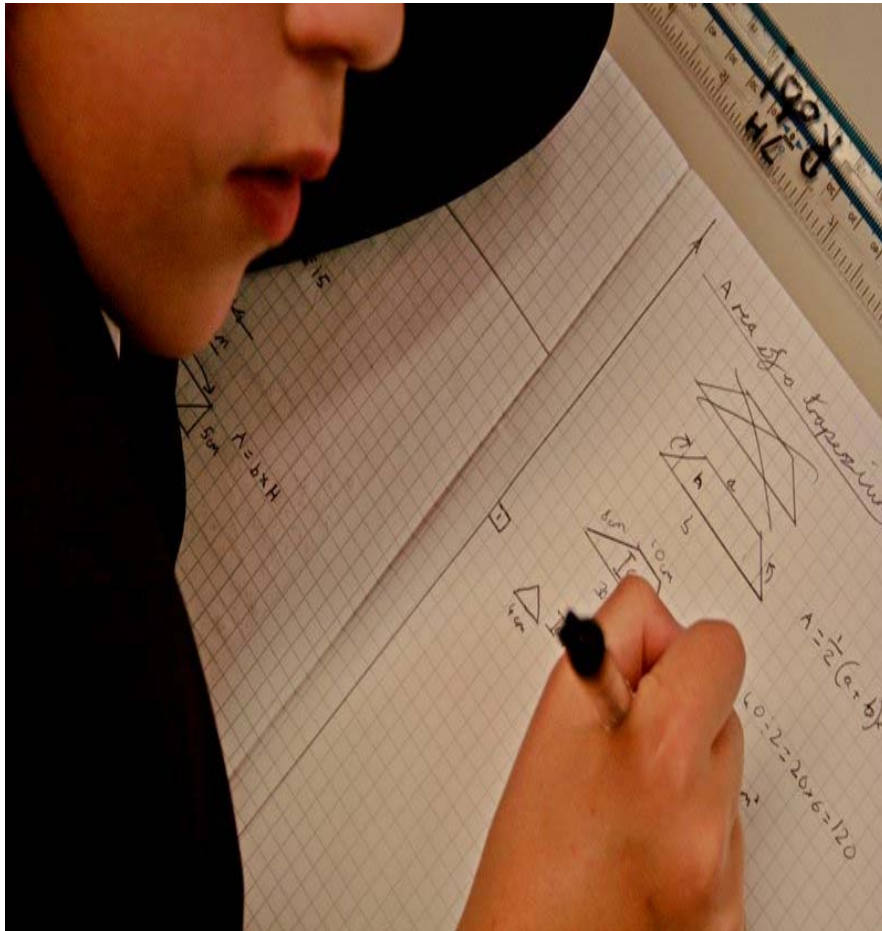


We don't:

- § expect schools to carry out a specified amount of observations
- § need to see specific pay grade details of individual teachers that we observe.



Pupils' work – in books and folders



‘ We don’t expect to see a particular frequency or quantity of work in pupils’ books or folders. ’

We understand that this depends on the subject being studied and the age and ability of the pupils.

Marking and feedback

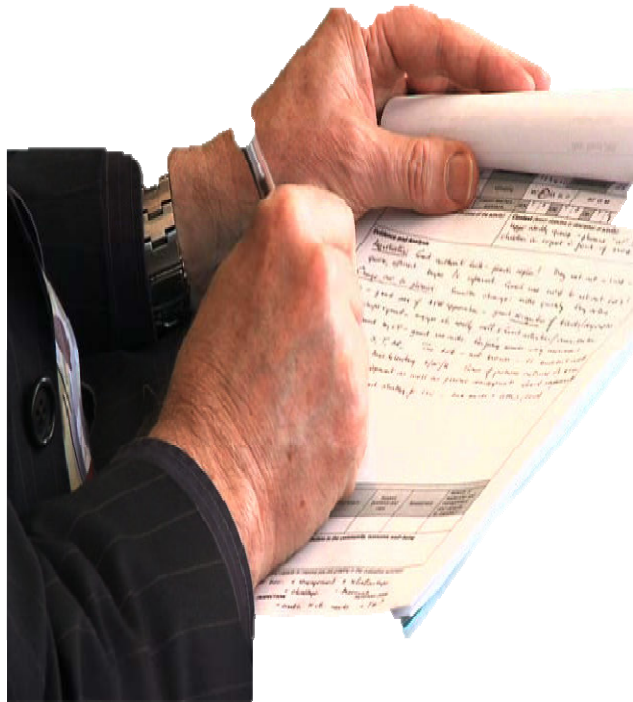


‘ We don’t expect to see any specific frequency, type, volume or written records of all feedback. ’

- § It’s for schools to decide through their assessment policy.
- § We’ll look at how it’s used to promote learning.
- § If marking needs to improve, we’ll make sure that our recommendations don’t lead to unnecessary workload for teachers.



Evidence for inspection



- ‘ We take a range of evidence into account ...
- § published performance data
 - § school's in-year performance information
 - § work in pupils' books/folders/online
 - § how teaching and learning is routinely monitored and its link to teachers' performance management and standards

but we don't expect you to prepare this specifically for inspection. ’

Evidence for inspection

We don't expect:

- schools to provide evidence beyond that in our inspection handbook
- teachers or pupils to do work specifically for the inspection
- evidence of the sub-headings in the teachers' standards for each teacher
- performance and pupil-tracking information in a specific format for the inspection. Just use the format you'd ordinarily use to monitor the progress of pupils.



The answer

The fairy tale lesson: How to get outstanding in Ofsted.

Get young people to do outstandingly well!





The challenge

'Unless we have headteachers who take on the difficult challenges of schools performance and adopt a no excuses culture, we are never going to make the improvements we need.' Sir Michael Wilshaw, HMCI, February 2012.

HMCI - January 2016

- I am pleased that headteachers have generally been open and candid with inspectors about the relative strengths and weaknesses of their schools. Just as important, most have robust and practical plans in place for addressing their particular areas of concern and can show how these plans are making a difference to performance.

HMCI – January 16

- At one secondary school in Staffordshire, for example, inspectors could clearly see that leaders had acted swiftly to halt a decline in standards in the English Department caused by a period of staff turbulence. Inspectors were reassured that while there was still more work to be done to improve reading across the school, leaders demonstrated that they had acted quickly and decisively to turn round the quality of teaching in such a key department.

HMCI - 2013

Obviously, there isn't one type of good leader. Angela Merkel isn't Alex Ferguson. And neither is like Richard Branson.

So over the years I've developed Wilshaw's Way. It owes a bit to Nelson Mandela, a bit to Machiavelli, a bit to Clint Eastwood and an awful lot to Frank Sinatra. You know the song.

Vision, detail, authority, pride.

HMCI - 2013

But authoritative leadership is not the same as autocratic leadership. Staff and students can't thrive in a culture of fear, but nor can they thrive in a chaotic school where there is little authority. Indeed, children who come from homes where there are few boundaries need more structure at school, not less.

It is my view, often expressed, that raising attainment is predicated on a culture in which heads do everything they can to reinforce not only their own authority, but the authority of all the staff in the school.



HMCI - 2013

I could never have achieved what I did at my schools in East London without the support of superb deputies and assistants. Successful heads aren't Roman Emperors – but they do need a Praetorian Guard to support them at difficult times.

HMCI - 2013

And ask yourself hard questions:

"Was that worth it?"

"Am I doing the right thing?"

"What would I do differently next time?"

HMCI - 2013

But take care: do not confuse careful reflection with self-doubt. Do not be seduced by the latest teaching fad or be swept away on a tidal wave of new initiatives.

As a head, my guide was always - that if something wasn't going to impact on classroom performance, then I wouldn't introduce it.



HMCI - 2013

- And be brave. Confront issues head on. Fight the good fight

HMCI - 2013



- And lastly, don't forget to have fun.

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher's passion for ensuring all pupils receive an outstanding education is tangible in all aspects of the school's work. Alongside her energetic and enthusiastic senior leadership team, she has created a colourful and enticing learning environment where pupils are happy, feel safe and love to learn.
- All leaders are knowledgeable about what the school does well and what the challenges are in maintaining the exceptionally high quality of teaching. All leaders work alongside staff on a formal and informal basis to check how much progress pupils are making.
- Pupils' progress is tracked relentlessly and potential underperformance is identified swiftly. Regular monitoring meetings between leaders and teachers ensure that pupils are provided with the appropriate support to ensure their progress does not stall. This close scrutiny of information has helped leaders identify that a few pupils are not making the consistently good or better progress that their peers make. The senior leadership team have narrowed the issue down to those pupils who start at different times in the school year and who are at the early stages of speaking English in the early years and key stage 1.
- The curriculum is extremely well designed to meet the needs of pupils, whose ideas regularly supplement the planning. Subject leaders work together to design termly 'projects' which link different subjects together. A recent project about London provided pupils with a knowledge and understanding of the city in which they live. Visits to different places of interest such as HMS *Belfast* supported the history strand about the Second World War.
- A notable feature of the curriculum can be seen in how the school uses the outside environment. The 'mini-farm' with pigs and goats and the wildlife area are used to help children understand nature and how to care for other living things. The school has appointed a poet in residence, whose work has enabled pupils whose first language is not English to develop their creative writing and speaking skills. One of these pupils went on to win a national competition with a moving and reflective poem about love and death, which she translated from the original language.
- The most-able pupils are challenged to think and work creatively. Examples include work using the London Tube map to develop telling the time and using timetables.

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher's exemplary leadership has created an impressive team spirit and camaraderie among all those who work in the school. One teacher who completed the staff questionnaire wrote, 'I look forward to coming in to teach and inspire the children every day.'
- The headteacher's drive and determination has ensured that the school's rapid and sustained improvement can be seen in all aspects of its work.
- Other leaders and middle managers work tirelessly to ensure that all pupils make the most progress they can. This is done through the highly effective use of a commercial scheme which helps staff set challenging targets and provides information about the rates of progress pupils have made in all subjects.
- Each pupil has a regular amount of dedicated, individual time with their teacher called 'assertive mentoring'. During this time, a pupil's targets, the progress they have made and the expectations of what needs to be done next to improve their learning are discussed with them. In the very best examples of this, pupils are choosing targets to stretch themselves.
- The highly effective team of the headteacher and assistant headteacher is exceedingly visible and accessible to the school community every day. Relationships with parents are a real strength of the school. Parents told the inspector that they see the deputy headteacher and/or the headteacher every morning. The exceptionally positive view held by parents who met with the inspector is reflected by those who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and the school's own parental questionnaires.
- The school's curriculum is well planned across all areas of learning. Middle leaders ensure that there are detailed activities to match a range of themes within different subjects such as 'thankfulness' in religious education and 'introducing magnetism' in science. The curriculum is enhanced with school trips to places of interest such as Stonehenge and an Ancient Egyptian workshop. Pupils are introduced to different faiths and beliefs on a regular basis.

2013

It has always been difficult to retain and promote excellent school leaders. But if anything, the challenge is becoming harder as the baby-boomer generation of heads retires and younger, less experienced colleagues take their place. And this is happening at a time when we are asking so much more of our schools.

More information



See our mythbuster doc: <http://bit.ly/OfstedMyths>

See our short #OfstedMyths films:
www.youtube.com/user/Ofstednews

Read the school inspection handbook:
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/
school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015)

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