

Schools that stay satisfactory

An analysis of secondary schools that have stayed satisfactory for more than one inspection and the reasons for this

This report presents the inspection data on secondary schools that seem to be 'stuck at satisfactory', and then examines the inspection history of a sample of these schools in more detail to understand why they have not improved consistently.

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Executive summary

This report focuses on two questions:

- what are the characteristics of secondary schools which appear to be 'stuck at satisfactory'?
- why have these schools not been able to improve?

At 8 April 2011, there were 2,153 secondary schools that had been inspected at least twice under inspection frameworks with the same four 'overall effectiveness' judgements of outstanding, good, satisfactory, and inadequate.¹ Of these, 473 were found to be satisfactory at both their most recent and their previous inspection. One hundred and thirty-nine had been satisfactory for three consecutive inspections in a row.²

Many schools do improve from being found satisfactory so that they become good or outstanding. However, of the schools which were inspected and found satisfactory, and then subsequently inspected a second time, the majority did not improve sufficiently to see their overall effectiveness judgement change for the better. Fifty per cent remained satisfactory and 8% became inadequate. It is important to note that Ofsted's inspection framework changes over time in order to raise expectations. Nonetheless these figures indicate a substantial challenge in improving the quality of satisfactory provision.

There is some evidence of a relationship between schools struggling to move beyond 'satisfactory' and their level of deprivation. Many schools serving more deprived families are good or better, but schools judged satisfactory are more likely to be serving more deprived families. In addition, schools serving students from the least deprived areas tend to improve more quickly to good or better, and schools serving students from the most deprived areas improve from satisfactory more slowly.

The key factor in improving schools is improving the quality of teaching and learning: most of the 473 schools judged satisfactory in two consecutive inspections had learning and progress that was judged satisfactory (95%), whereas those that improved from satisfactory to good at the second inspection were mainly judged to be good in these respects (94%).

¹ Based on Edubase as at 31 March 2011 (including sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges).

² This takes into account inspections carried out between January 2000 and August 2005. Overall effectiveness during that period was judged on a seven-point scale, and there is no direct read-across from this to the current four-point scale. However, it is helpful to consider the longer run of data to get a feel for the level of stability within the sector.

There is a lot of variation between different local authorities in the proportion of schools stuck at satisfactory. In several authorities more than half of the secondary schools were judged satisfactory at the last inspection. In one local authority, 62% of students in mainstream secondary schools were being educated in schools judged satisfactory at their last inspection and a further 10% were in a school judged inadequate. Of the 10 local authorities with the highest proportion, all are urban and most are fairly small. In the 20 authorities with the highest proportion, there is one large 'shire' authority and only two London boroughs.

This report looks in detail at the recent inspection history of 36 schools that were judged to be satisfactory at both of their most recent inspections. A large majority of these schools were also judged to have had satisfactory leadership and management in both inspections. Three of the 36 were graded good for leadership and management on the first inspection, and two on the second. Only one of the 14 which had monitoring visits in between the full inspections was judged to be making inadequate progress.

The schools were characterised by a high level of change among staff and at senior level, with recent changes in leadership increasingly mentioned in more recent reports; half of the schools changed headteacher between the two most recent full inspections. Issues of staff recruitment and retention, most often in mathematics, were also prominent. It was evident that many of these schools had difficulty managing the challenges that they faced.

None of these schools were so weak as to be deemed inadequate but, as with all schools, inspectors set out priorities for improvement in their inspection reports which would help them to improve. The most common priorities were to improve the quality of teaching; to improve leadership and management; and to raise attainment and progress. The persistence of low attainment was linked to weak teaching and in turn to ineffective leadership of teaching at middle or more senior levels. Mathematics and English were most often cited as subjects requiring improvement. Low-level behaviour problems were also apparent from many of the reports.

Leaders and managers in these schools had often been unable to establish consistent quality and practice across enough of the school's activities. These schools were characterised by securing improvements in some areas between one inspection and the next, but not in others, or allowing new weaknesses to emerge. Weaknesses in the leadership of teaching and learning, and in the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the school by the leadership team were the most commonly cited priorities by inspectors. School leaders often had the relevant policies in place, but were not implementing and monitoring them effectively. A lack of focused and effective professional development for teachers was another common issue, which meant that pockets of good practice tended to remain isolated rather than spreading across these schools.

Teaching in these schools was therefore often 'stuck' at satisfactory despite good and even outstanding practice existing within the school. Most commonly,

inconsistent practice in assessment and evaluation had resulted in a lack of challenge, mediocre progress, and attainment that failed to improve. The planning of lessons, and the style of teaching, failed to consistently meet the needs of all the students. Common weak areas of teaching practice mentioned included pace, challenge and variety of teaching methods so that teaching was dull. Assessment practice did not effectively engage young people in planning and directing their own improvement, either during lessons or over a period of time.

Although none of the secondary schools in the sample were reported as having serious problems with behaviour, more than half of them had critical comments about behaviour in one or both of their last two reports, suggesting that leaders had not established the right learning environment throughout the school. In several inspections, parents also expressed critical views. The most common behaviour problems reported included disruptive behaviour by a small minority of students, especially when teaching was weak or uninspiring. Crucially of course, leaders' monitoring and actions were failing to eradicate these problems and not generating a strong enough learning ethos across the whole school.

Key findings

- The proportion of secondary schools judged satisfactory in each academic year decreased between 2005/06 and 2008/09 from 38% to 31%. As a new framework was introduced and inspection became more focused on weaker schools, it rose to 41% in 2009/10 and was 40% between 1 September 2010 and 8 April 2011.
- As at 8 April 2011, there were 2,153 secondary schools that had been inspected twice or more. Of these, 937 had been found to be satisfactory at the inspection before their latest one. Fifty per cent then remained satisfactory at their latest inspection and 8% became inadequate.
- Four hundred and seventy-three secondary schools were judged satisfactory at their last two inspections and 139 at their last three inspections.
- Fifty-four per cent of 404 secondary schools serving deprived and very deprived pupils were judged satisfactory for overall effectiveness in both their latest and previous inspections. This is compared with 44% of 302 secondary schools serving less and least deprived pupils.³
- Schools serving more deprived families improve from satisfactory more slowly than schools serving affluent families.

³ Deprived and most deprived are defined as those schools where the mean Income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI) for pupils attending the school was in the top 40% nationally; less and least deprived are defined as those schools where the mean IDACI for pupils attending the school was in the bottom 40% nationally.

- The size of the school does not influence the likelihood that it improves from satisfactory.
- Improved learning and progress are key to schools becoming good or better. The learning and progress judgement in secondary schools found to be satisfactory at their latest and previous inspections was satisfactory in the very large majority of schools inspected; whereas the very large majority of those that improved from satisfactory were found to have good learning and progress (94%).
- The local authorities with the highest proportion of secondary schools judged satisfactory at their most recent inspection are almost all smaller, urban authorities, with few 'shire' counties or London boroughs.
- North-east Lincolnshire, Blackpool, Merton and Peterborough are the local authorities that have the highest proportion of secondary schools found to be satisfactory at their latest inspection. Full local authority outcomes are presented in the data annex.
- In a detailed study of the recent inspection history of 36 schools judged satisfactory at their last two inspections, and with capacity to improve also satisfactory in the latest, it was found that:
 - the main weaknesses in schools that do not improve their overall effectiveness judgement are low attainment, inconsistently effective leadership and management, and too little good teaching
 - schools often failed fully to sustain improvement in their weaknesses from one inspection to the next, or only made improvements on a narrow front
 - the sample schools came from a variety of social and economic contexts but around half seem to have had problems managing their circumstances, such as teacher recruitment or falling student numbers; half changed headteacher between their most recent and previous full inspections
 - leaders were insufficiently effective in leading teaching from satisfactory to good, or in ensuring that monitoring and evaluation were driving consistent improvement in teaching
 - the improvement of teaching was often held back by weaknesses in assessment and planning, so that students were insufficiently challenged; teaching lacked pace because it did not set high enough expectations, did not engage students sufficiently, and was sometimes faced by negative behaviour as a consequence
 - in a substantial minority of these schools the whole-school ethos was insufficiently robust to contain disruptive behaviour by a minority of students in a small proportion of lessons; behaviour declined rapidly in some lessons and in a few cases attendance was also a challenge

- schools tended also to be satisfactory for leadership and management, especially at their second inspection
- inconsistency among middle managers is often cited as a limiting factor on improvement
- senior leaders often did not ensure consistency through accurate monitoring leading to appropriate professional development
- parents often held more negative views about behaviour compared with school leaders.

Methodology

1. The data used for Part A of this report was from the inspection of the 2,996 secondary schools that were open between 1 September 2005 and 8 April 2011. Data from Ofsted inspections between 1 January 2000 and 31 August 2005 were also used to inform historical analysis. It should be noted that inspection outcomes between 1 September 2005 and 8 April 2011 are not directly comparable with schools inspected between 1 January 2000 and 31 August 2005 due to a change in the number of grades, while other aspects of the inspection framework changed significantly in September 2009. IDACI was based on the 2010 Schools Census. Edubase as at 31 March 2011 was used to identify open secondary schools in England.⁴
2. In order to understand why schools stay satisfactory, a sample of 36 schools was chosen for Part B of this report. These schools were selected out of 64 schools that were inspected between 1 September 2010 and 8 April 2011; were found to have satisfactory overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection; had satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement at their most recent inspection; and were also found to be satisfactory at their previous section 5 inspection. The 36 schools were selected to provide a good distribution of contextual factors (such as deprivation, number on roll and location) and were not selected randomly.
3. For most schools in the sample the first of the sampled inspections was under the 2005 inspection framework and the second under the framework introduced in 2009. In addition, some schools received a grade 3 monitoring visit and in these cases would have been identified as the most 'at risk' schools within the satisfactory group. The methodology analysed and compared those factors identified by different inspections as holding back the schools' improvement. The 2009 framework introduced a much more detailed approach to the report section on what schools should do to improve.

⁴ IDACI 2007 provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

4. Ofsted has provided data and analysis covered by this report to Professor Rebecca Francis of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) for their own work on this issue.

Part A: The national picture

5. Because of increased expectations in inspection frameworks, to compare grades judged over time for individual schools can create a misleading impression. Over the last 15 years, the quality of provision has improved considerably in many areas such as self-evaluation and assessment so that the performance required to get a particular level has been raised. However, a comparison of inspection judgements over time does allow some sense of how a school was performing compared with the expectations of the time.
6. Four hundred and seventy-three secondary schools that are currently open have been judged satisfactory in their last two inspections, some of which were carried out under the school inspection framework that operated from 2005 to 2009. Analysis of their earlier inspections indicates that just over a fifth of these schools have a history of being judged inadequate but also that some schools declined from good and then failed to recover this position.

	Good or better	Satisfactory	Inadequate/poor
Judgement <i>three</i> inspections ago of schools judged satisfactory in two most recent inspections (415) ⁱ	183	139	93

i: Of the 473 schools, 58 did not have three inspections.

7. Only one school is known to have been satisfactory for four inspections in a row. However, of the 473 schools, 52 have previously been in special measures, 39 had serious weaknesses and 51 have had a notice to improve. Some may have been in more than one of these categories. Thus a substantial minority of secondary schools have been either satisfactory or inadequate for most of the last 12 years (12 of 473); we explore later why this might be.

Which are the 'stubbornly' satisfactory schools?

8. The proportion of schools judged to be satisfactory gradually fell during the lifetime of the 2005/9 inspection framework to 31% and then increased again in 2009/10 (see Annex: Data, Chart i) to 41%. However framework changes make strict comparisons inappropriate. As can be seen in chart i, the introduction of a new framework in 2009 and a move to a more proportionate approach to inspection led to an increased proportion of schools being judged satisfactory whereas there had been a steady reduction of the proportion in the two previous years.⁵
9. Of the 937 schools judged satisfactory at their previous inspection, half were still satisfactory at their latest inspection (Annex: Data, Chart ii) – with 42% having improved, including a small proportion to outstanding. However 8% declined to become inadequate. Note also that 21% of schools previously judged good became satisfactory as did 4% of previously outstanding schools; on the other hand, 82% of previously inadequate schools became satisfactory. This might suggest two types of satisfactory school:
 - schools that have a history of fragility, varying between satisfactory and inadequate, or remaining stuck at satisfactory
 - schools that generally perform well but 'dip' into the satisfactory level perhaps due to shorter-term factors, or are on their way up and improving through satisfactory.

Where are the satisfactory schools?

10. Proportionately fewer secondary schools are judged to be satisfactory in London and the South West than in other regions, and there is a higher proportion of such schools in East Anglia, the East Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber (Annex: Data, Map i and Table iv). However, analysis at local authority level (Annex: Data, Map ii and Table i) shows that there is great variation within each region and this would suggest that there is no significant regional basis for the proportion of schools judged satisfactory.
11. The 10 local authorities with the highest proportion of schools judged satisfactory are all urban authorities (Annex: Data, Map i); the majority of them are small, and a considerable proportion are from the Yorkshire and the Humber region. Only one large rural authority and two London boroughs feature in the 20 with the highest proportion (Annex: Data, Table v); many London boroughs have very low proportions of schools judged satisfactory.

⁵ 'Proportionate inspection' is the term used to describe the process of giving priority in scheduling to the inspection of weaker schools. The result is that the national data then may appear to give a picture of a system that is weaker overall than is really the case.

Is this a problem related to deprivation?

12. It was also considered whether the geographical location of schools in urban or rural settings could be influential (Annex: Data, Table vi). However the large majority of secondary schools are in urban areas and there is little apparent difference between the distribution of satisfactory secondary schools and all secondary schools.
13. Pupils from deprived circumstances make up 38% of the national secondary school population, but constitute 45% of the satisfactory school and 47% of the inadequate school population (Annex: Data, Chart xviii). Schools serving deprived pupils consistently make up a greater proportion of those judged satisfactory than might be expected from a uniform distribution (Annex: Data, Chart xix). It is also the case that schools serving the less and least deprived are more likely to be better than satisfactory. The tendency for schools to fluctuate around satisfactory or inadequate, rather than improving beyond this, is much more prominent with schools in deprived areas than schools in less deprived ones (Annex: Data, Charts v and vii).
14. Sixty-three per cent of schools judged satisfactory at their previous inspection and serving, on average, more deprived students, failed to improve, of which 9% slipped back to become inadequate (Annex: Data, Chart iv). In contrast, in more advantaged areas the figures were 48% for failing to improve, including 4% who slipped back (Annex: Data, Chart vi). So previously satisfactory schools serving more deprived students were more likely to stay satisfactory or become inadequate compared with those serving less deprived students.
15. An analysis of schools by size does not show a pattern. Fifty-eight per cent of larger schools failed to improve by their next inspection, and for smaller schools the figure was exactly the same, although within this a slightly greater proportion declined to become inadequate. Where schools had been judged satisfactory, 42% of larger schools and 43% of smaller schools had improved by their second inspection (Annex: Data, Chart xiv and Chart xv). The possible impact of student numbers on factors such as size of leadership group and range of the curriculum therefore appears not to be a significant influence on a school's improvement.

Part B: Schools' inspection histories – why do schools stay satisfactory?

16. In order to develop a sharper understanding of the reasons why some schools are 'stuck at satisfactory', Ofsted analysed the recent inspection histories of a sample of satisfactory secondary schools. The sample was chosen on the basis that schools were satisfactory overall for both inspections and had satisfactory capacity to improve at their second inspection. Within this sample, 36 were

identified for further study that provided a distribution of location, characteristics and other factors. Each school's last two inspection reports and any intervening grade 3 monitoring visit reports were then analysed, with a particular focus on the issues that inspectors identified as priorities for improvement. We have included some charts in this section to illustrate our analysis and to support the narrative about these schools; however it should be noted that these are based only on a qualitative reading of the reports of 36 schools and do not represent a statistical analysis. Nonetheless, this approach does identify some patterns with these schools that are worthy of consideration.

17. The key actions or recommendations at the start of the inspection report represent the inspection team's analysis of what the school needs to do to become good or better. It therefore also represents their view of the school's most significant weaknesses. The introduction of the 2009 framework included a commitment to provide more detailed comment in the recommendations section. This approach tends to produce a pattern of higher-level actions or strategic objectives, and lower-level actions – which often indicate the actual operational weakness. In this example, the higher-level objectives are indicated in bold:

'Strengthen the leadership, management and governance of the school by:

- developing the strategic role of the governing body
- bringing about greater consistency in the quality of middle management and the resulting contribution made to school self-evaluation.'

'Raise attainment and accelerate the progress that students make by:

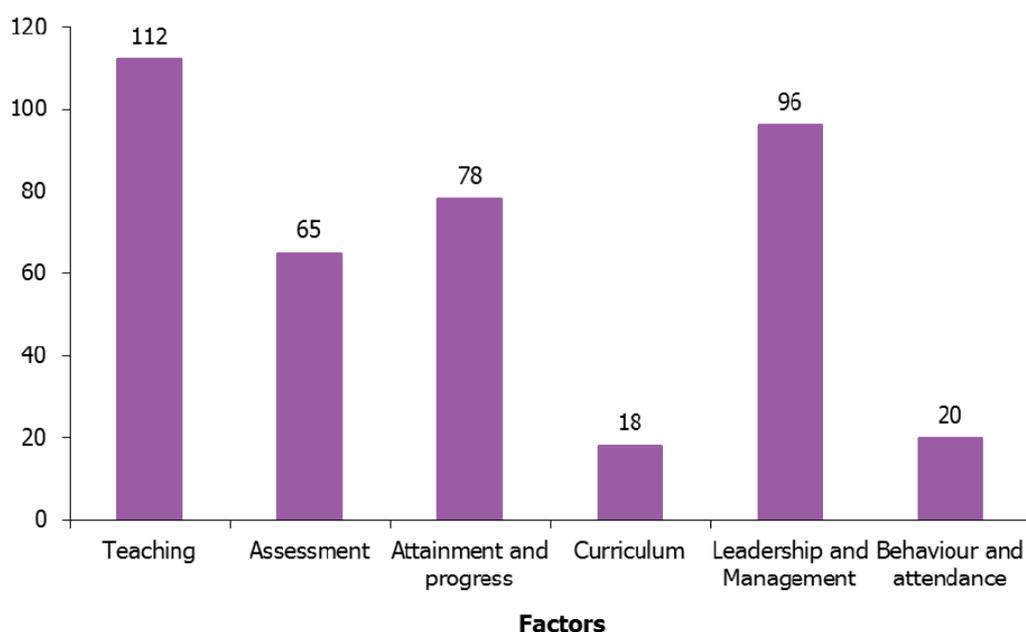
- ensuring that lesson planning builds on what teachers know about students' abilities and progress so that activities can be tailored to meet individual needs in each lesson
- providing more opportunities for students to be actively involved in their learning
- adapting the curriculum and the range of teaching strategies to close further the gap in attainment between boys and girls
- helping students to develop better time-keeping and more positive learning habits so that little time is wasted in lessons
- ensuring that the students make more rapid progress in science.'

Strengthen the effectiveness of the sixth form by:

- providing a suitable range of courses to meet the abilities, interests and aspirations of students of all abilities
- ensuring that students receive effective guidance in choosing the right courses and in helping them make the most of those options
- ensuring that students make better progress across the range of subjects, particularly those taking AS and applied courses.'

18. At the higher level two actions dominate – raise attainment (and/or progress) and improve the quality of teaching. Both of these are also often connected to leadership and management. Because achievement, including progress and standards attained in examinations, is often the symptom of the problem rather than the cause, it is the lower-scale actions that indicate the issues that are preventing the school from improving. Therefore the second reports and the lower-level recommendations can be analysed in some detail to show how often individual issues emerge as priorities for schools. As Figure 1 shows, it is the quality of teaching and leadership that is the main problem in the 36 schools sampled.

Figure 1: Frequency of factors being cited in the latest inspection report for the sample of secondary schools



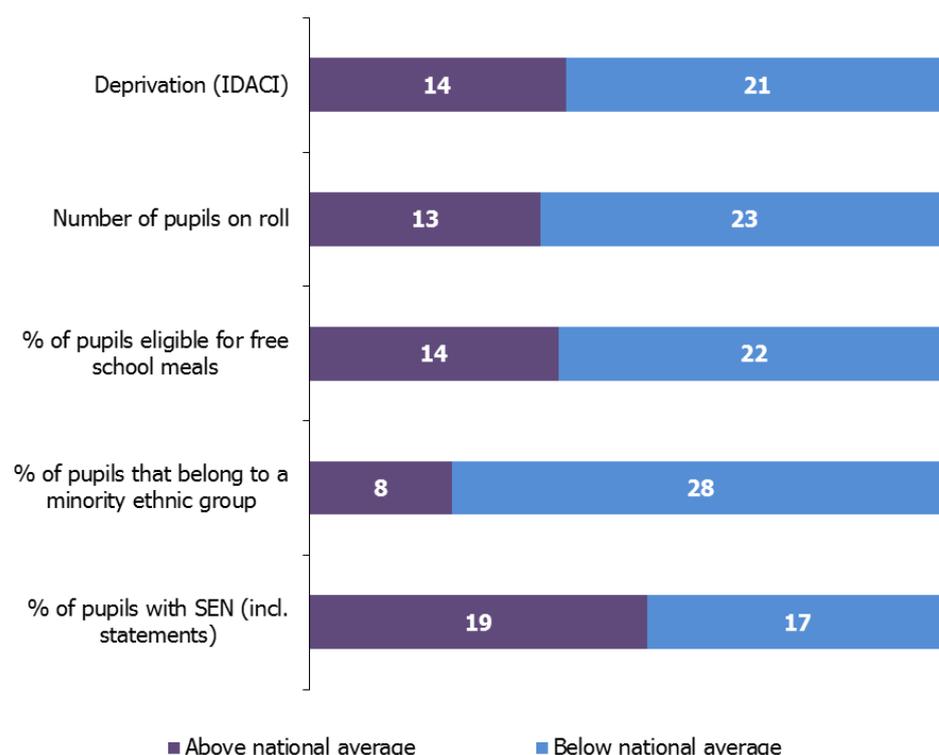
Figures exceed the number of schools in the sample as the lower-level actions may include multiple items on the same issue.

In this section of this report we seek to find why it is that the factors in the chart above continue to restrict these schools in moving from satisfactory to good.

The schools and their local context

19. The schools in this sample were selected to give a broad mix of schools with different characteristics so that they include, for example, similar proportions of schools with very high or very low levels of special educational needs. However the sample does still include more schools with a higher level of deprivation and also more schools which are smaller than average.

Figure 2: Contextual factors (above or below the national average) of the sample of secondary schools



IDACI figures, which are a measure of deprivation affecting children, exclude two schools where their IDACI was the same as the national average.

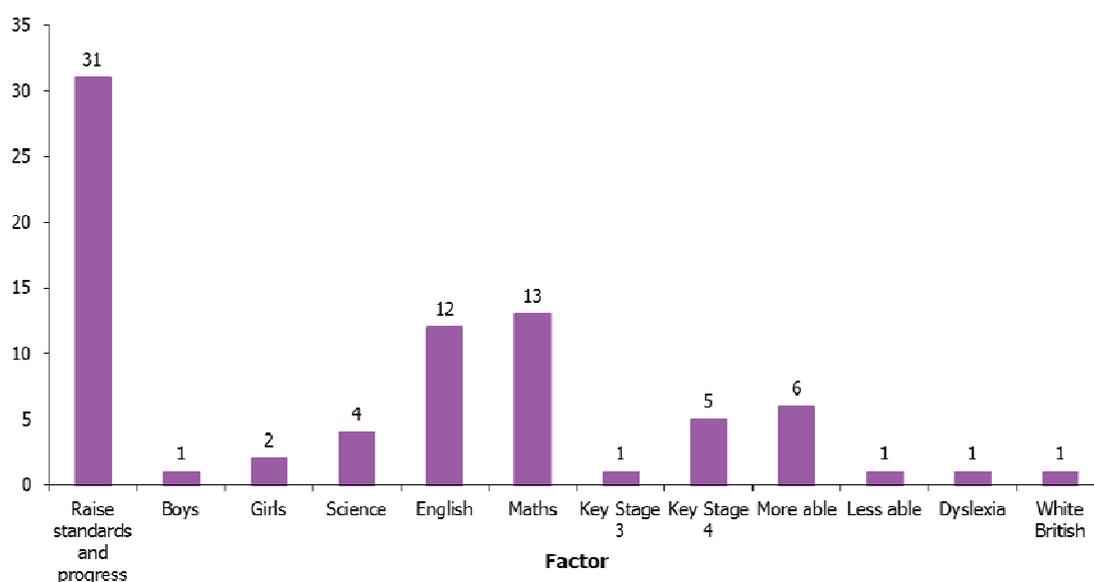
20. Unlike the quantitative study that forms the first part of this report, no inference about the characteristics of the wider population of schools can be drawn: the chart simply provides information about the sample.

Achievement

21. All the schools sampled except one were judged satisfactory for achievement – broadly speaking the progress they make in learning and the standards they attain in examinations – the one exception being judged good. Twelve schools in the sample had low or relatively low attainment, but this was not invariably the case; one had high attainment and three had above average attainment, leaving 20 of the 36 as average attainment. However all except one were judged to have only satisfactory progress in students' learning and progress. Often, areas for improvement focus on raising attainment by improving

teaching or other aspects of the school's work. At the second inspection, there is often an acknowledgement that standards have risen but need to rise further. The recommendations in the second report are often prefaced with a directive such as 'Further raise attainment by...'

Figure 3: Attainment and progress factors cited in the latest inspection report of the sample of secondary schools



Figures exceed the number of schools in the sample as the lower-level actions may include multiple items on the same issue.

22. Occasionally comments in the first report are stronger:

'Urgently raise standards and achievement at Key Stage 3 in all core subjects, especially that of boys.'

23. Some reports specify that particular subjects need improving, or achievement for groups of learners could be improved:

'Improve students' attainment, especially at Key Stage 3 and in mathematics.'

24. In the above example, attainment did not improve enough and mathematics remained a problem so that recommendations after the second inspection included:

'Accelerate students' progress and raise attainment, particularly in mathematics and science.'

25. The analysis of issues cited for recommendations in second reports shows that the issue of attainment and progress is most often a general one and specific

groups appear only occasionally. Most often, low standards and progress are directly linked to weaknesses in assessment and the planning of lessons:

'In satisfactory lessons, the good and detailed assessment information teachers hold about students' progress is not always used well enough to match teaching to students' current levels of ability. Consequently, some students, particularly the more able and those of lower ability, make only satisfactory progress.'

26. Where schools are making improvements, these are slow in working through into examination results:

'The school leadership recognises that although the school has been successful in improving some aspects of its work, such as teaching and the specialist subjects, it has been slow in improving the general standards reached by students in Year 11.'

27. Therefore, satisfactory schools tend to have learning and progress that is also satisfactory. If students came into the school with low standards, this is unlikely to be good enough to boost their chances of future success and it means that they will be lagging further behind students in schools where progress is good so attainment is better. To consider why this happens we must first look at teaching, then students' contributions to their own learning in their behaviour, and finally at how effective leaders are in securing improvements in both areas.

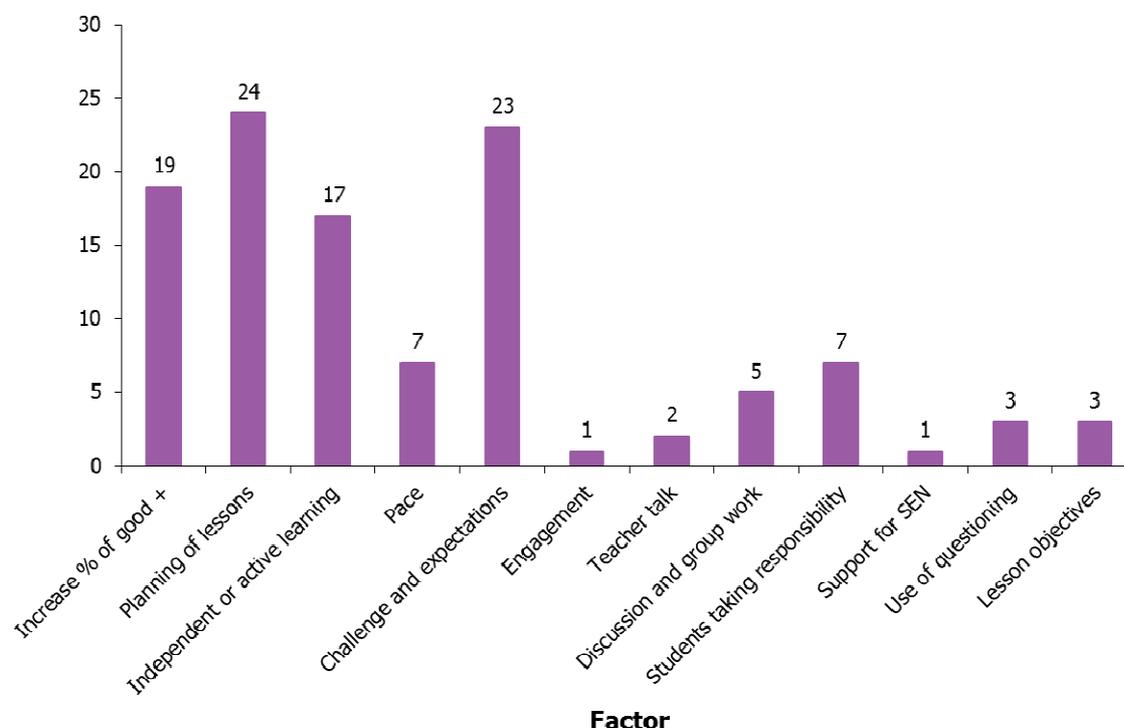
Teaching

28. Achievement is clearly improved by teaching that is highly effective so satisfactory teaching is therefore especially problematic where students start with low prior attainment – it does not deliver enough progress for students in the most challenging circumstances to close the gaps. All 36 schools were judged to have had satisfactory teaching at their latest inspection – notably including the school where attainment was nonetheless high. The most common teaching issue in the sample schools is that they lack a sufficiently high proportion of good or better teaching. The following quote was a common theme identified in the reports analysed:

'Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better in order to raise overall standards further.'

The related issues of planning and challenge or expectations are prominent in inspectors' thinking about the weaknesses of teaching:

Figure 4: Teaching factors cited in the latest inspection report of the sample of secondary schools



29. Good-quality teaching depends on effectively planned lessons, with the right mix of activities chosen to sustain students' concentration and develop their understanding. It is characteristic of these schools that leaders seem unable to improve teaching enough to secure a sufficient proportion of good teaching as these two sets of recommendations from successive reports in the same school show:

'(1) Improve the quality of teaching and learning to increase the proportion of good or better lessons.

(2) Improve the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning by:

- sharing existing good practice effectively
- securing more consistent student engagement in lessons through increasing the pace and challenge in teaching and providing opportunities for students to assess and take responsibility for their own learning
- making the quality of marking and feedback more consistent.'

30. It is clear from the sample that a problem for many of these schools is teaching that is too often uninspiring:

‘Increase the proportion of good or better teaching to at least 80% by July 2011 by ensuring that teachers consistently:

- use assessment information more effectively in classes set by ability to plan challenging lessons that take account of prior attainment and the learning needs of individuals and groups
- use teaching methods that provide pace, variety, interest and high levels of challenge to accelerate pupils’ progress.’

‘Ensure students make at least good progress in all lessons and hence continue to raise attainment by:

- ensuring that all lessons are interesting and challenging.’

31. However, understanding why this should be so is an important key to the improvement of these schools. As we shall see, it is frequently the case that leaders are ineffective in achieving consistency in teaching practice in a school. In one of the reports sampled, two major technical weaknesses were encapsulated in a single point for action:

‘Ensure that most teaching is at least good by improving teachers’ planning to meet the needs of all students and increasing the variety of approaches to learning.’

32. In this school, progress by the second inspection appears to have been fitful and a more detailed list of weaknesses in teaching emerges which questions the ability of leaders to *lead* teaching and learning:

‘Raise standards and increase the proportion of good lessons by ensuring that teachers:

- receive further training on the use of assessment information to enable students to achieve their challenging targets
- plan lessons and tasks that take account of students’ prior learning, assessment information and individual learning needs
- use teaching methods that provide interest, variety and challenge for all abilities so that all students are fully engaged
- check students’ learning regularly during lessons so plans can be adjusted to meet their needs.’

This crucial issue of the leadership of teaching is commented on further in the senior and middle leadership section of the report.

33. The best teaching has high expectations of what students can achieve and the sequence of activities is well planned, ensuring progressive learning and acquisition of skills. But one of the most common issues in these schools is the balance between teacher-led and independent activities, often with too much of the former:

‘providing more opportunities in lessons for pupils to work independently and in small groups’.

‘Teachers often dominate the lessons; they talk knowledgeably and kindly but without expecting the students to contribute or think sufficiently for themselves.’

34. A further characteristic of teaching that is no better than satisfactory is that lively interaction tends to be lacking. Inspectors regularly described situations such as this example:

‘Teachers over-direct learning which limits the opportunities for pupils to work independently and in small groups. They do not use assessment information sufficiently to plan work to cater for pupils’ different starting points. Where the same work is set for the whole class it is sometimes too easy for some pupils and too difficult for others...In the main, there is too much whole-class teaching which limits learning to the pace of the slowest in the group and which stops the brightest making the faster progress of which they are capable.’

35. In these schools students do not have enough opportunities to work and learn together, nor to develop their own skills through independent learning. In a few instances, it would appear that teachers are too uncertain about classroom management to risk varying their teaching methods – thus becoming caught in the trap of dull teaching being met with negative attitudes leading to a fear of varying the pattern.

‘Where teachers worry about students’ behaviour, they shy away from giving opportunities for students to work in groups or independently and to take responsibility for their own learning.’

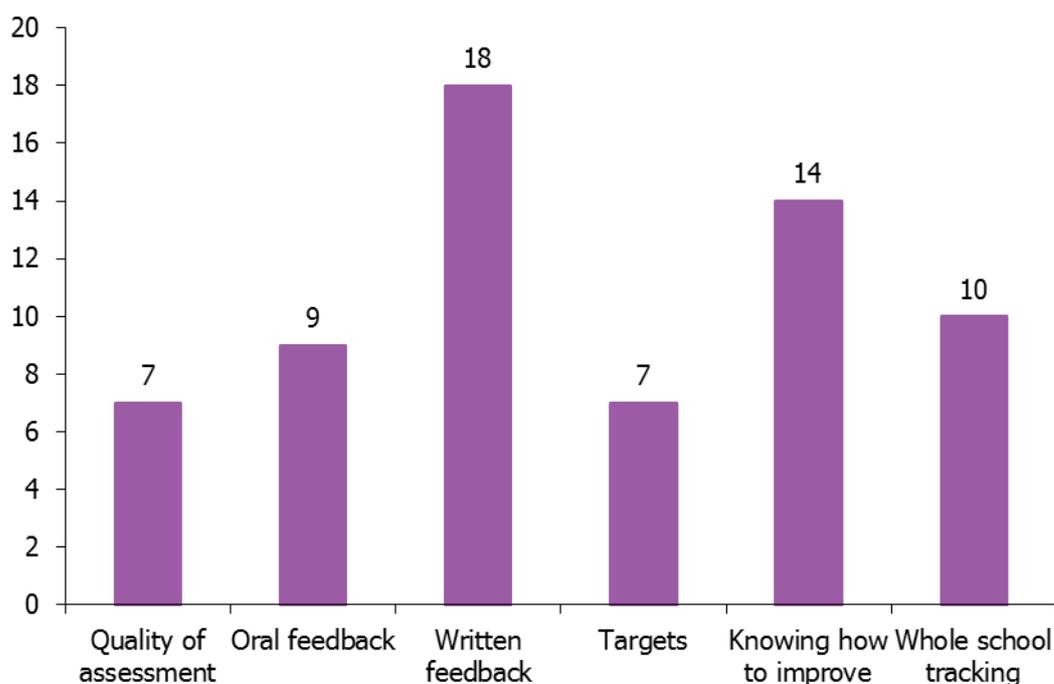
36. More generally, the quality of questioning has started to emerge as an issue that inspectors note as a weakness and this features in some of the latest inspections from the sample schools. Such issues are also often expressed through comments about students not being able to take enough responsibility for their own learning.

37. Overall though, issues relating to assessment, guidance and planning appear most frequently, as the next section demonstrates.

Assessment and marking

38. Planning is the factor in teaching that emerges most often – and this is of course highly dependent on the quality of assessment practice both in the school and the classroom. High-quality assessment is a key element of effective teaching but where it is lacking – as in many of the sample schools – groups of students are not consistently well provided for through learning activities, with the most able being the group referenced most often as missing out. None of the schools were better than satisfactory on the inspection judgement for assessment, and two were judged inadequate. The whole range of assessment issues emerges in these schools – from the short-term assessment of progress in the classroom that informs the teacher’s response to learning, through marking work, to the whole-school systems of assessing progress and diagnosing problems.
39. Issues related to assessment are therefore central to improving teaching practice. Some examples from the schools sampled include:
- ‘make better use of tracking data, especially at Key Stage 3, to inform lesson planning and accelerate student progress’.
 - ‘improve the consistency, quality and helpfulness of the marking of students’ work so that they understand what they need to do to improve’.
 - ‘ensuring all pupils understand how to improve their work’.
 - ‘making sure teachers use assessment information to provide work of appropriate challenge for all pupils’.
 - ‘provide all pupils with clear guidance on how well they are doing and on how to improve their performance across all subjects’.
40. The link between assessment and learning is also clear in this example:
- ‘Extend pupils’ learning by:
 - making sure teachers use pupil progress data consistently to track the performance of individuals and groups and plan the next steps in their learning
 - giving more opportunities for pupils to take shared responsibility for their learning
 - using the marking of pupils’ work more effectively so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.’

Figure 5: Assessment factors cited in the latest inspection report of the sample of secondary schools



41. Because assessment is weak, lesson planning is also weak and so pace and challenge are too variable. In contrast, in effective schools teachers adjust the pace of learning within the lesson on the basis of frequent feedback. Differentiation, the setting of work so that the challenge provided matches the learning needs of the student, is ineffective in many of the satisfactory schools as in the recommendation to:

‘ensure teachers provide opportunities in lessons for all students to have work that matches their ability’.

42. The most common factor appears to be that individual teachers have an inexpert understanding of the links between assessment, planning and improvement as well as how they can promote self-improvement among their pupils:

‘Improve the quality of teaching so that the large majority is regularly good or better by:

- ensuring all teachers consistently use assessment information to ensure high expectations in lessons and good challenge for all students in their learning
 - providing students with good-quality written and oral feedback, linked to learning targets, to support them in making further improvements
 - systematically sharing with students what they need to do to make good progress in the lesson.'
43. In other examples, inspectors highlight particular areas where practice is lagging behind that found elsewhere and impacting on standards:
- 'There are pockets of good practice in assessment but teachers do not always ask sufficiently probing questions to ensure active participation in lessons or provide specific targets to help students, particularly the more able, to make consistently good progress and raise attainment.'
- '[Teachers] do not use assessment information sufficiently to plan work to cater for pupils' different starting points. Where the same work is set for the whole class it is sometimes too easy for some pupils and too difficult for others... Learning was satisfactory in a majority of lessons seen during the inspection and mostly good in the remainder. In the main, there is too much whole-class teaching which limits learning to the pace of the slowest in the group and which stops the brightest making the faster progress of which they are capable. Teachers mark and assess pupils' work frequently but do not use this information to plan different activities appropriate to the differing needs and capabilities of individuals in the class.'
44. As a result, issues relating to this persist between inspections and schools fail to eradicate weaknesses. For example, note how the issue remains the same over successive inspections in one school:
- '(1) Provide all pupils with clear guidance on how well they are doing and on how to improve their performance across all subjects.
- (2) Further raise attainment by:
- ensuring all pupils understand how to improve their work
 - making sure teachers use assessment information to provide work of appropriate challenge for all pupils.'

The second inspections, under the 2009 framework, give more detailed guidance that goes into specific weaknesses of teaching:

‘Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that, within the next 12 months, at least 75% of lessons secure good or better progress and raise achievement, by:

– ensuring that teachers make more effective use of detailed assessment information to align teaching and learning more closely to students’ individual needs and abilities, especially in stretching and challenging the middle- and higher-ability students, and in monitoring their progress.’

45. As a result, pupils do not know enough about how to improve. Comments in written marking are not always helpful while ongoing oral feedback lacks sharpness. These issues are also reflected in weaknesses in whole-school approaches to assessment and the tracking of students’ progress.
46. Comments on data and assessment also commonly refer to the need to use data at a whole-school level to identify learning problems and give advice that helps students to overcome them:

‘Use tracking data to ensure that pupils understand exactly what they need to do to improve their work.’

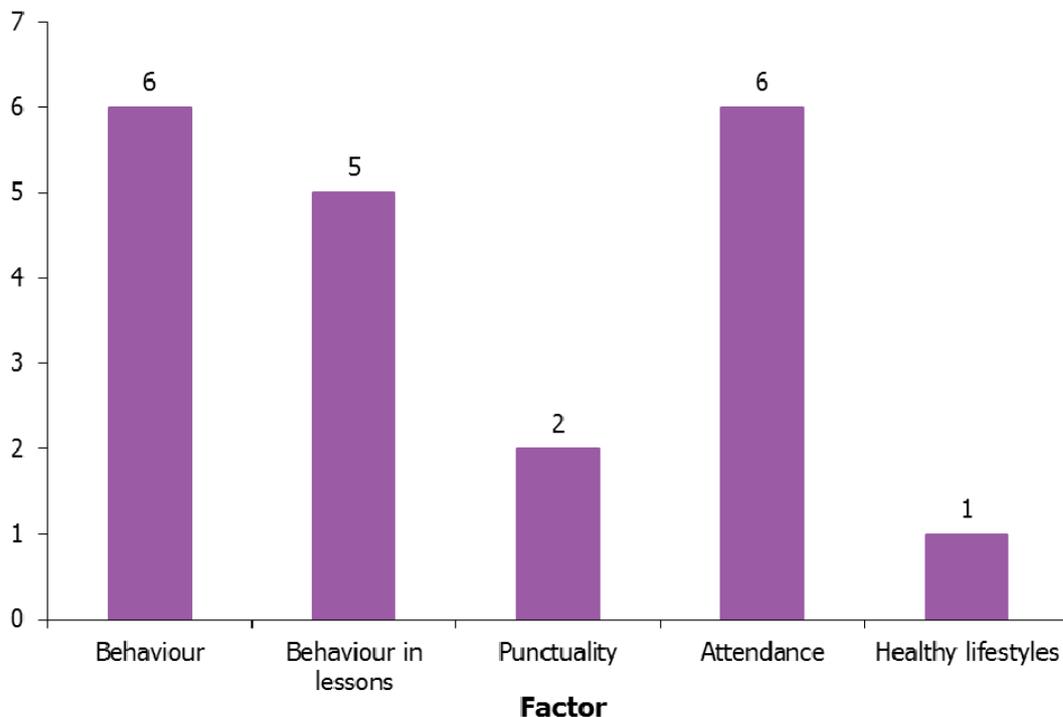
47. Weaknesses in assessment and therefore planning of lessons may be expected to impact on specific groups of learners. The most commonly referenced group consists of the most able, who are specified in a number of reports as lacking challenge.
48. However there are also concerns at a broader level, which many reports refer to as about tracking how good the school is, globally, at identifying students at risk of failure and doing something about it. In one school the report identifies the groups at risk and then recommends:

‘Improving the effectiveness of early identification and intervention strategies for students at risk of falling behind, and increasing the impact of support for those underperforming so that they can recover the lost ground in their learning securely and quickly.’

Behaviour and attendance

49. Sixteen of the sample schools were judged to have had good behaviour at their most recent inspection and 20 to have had satisfactory behaviour. However issues regarding behaviour and attendance are cited in the reports.

Figure 6: Behaviour and attendance factors cited in the latest inspection report of the sample of secondary schools



50. Had these schools suffered from serious behaviour problems, then behaviour would have been judged inadequate and the school itself likewise. However, many of the schools appear to have persistent minor difficulties which at times impact on learning. Of the 36 schools, 19 have critical comments about behaviour either from parents' questionnaires or inspectors' observations over the two inspections – generally of 'low-level disruption' in the classroom in the latter case. Sometimes the onus is placed on what the teachers are doing and they are directed into:

'helping students to develop better time-keeping and more positive learning habits so that little time is wasted in lessons'.

Or,

'in duller lessons low-level disruption becomes a problem'.

51. However, over the course of the reports a picture emerges of several schools where students behave well in most lessons but some of them do not in a few lessons; on occasions, this does affect the learning of others. In contrast, in the schools where behaviour was good the ethos is stronger:

‘their behaviour around school and in lessons is good, even in those lessons that are less inspiring’.

52. It is also the case in some of the schools sampled that a minority of teachers lack the skills to manage behaviour, and this is often referred to in the context of needing better standards of teaching:

‘supporting all teachers to develop their skills in managing incidents of disruptive behaviour effectively in lessons’.

‘Improve behaviour by ensuring that teachers manage it consistently.’

53. As a result, inspectors sometimes make recommendations related to behaviour management, for example to improve teaching by ‘using effective behaviour management strategies consistently in order to maintain a focus on learning’. Often the problems with behaviour are specifically linked to weaknesses in teaching, for example in the recommendation to:

‘Raise achievement and standards through more consistently good teaching by ensuring students’ tasks are carefully matched to their abilities and poor behaviour does not disrupt learning.’

54. Leaders appear to struggle to get all staff to follow behaviour policies as in the following action from the same school:

‘Improve students’ behaviour by...using the behaviour policy consistently to tackle low-level disruption.’

55. Such comments about behaviour, although focusing on the problems caused by poor teaching, reflect a difference between the sample schools and those that are good or better. In the better schools, standards and expectations of behaviour are consistent so that behaviour is good even where teaching is not: good attitudes to learning have become ingrained in the school’s culture.

56. But in some of the sample schools they cannot resolve persistent issues with behaviour from one inspection to the next.

(1) Continue to challenge the poor behaviour of the minority of students and to promote better attendance, particularly in Key Stage 4.

(2) developing students’ learning behaviours so they are positively placed to both support one another’s learning and work independently’.

57. Occasionally it is parents who have concerns about behaviour and with whom schools are not communicating effectively. One school was advised to communicate more clearly:

‘highlighting the reduction in behaviour incidents, reassuring them that tackling unacceptable behaviour is a high priority, and sharing with them the robust procedures in place to deal with students’ inappropriate behaviour, and the strategies to further improve standards of behaviour’.

58. Attendance in the sample schools was found to be varied. Seventeen were found to have good or better attendance, but in 14 schools it was judged satisfactory and in five schools was low. A number of schools clearly have unresolved problems with attendance or have failed to secure improvement so that in one case ‘sustaining the focus on attendance and reducing persistent absence’ was recommended. In another, the school’s first inspection advised it to ‘promote better attendance’ and its second inspection to ‘work more closely with parents, carers and the community to improve rates of attendance’.

Senior and middle leadership

The capacity to manage circumstances

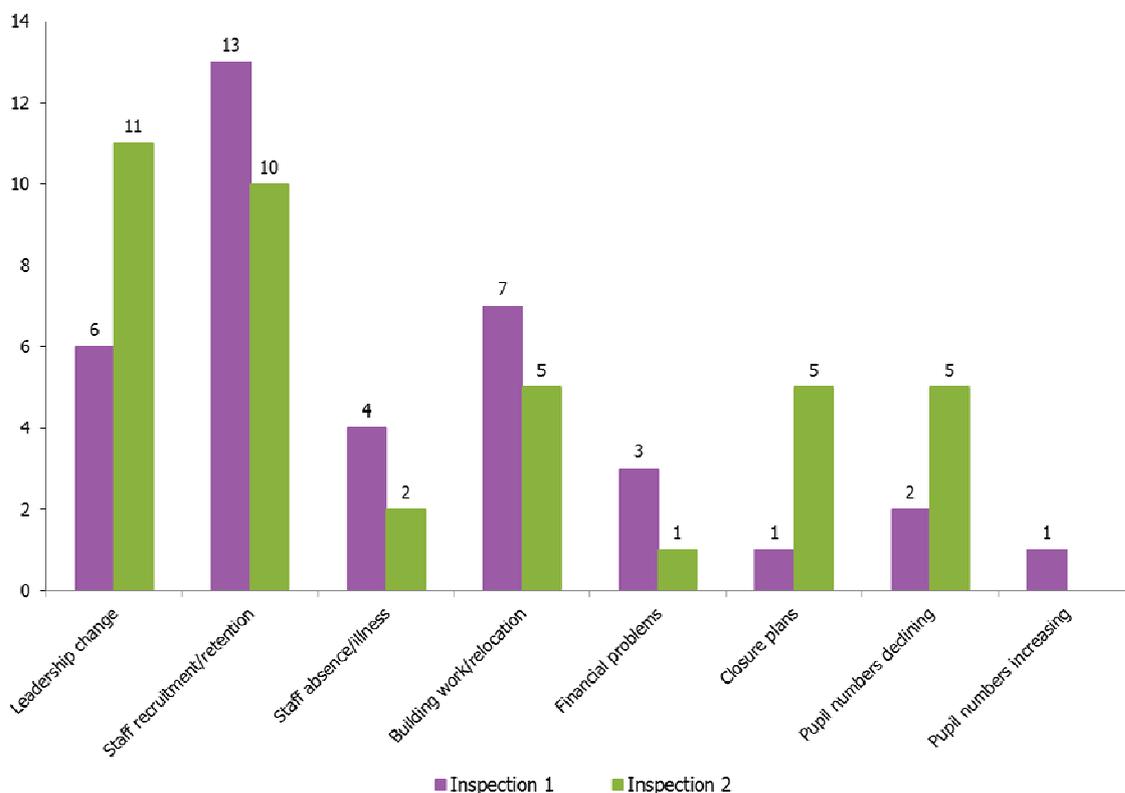
59. A characteristic of the leadership of these schools is that it is not so poor that the school is judged ‘inadequate’, but lacks the capacity and skills to move the school up to good or better. Almost all of the sample schools were judged satisfactory for leadership and management at both inspections. In some schools, the quality of leadership and management appeared to be in decline – almost half were judged to have good ‘capacity to improve’ in the first inspection, but this was only satisfactory by the second. Three schools were judged to have good leadership and management in the first inspection and two in the second.
60. The two schools judged to have good capacity to improve on their second inspection had both been judged to have good leadership and management on the first inspection.
61. Fourteen of the schools also received a grade 3 monitoring visit between their two full inspections.⁶ Monitoring inspections make a judgement about the school’s progress, so it is important to note that a judgement of ‘satisfactory progress’ does not mean that a school is satisfactory overall. Of the 14 schools, five demonstrated good progress in making improvements, eight

⁶ Up to 40% of schools receive a monitoring visit if they have been judged satisfactory. Schools are selected for these on the basis of a risk assessment and so the visits tend to concentrate on the weakest of the satisfactory schools.

satisfactory progress and one was making inadequate progress. Results for increasing capacity to improve were similar.

62. Ten of the schools had been judged inadequate (or equivalent) since January 2000, and were mainly placed in special measures or serious weaknesses categories. One other school had received an 'inadequate behaviour' monitoring visit.
63. In the introduction to the inspection report, inspectors cite issues of significant change in the school's context and circumstances and may also mention other factors which may be influencing the school's position. Often this section has been agreed with the headteacher as it is treated as factual information rather than inspection commentary. It therefore reflects what the inspector and the school feel to be significant about the circumstances. However, it is important to distinguish between context and circumstances: broadly speaking, by 'context' we might mean the external factors beyond a school's control such as the level of deprivation in its community, but by 'circumstances' we might instead mean factors that impinge on the school's operations that it has the opportunity to manage. A number of such factors emerge, with some change in the balance between inspections.

Figure 7: The frequency of school circumstances cited in the inspection reports for the sample of secondary schools



64. These findings underline previous findings about the ability of some schools to manage the impact of their circumstances, including leadership change and staff turbulence while also striving to sustain improvement. None of the circumstances mentioned above necessarily prevent a school from improving and indeed the pattern changes between inspections. For example, all schools face issues of staff retention and turbulence but many manage this so that it does not impinge on achievement unduly. One interesting pattern is that staff recruitment and absence factors have declined in importance by the second inspection but leadership change has become more common.
65. By 'leadership change' we mean changes in the headteacher or other senior leaders. Of the 36 schools in the sample, exactly half (18) had a different headteacher at the time of the second inspection, although this was not always mentioned as a contextual factor; three of these were acting headteachers. Of the 14 schools that had a grade 3 monitoring visit, eight had changed their headteacher by the time of the visit and three schools had an acting headteacher in place.
66. A number of factors surface in schools that do not improve but all of them are within the sphere of influence of senior and middle leaders. As well as appearing to struggle with their circumstances, the clearest characteristic of these schools is that they lack the management capacity to do enough of the basic things consistently well. Typical areas for improvement are:
- 'Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management to enable greater consistency in the implementation of policies introduced.'
- 'Improve the quality and consistency of leadership and management at all levels to match the standard set by the best leaders in the school.'

Securing consistent quality

67. It is often the case that senior leaders in these schools have been unable to ensure consistently good practice among middle managers. An extract from a second inspection report paints the picture of a senior team struggling to have wide and deep impact across a range of issues:
- '[The leadership team's] well-intentioned actions to improve this situation, however, do not always have a high profile amongst staff. Actions lead to some improvement, but this could be more rapid. Similarly, the work to improve teaching leads to incremental rather than swift change. The school improvement plan is suitably constructed, with understandable targets and objectives. Some of its sound objectives and actions are not carried through or followed up robustly enough in practice, so that there remain inconsistencies in the quality of work between teachers and across departments. However, just as the precise assessments made of students' attainment are not well enough used in lessons to improve learning

significantly, similarly the whole-school evaluations lead only to gradual improvement in the weaker areas of the school's work. This has successfully removed some inadequacies, and guided positive developments in teachers' practice, but without raising the overall quality of teaching beyond satisfactory at this stage.'

68. These schools are typically unconvincing in making sustained improvements to areas of weakness. To assess this, we compared the 'areas for improvement' from the first inspection with those from the second inspection. If an area was again evident in the report for the second inspection, this was rated 'red', if partially evident 'yellow' and if no longer identified then 'green'. A picture of partial progress emerges:

Table 1: Areas for improvement for the sample of secondary schools, indicating their level of resolution at time of reinspection

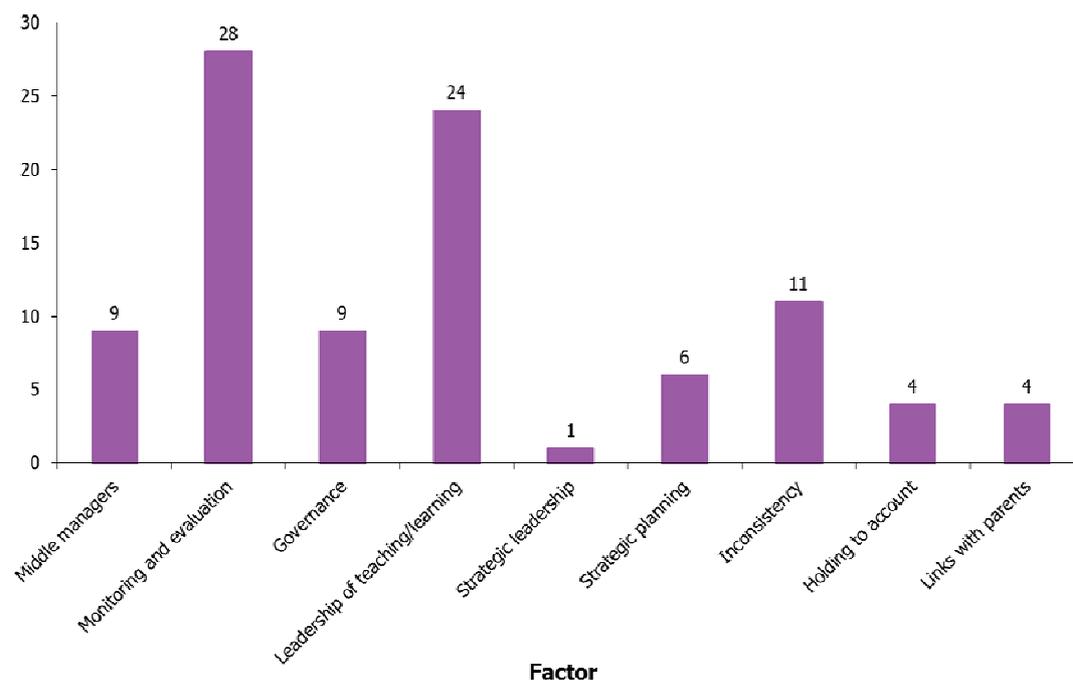
1 ²²	Assessment	Behaviour	Monitoring	6 th form	
2	Progress/standards	Mathematics	Specialism	Active learning	
3	Progress/standards	Mathematics	Teaching	Literacy/numeracy.	Guidance
4	Progress/standards	Teaching and learning.	Self-evaluation		
5	Teaching	Assessment	Curriculum	Monitoring	
6	Achievement/standards	Challenge	Behaviour	Middle managers Quality assurance	
7	Planning	Tasks/questions	Assessment	Middle managers	
8	Teaching	English	Assessment	6 th form	
9	Attendance	Achievement	Teaching	Assessment	Middle managers
10	English	6 th form	Teaching	Assessment	
11	Planning	Monitoring	Parent links		
12	Consistent leaders	Teaching	Challenge		
13	Attainment	English	Marking	Planning	
14	Middle managers	Mathematics	Assessment	Teaching and learning	Monitoring and evaluation
15	Attainment	6 th form progress	Learning	Tracking	Middle managers
16	SEND	Literacy	SMSC	Comm. cohesion	Exclusions
17	Progress	English/literacy	Teaching	Targets	Marking
18	Standards	Feedback	Behaviour	Attendance	

19	Standards	English	Mathematics	Teaching and learning	Leadership and management
20	Teaching and learning	Tracking	Marking	Planning	
21	Standards	Targets	Assessment		
22	Teaching	Assessment	Middle managers		
23	Teaching	Standards	Assessment	Monitoring and evaluation	Middle managers
24	Standards	Teaching	Planning	Leadership and management	
25	Teaching	Curriculum	Standards	Mathematics	Attendance
26	Mathematics	Tracking	Marking	Assessment	
27	Teaching	Planning	Assessment	Monitoring	
28	Standards	Teaching	Assessment	Marking	Middle managers
29	Standards	Assessment	Monitoring		
30	Progress	Behaviour	Parents	Assessment	Monitoring
31	Literacy	Planning	Monitoring	Strategy	
32	Standards	Teaching	Assessment		
33	Strategic planning	Consistency	Planning		
34	6 th form	Tracking data			
35	Teaching	Senior staff	Specialism	Numeracy	
36	Standards	Teaching			

69. The analysis shows that in general these schools have difficulties in resolving weaknesses – often linked to inconsistency – in teaching and assessment in particular. Where weaknesses are quite sharply defined in scope, for example, the mathematics department, they are more quickly addressed; but general weaknesses in areas such as planning tend to persist between inspections. The frequency with which aspects of teaching appear in the chart is notable and is discussed below.

70. Analysis of the recommendations in the second report allows closer consideration of what leadership factors are preventing schools moving forward.

Figure 8: Leadership and management factors cited in the latest inspection report of the sample of secondary schools



71. These factors are dominated by issues related to doing things consistently well. In the typical school, monitoring and evaluation lack rigour or are inconsistently practised, often because individual middle managers have not been challenged, especially in respect of driving forward the quality of teaching and learning. In some of these schools senior leaders have policies but lack the strategies to ensure their widespread application; this often affects issues such as the planning of lessons or management of behaviour.
72. A characteristic of schools with weaker leadership is that they appear to be able to only maintain progress in a few areas at once. As a result, an identified weakness from one inspection may have been addressed by the next, but it has been replaced by others. In the simplest example, in one school students' achievement in mathematics was replaced by the same issue in science for the next inspection, with weaknesses in the management of the school's specialism replaced by weaknesses in its sixth form management.
73. In another case, one school that had previously been in special measures was given five areas for improvement. In the second inspection, it was given a wide range of actions to take to improve teaching and learning as well as

leadership and management. Although it had addressed most of the priorities in the previous inspection, it had not sustained improvement on a wide front.

Leading teaching and learning

74. A particular issue is that leaders are unable to sustain improvements in teaching and learning, or to ensure that new policies in this area are followed consistently. At their latest inspection, 34 of the schools were judged satisfactory in the leadership of teaching and learning and only two were considered to be good – but greater quality is needed in this area if persistently satisfactory schools are to be moved forward. Particular issues include ensuring that lessons are not teacher-dominated and avoiding students being too passive, as well as issues around planning and assessment. In one school, the first report asked for improvements to:

‘Raise the quality of teaching so it is consistently good throughout the school, particularly by ensuring lessons meet the needs of all students and by increasing the opportunities for students to be more actively involved in their own learning.’

The subsequent report:

‘Ensuring at least 80% of teaching and learning matches the best practice in the school by the end of December 2011 by providing students with practical activities during lessons with more opportunities to learn independently.’

75. The issue of how schools cascade best practice or deal with weaknesses in teaching is the responsibility of leadership and management. The two over-riding management conundrums often appear to be: how to improve generally satisfactory teaching to good; and how to tackle a minority of poor teaching.
76. In almost all the schools sampled, good and outstanding practice exists but not everyone is learning from it, because leaders are not:

‘ensuring that all teachers learn from the good and outstanding teaching that exists in the school’.

77. Another example shows how a school is unable to provide sufficient leadership of teaching to ensure consistent improvement:

‘Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning so that lessons enthuse and engage students and raise achievement in mathematics by:

- ensuring teachers use assessment information to plan work of appropriate challenge for the range of students’ needs

- providing clarity for teachers about what constitutes good practice
- making sure teachers plan active and varied learning tasks
- involving leaders at all levels in monitoring provision and driving improvement.'

78. In general these schools are addressing these issues too slowly, as in this case:

‘Most significantly, the school is beginning to deal with poor performance in teaching and learning through appropriate support and more formal procedures where necessary.’

79. In the context of this report, the key words here are ‘beginning to’; but this is not a new school. Indeed, the grade 3 monitoring visit report almost two years earlier had commented that ‘Action taken to improve the quality of teaching is having a positive effect on students’ learning and outcomes’; yet these actions have not achieved concerted improvement.

80. The importance of this issue was reflected in the recent survey report from Ofsted, *Leadership of more than one school*.⁷ This highlighted how significant improvement in aspects of teaching could be driven by the introduction of effective assessment and tracking arrangements:

‘In all cases, a single system of assessing and tracking pupil progress was used in these federations. This was always an extension of the existing procedures in the stronger school and was one of the first steps taken by leaders who needed accurate information to identify weaknesses in learning.’

81. Teaching that is ‘stuck at satisfactory’ therefore reflects on the capabilities of the school’s professional leadership. Some leaders and managers do not appear to have an effective strategy for disseminating new policies and best practice so that ‘the work to improve teaching leads to incremental rather than swift change’.

‘Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:

- strengthening leadership for teaching and learning by ensuring there is a member of the senior leadership team with specific responsibility for this area
- devising and implementing a whole-school plan by the beginning of April to improve the quality of teaching and learning which sets measurable targets for end-of-term evaluations.’

⁷ *Leadership of more than one school* (100234), Ofsted, 2011; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100234.

82. On occasions, the schools sampled seem to lack any strategy for improving teaching:

‘Additionally, plans to improve the quality of teaching rely largely on improving individual staff rather than identifying areas for everyone to improve. This is partly because there is no senior leader with designated responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning. Also, the policy for teaching and learning does not provide staff with an up-to-date clear steer of the features of good practice expected in lessons.’

83. In the above example, the school has a successful strategy for eliminating poor teaching by individuals. However, having achieved that it evidently lacked a strategy for converting satisfactory teachers into good ones so that ‘actions lead to some improvement, but this could be more rapid’. Meanwhile, some teachers gave inspectors the impression that they did not know what actions were being taken. This can be seen in a similar case:

‘Due to effective performance management, leaders have successfully ensured that all teaching and learning in the school is at least satisfactory. Systems to monitor lessons are organised well and are carried out regularly by senior leaders and heads of departments. As a result senior leaders have a reasonably accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. However, their evaluation of the overall quality of teaching and learning is overgenerous because there is insufficient focus during lesson observations on the progress in learning made by students. Until recently, leaders did not correlate their judgements on the quality of teaching with the data which measures students’ attainment and progress.’

84. In this respect, the weakness tends to highlight problems with the school’s professional development programme. Comments about ineffective promotion of better teaching often identify the existence of good or even outstanding practitioners in a school and point out that the strategies for sharing good practice are missing. For example, one school’s senior leaders lacked a strategy for delivering improvements by:

‘implementing a programme of coaching and mentoring for spreading good practice in assessment throughout the school.’

85. In one interesting example, the recommendation neatly encapsulates the issues within the school for the reader:

‘Achieve consistency and improvement across the school by strengthening monitoring, evaluation and lines of accountability so that:

- the outcomes of regular monitoring of teaching and learning lead to personalised improvement programmes to enhance teachers’ skills and the sharing of good practice
- greater emphasis is placed on progress in lessons, and there is less reliance on additional intervention strategies
- agreed policies and quality assurance activities become embedded to drive improvement.’

Middle leaders

86. Middle leadership is one of the most commonly identified weaknesses in stubbornly satisfactory schools, with the most common problem being inconsistent quality and practice. Because of this, weaknesses identified in monitoring are not resolved and professional development may lack focus. In some schools this problem persists over several years. For example one school was asked in its first inspection to ‘establish consistently good practice at all levels of leadership and management’ and in the second inspection to ‘ensure consistency in the quality of leadership and management’. Middle leaders or ‘inconsistent management’ appear as areas for improvement in about a third of all the reports analysed and are also closely linked to weaknesses in monitoring, evaluation and the implementation of other school policies. In the following example from the first inspection, it is notable that many of these factors are linked to inconsistent middle management:

‘Raise the proportion of teaching that is good and ensure all lessons include planned opportunities to enhance students’ literacy skills.’

‘Raise teachers’ and students’ expectations of what they can achieve through more effective academic targets.’

‘Ensure that the best practice in marking students’ written work is spread across all subjects.’

87. One second inspection report identifies the inability of middle leaders to deliver improvements in teaching. An extract from the report text reads:

‘The impact of a number of initiatives the school has introduced is dissipated because middle leaders are not one of the key driving forces behind them. A school improvement group made up of representatives

from each faculty takes back good practice to their teams, but the impact of this on teaching and learning is not apparent.'

88. Often the variation within middle management is picked out as a factor to be dealt with:

'Raise the quality of middle managers' practice to meet that of the best.'

89. In other schools the narrative appears to be that change is being introduced but not all middle managers have the skills to contribute:

'Train and support middle leaders to develop their skills and confidence in taking on new roles and responsibilities to secure improvements in all areas of the school.'

90. Typically, therefore, weaknesses in both senior and middle management result in the quality of teaching being too varied and whole-school structures need to be in place.

Monitoring and self-evaluation

91. Monitoring is a crucial lever for school improvement. The ability of the school to 'know itself' and how it compares with others is vital, as is its ability to identify and address areas of weakness in establishing consistency. Issues relating to the robust nature of monitoring, and the consistency of it, recur repeatedly in these schools. Often when schools are federated one of the first actions of the executive headteacher is to introduce very rigorous procedures to monitor and evaluate practice and impact.

92. Comments on the sample schools tend to focus on whether senior leaders do enough monitoring – especially of teaching and assessment, including marking – or whether their judgments are robust enough. The most common issues include whether assessment, marking and planning are always of a high standard, and whether students are being challenged enough. In some of the schools, this extends to whether evaluation and planning are robust enough to drive improvements:

'Improve the rigour and quality of school planning and evaluate critically the impact of actions on students' outcomes.'

93. Here is one example of a school where monitoring and evaluation processes are having less effect than they should:

'The variable performance of different subjects and the pace of improvement to areas targeted by the school's leaders are due to a lack of a whole-school improvement strategy and rigour in leaders' action-planning. Whole-school development plans are not sharp enough and do not have measurable success criteria which can be used at regular

intervals to check on how well improvements are progressing. Individual subjects are largely autonomous in their self-evaluation and action-planning.'

94. Another school was criticised for inconsistent marking on its first inspection. By the time of the second inspection, the problem appears to have grown and become almost systemic:

'Improve the rigour of school self-evaluation by:

- checking thoroughly that agreed actions are fully implemented
- evaluating the impact of agreed actions against the outcomes
- strengthening the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning
- holding staff accountable for the outcomes achieved by students.'

95. In some cases, it would appear that data analysis at whole-school level – sometimes referred to as 'tracking' – is a skill needing development:

'Evaluating trends in pupil progress data as well as in National Curriculum levels.'

96. Some reports suggest that senior leaders appear to have a benevolent view of their own school and therefore challenge is underdeveloped:

'The school's self-evaluation is overgenerous in a number of key areas and needs to take greater account of the impact on achievement and standards of all aspects of provision.'

97. The contribution of middle leaders to monitoring is also highlighted frequently. Middle leaders tend to be criticised for insufficient focus on the quality of teaching, but it is also clear that it is important for monitoring to check compliance with policies:

'Ensure managers, at all levels, take greater responsibility for checking that systems and procedures are consistently implemented by all staff.'

98. One school gives an example of this:

'Improve the monitoring role of senior and middle leaders with a focus on raising the quality of teaching and improving standards so that they are consistently good.'

99. It will be seen that all three of the examples for the second action point require effective monitoring in order to be successful. In another case:
- ‘Ensure that middle leadership is consistently effective in evaluating and improving provision and its contribution to all pupils’ achievement.’
100. Of course better monitoring enables more effective holding to account, but a few of the sample schools appear to be slow to enact this:
- ‘Senior leaders know the school’s strengths and weakness and recognise that concerted, more decisive action is necessary if the main school is to emulate the success of the sixth form. They are beginning to hold staff more rigorously to account and are also reconsidering the impact of their own practice.’
101. This also highlights another issue with school leadership – the lack of urgency in some areas and a sense that leaders are coming ‘late to the game’ of school improvement.

Conclusions

102. A review of the data indicates a significant number of secondary schools that have not improved from satisfactory between their last two inspections. On average they serve students who are more disadvantaged, and where their pupils are more disadvantaged they appear less likely to improve between inspections.
103. It is sometimes said that to be a good school you do not need to be a world-beater at anything, but you need to be consistent at *everything*. Schools which are stuck at satisfactory do not meet this standard, too often failing to be consistent over time (for example in improving attendance) or consistent in applying a policy across the whole school (such as marking or behaviour). Leaders and managers in these schools have often been unable to establish consistent quality and practice across enough of the school’s activities. These schools are characterised by securing improvements in some areas between one inspection and the next, but not in others – or new weaknesses emerge.
104. The detail of this report addresses the priorities that are most commonly required to move such schools forward: to improve the quality of teaching; improve leadership and management; and to raise attainment together with progress. Every year Ofsted inspects many schools that have moved forward in this way, and every year finds schools providing an outstanding education despite the most challenging circumstances. Hopefully this report will enable more schools that are currently satisfactory to rise successfully to their challenge now.

Annex: Data

School-level data that provide the information on which analysis in this report is based are published separately on the Ofsted website.

Table I (overleaf) shows the number and proportion of secondary schools judged to be satisfactory, by local authority (education).

Local Authority	Government Office Region	Total number of secondary schools inspected	No. of secondary schools found satisfactory at latest inspection
Barking and Dagenham	London	8	3
Barnet	London	18	2
Barnsley	Yorkshire and The Humber	13	6
Bath and North East Somerset	South West	10	1
Bedford	East of England	17	6
Bexley	London	12	5
Birmingham	West Midlands	68	23
Blackburn with Darwen	North West	10	2
Blackpool	North West	8	5
Bolton	North West	14	4
Bournemouth	South West	8	3
Bracknell Forest	South East	6	3
Bradford	Yorkshire and The Humber	25	15
Brent	London	13	1
Brighton and Hove	South East	8	3
Bristol City of	South West	18	9
Bromley	London	12	3
Buckinghamshire	South East	31	8
Bury	North West	14	1
Calderdale	Yorkshire and The Humber	13	3
Cambridgeshire	East of England	28	12
Camden	London	9	4
Central Bedfordshire	East of England	32	15
Cheshire East	North West	17	7
Cheshire West and Chester	North West	17	4
City of London	London	0	0
Cornwall	South West	30	7
Coventry	West Midlands	18	4
Croydon	London	19	7
Cumbria	North West	34	12
Darlington	North East	7	3
Derby	East Midlands	12	6
Derbyshire	East Midlands	43	20
Devon	South West	30	7
Doncaster	Yorkshire and The Humber	15	6
Dorset	South West	34	5
Dudley	West Midlands	20	5
Durham	North East	35	15
Ealing	London	13	2
East Riding of Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	18	8
East Sussex	South East	26	8
Enfield	London	14	2
Essex	East of England	72	29
Gateshead	North East	11	3
Gloucestershire	South West	35	8
Greenwich	London	13	2
Hackney	London	10	4
Halton	North West	6	2

Source: Ofsted

Local Authority	Government Office Region	Total number of secondary schools inspected	No. of secondary schools found satisfactory at latest inspection
Hammersmith and Fulham	London	9	0
Hampshire	South East	70	18
Haringey	London	12	4
Harrow	London	10	0
Hartlepool	North East	5	2
Havering	London	17	7
Herefordshire	West Midlands	11	3
Hertfordshire	East of England	76	26
Hillingdon	London	17	7
Hounslow	London	13	4
Isle of Wight	South East	19	5
Isles of Scilly	South West	0	0
Islington	London	10	2
Kensington and Chelsea	London	4	0
Kent	South East	75	24
Kingston upon Hull City of	Yorkshire and The Humber	13	8
Kingston upon Thames	London	10	2
Kirklees	Yorkshire and The Humber	30	11
Knowsley	North West	7	3
Lambeth	London	12	3
Lancashire	North West	78	24
Leeds	Yorkshire and The Humber	34	13
Leicester	East Midlands	18	7
Leicestershire	East Midlands	54	12
Lewisham	London	14	4
Lincolnshire	East Midlands	46	14
Liverpool	North West	27	5
Luton	East of England	11	2
Manchester	North West	19	10
Medway	South East	11	2
Merton	London	8	5
Middlesbrough	North East	5	2
Milton Keynes	South East	9	2
Newcastle upon Tyne	North East	12	5
Newham	London	15	2
Norfolk	East of England	45	15
North East Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	6	5
North Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	13	5
North Somerset	South West	10	3
North Tyneside	North East	15	3
North Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	46	14
Northamptonshire	East Midlands	35	18
Northumberland	North East	47	17
Nottingham	East Midlands	11	5
Nottinghamshire	East Midlands	42	18
Oldham	North West	10	3
Oxfordshire	South East	33	14
Peterborough	East of England	8	5
Plymouth	South West	13	3
Poole	South West	7	0
Portsmouth	South East	9	5

Source: Ofsted

Local Authority	Government Office Region	Total number of secondary schools inspected	No. of secondary schools found satisfactory at latest inspection
Reading	South East	4	2
Redbridge	London	16	1
Redcar and Cleveland	North East	10	4
Richmond upon Thames	London	5	1
Rochdale	North West	11	2
Rotherham	Yorkshire and The Humber	13	7
Rutland	East Midlands	3	0
Salford	North West	15	4
Sandwell	West Midlands	15	5
Sefton	North West	20	1
Sheffield	Yorkshire and The Humber	26	9
Shropshire	West Midlands	22	5
Slough	South East	9	1
Solihull	West Midlands	10	3
Somerset	South West	35	14
South Gloucestershire	South West	14	6
South Tyneside	North East	8	4
Southampton	South East	12	6
Southend-on-Sea	East of England	8	2
Southwark	London	13	4
St. Helens	North West	9	4
Staffordshire	West Midlands	65	22
Stockport	North West	14	6
Stockton-on-Tees	North East	10	1
Stoke-on-Trent	West Midlands	13	7
Suffolk	East of England	75	29
Sunderland	North East	14	4
Surrey	South East	53	15
Sutton	London	14	0
Swindon	South West	11	3
Tameside	North West	11	5
Telford and Wrekin	West Midlands	13	5
Thurrock	East of England	8	3
Torbay	South West	5	1
Tower Hamlets	London	15	7
Trafford	North West	13	1
Wakefield	Yorkshire and The Humber	15	4
Walsall	West Midlands	17	7
Waltham Forest	London	15	3
Wandsworth	London	11	5
Warrington	North West	12	4
Warwickshire	West Midlands	33	13
West Berkshire	South East	10	3
West Sussex	South East	34	12
Westminster	London	10	3
Wigan	North West	20	3
Wiltshire	South West	23	5
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East	13	4
Wirral	North West	20	3
Wokingham	South East	8	2
Wolverhampton	West Midlands	15	3
Worcestershire	West Midlands	43	14
York	Yorkshire and The Humber	10	1

Source: Ofsted

Table ii: The number and proportion of secondary pupils who attend satisfactory schools by local authority (education)

Local Authority	Government Office Region	Total number of secondary school pupils	Proportion of secondary school pupils who attend satisfactory schools
Barking and Dagenham	London	12,159	34
Barnet	London	17,948	11
Barnsley	Yorkshire and The Humber	12,930	46
Bath and North East Somerset	South West	9,701	10
Bedford	East of England	10,871	30
Bexley	London	14,996	50
Birmingham	West Midlands	63,499	33
Blackburn with Darwen	North West	9,452	13
Blackpool	North West	7,964	62
Bolton	North West	16,849	28
Bournemouth	South West	8,474	33
Bracknell Forest	South East	6,361	46
Bradford	Yorkshire and The Humber	31,516	59
Brent	London	16,445	10
Brighton and Hove	South East	11,587	38
Bristol City of	South West	15,741	48
Bromley	London	15,940	21
Buckinghamshire	South East	31,499	23
Bury	North West	11,069	5
Calderdale	Yorkshire and The Humber	14,596	16
Cambridgeshire	East of England	30,474	47
Camden	London	9,907	40
Central Bedfordshire	East of England	21,876	44
Cheshire East	North West	18,377	36
Cheshire West and Chester	North West	18,546	22
City of London	London	0	0
Cornwall	South West	30,322	21
Coventry	West Midlands	19,523	20
Croydon	London	18,408	38
Cumbria	North West	29,318	38
Darlington	North East	5,899	34
Derby	East Midlands	13,523	47
Derbyshire	East Midlands	45,204	47
Devon	South West	34,589	24
Doncaster	Yorkshire and The Humber	18,661	39
Dorset	South West	29,764	9
Dudley	West Midlands	19,439	24
Durham	North East	29,325	40
Ealing	London	17,798	15
East Riding of Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	22,641	48
East Sussex	South East	26,960	28
Enfield	London	17,279	13
Essex	East of England	82,655	34
Gateshead	North East	12,640	20
Gloucestershire	South West	34,360	23
Greenwich	London	14,415	13
Hackney	London	7,991	37
Halton	North West	6,451	39

Source: Ofsted

Local Authority	Government Office Region	Total number of secondary school pupils	Proportion of secondary school pupils who attend satisfactory schools
Hammersmith and Fulham	London	7,027	0
Hampshire	South East	69,435	20
Haringey	London	13,164	36
Harrow	London	10,183	0
Hartlepool	North East	6,249	35
Havering	London	16,133	39
Herefordshire	West Midlands	7,208	23
Hertfordshire	East of England	74,834	34
Hillingdon	London	17,909	38
Hounslow	London	15,242	28
Isle of Wight	South East	11,396	37
Isles of Scilly	South West	0	0
Islington	London	8,038	19
Kensington and Chelsea	London	3,438	0
Kent	South East	76,010	33
Kingston upon Hull City of	Yorkshire and The Humber	12,779	62
Kingston upon Thames	London	9,995	15
Kirklees	Yorkshire and The Humber	24,606	38
Knowsley	North West	7,434	50
Lambeth	London	8,876	22
Lancashire	North West	65,143	30
Leeds	Yorkshire and The Humber	40,357	38
Leicester	East Midlands	17,952	33
Leicestershire	East Midlands	45,624	26
Lewisham	London	14,092	24
Lincolnshire	East Midlands	37,059	24
Liverpool	North West	28,774	18
Luton	East of England	11,154	16
Manchester	North West	20,042	56
Medway	South East	12,513	23
Merton	London	8,570	60
Middlesbrough	North East	5,461	28
Milton Keynes	South East	13,183	25
Newcastle upon Tyne	North East	13,846	48
Newham	London	18,369	21
Norfolk	East of England	44,067	32
North East Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	5,029	86
North Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	9,985	40
North Somerset	South West	12,747	25
North Tyneside	North East	13,415	12
North Yorkshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	38,452	24
Northamptonshire	East Midlands	40,246	50
Northumberland	North East	24,890	27
Nottingham	East Midlands	11,345	39
Nottinghamshire	East Midlands	48,302	38
Oldham	North West	12,378	27
Oxfordshire	South East	35,615	38
Peterborough	East of England	10,196	57
Plymouth	South West	14,817	23
Poole	South West	6,860	0
Portsmouth	South East	8,706	50

Local Authority	Government Office Region	Total number of secondary school pupils	Proportion of secondary school pupils who attend satisfactory schools
Reading	South East	3,443	42
Redbridge	London	20,318	6
Redcar and Cleveland	North East	8,535	52
Richmond upon Thames	London	4,564	18
Rochdale	North West	11,396	23
Rotherham	Yorkshire and The Humber	15,234	51
Rutland	East Midlands	2,367	0
Salford	North West	10,942	24
Sandwell	West Midlands	17,459	32
Sefton	North West	18,892	4
Sheffield	Yorkshire and The Humber	29,913	31
Shropshire	West Midlands	16,948	24
Slough	South East	7,785	12
Solihull	West Midlands	12,249	31
Somerset	South West	27,882	39
South Gloucestershire	South West	15,955	43
South Tyneside	North East	8,092	43
Southampton	South East	10,313	40
Southend-on-Sea	East of England	8,834	18
Southwark	London	10,647	33
St. Helens	North West	9,440	38
Staffordshire	West Midlands	53,147	35
Stockport	North West	14,716	39
Stockton-on-Tees	North East	9,939	12
Stoke-on-Trent	West Midlands	10,558	51
Suffolk	East of England	50,194	33
Sunderland	North East	15,172	29
Surrey	South East	59,606	25
Sutton	London	16,887	0
Swindon	South West	12,417	31
Tameside	North West	9,254	46
Telford and Wrekin	West Midlands	11,057	37
Thurrock	East of England	7,468	35
Torbay	South West	5,875	19
Tower Hamlets	London	14,730	43
Trafford	North West	10,864	7
Wakefield	Yorkshire and The Humber	16,540	23
Walsall	West Midlands	18,661	46
Waltham Forest	London	14,785	19
Wandsworth	London	11,445	37
Warrington	North West	13,345	28
Warwickshire	West Midlands	30,880	37
West Berkshire	South East	12,101	21
West Sussex	South East	40,155	34
Westminster	London	9,012	31
Wigan	North West	19,103	12
Wiltshire	South West	24,207	19
Windsor and Maidenhead	South East	10,290	24
Wirral	North West	21,264	15
Wokingham	South East	10,122	23
Wolverhampton	West Midlands	13,462	18
Worcestershire	West Midlands	35,181	32
York	Yorkshire and The Humber	9,891	12

Source: Ofsted

Table iii: Distribution of pupil level deprivation (IDACI) for schools inspected and yet to be inspected by Ofsted as at 8 April 2011

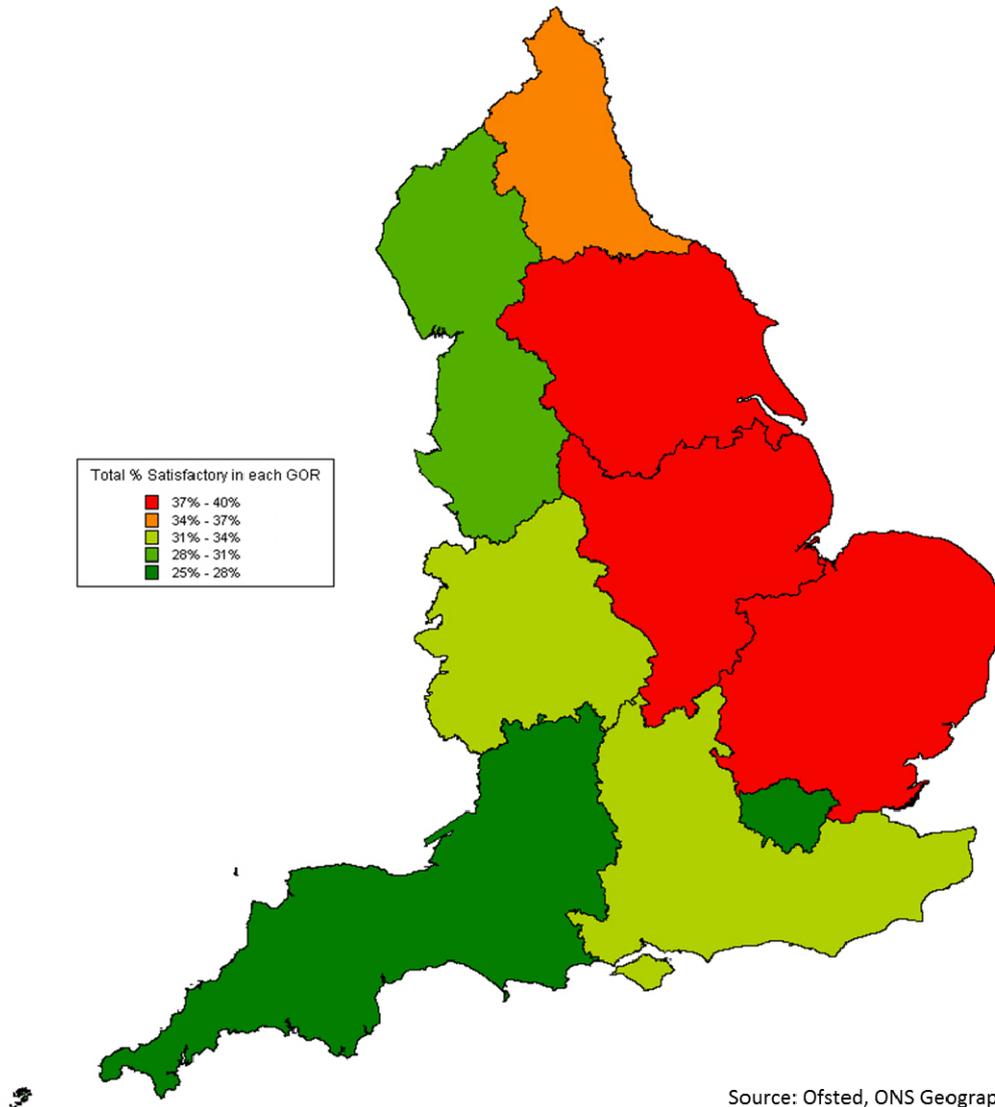
	Percentage of pupils				
	Least deprived	Less deprived	Average	Deprived	Most deprived
Outstanding (670,896)	25	22	19	16	17
Good (1,273,423)	22	21	21	19	17
Satisfactory (903,104)	15	18	20	23	23
Inadequate (101,200)	14	16	22	25	23
Not inspected (85,319)	8	10	16	26	40

Secondary schools include sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges

Breakdown of pupil deprivation is calculated by ordering data from large to small and dividing the data into five equal groups (quintiles).

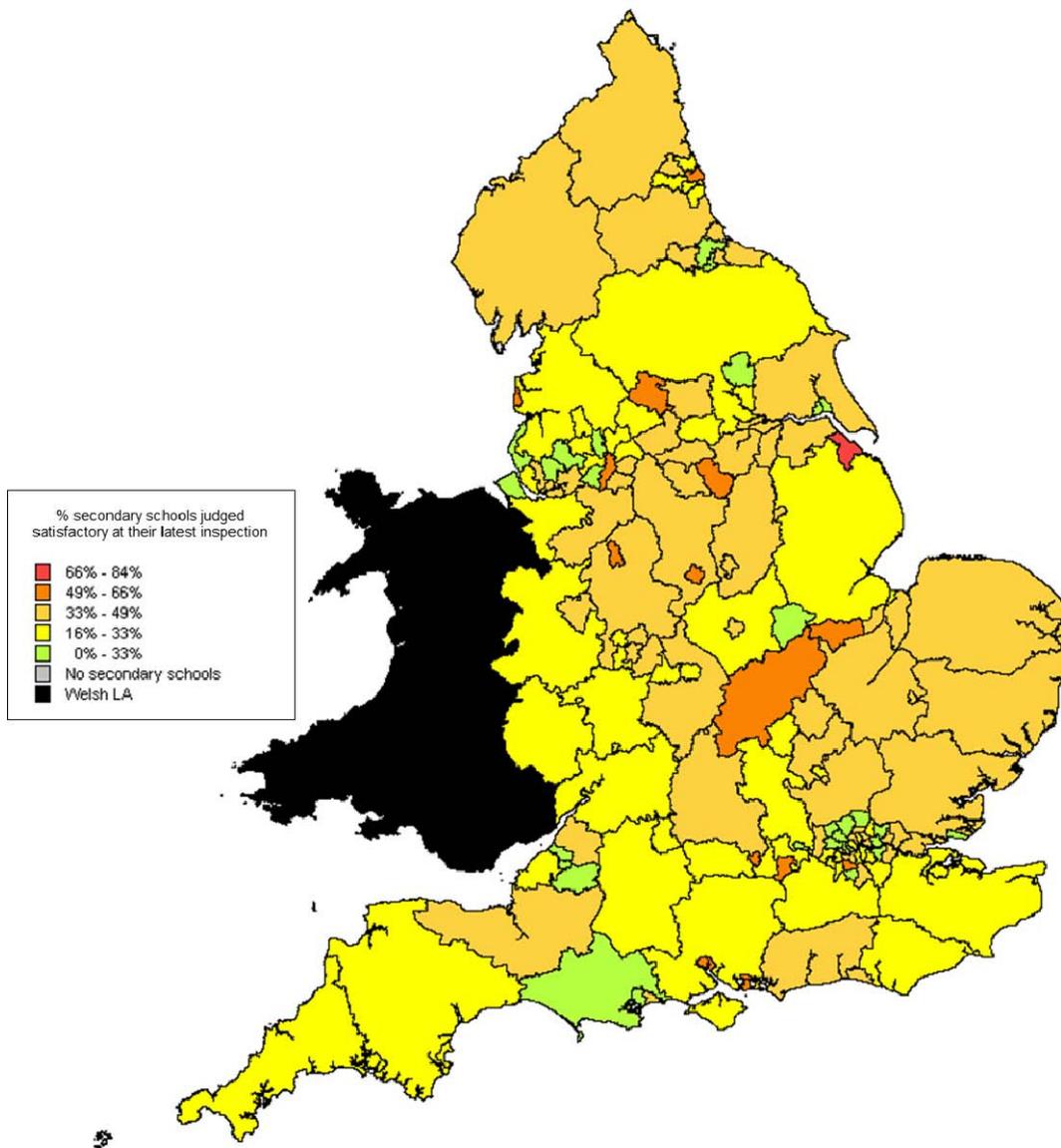
Figures may not match publications due to differences in the range of schools used (inspections use Edubase as at 31 March 2011 while RAISEOnline data is correct as at January 2011).

Map i: Map of all government office regions in England by the percentage of secondary schools judged to be satisfactory at their latest inspection



Source: Ofsted, ONS Geography

Map ii: Map of all local authorities (education) in England and the percentage of secondary schools judged to be satisfactory at their latest inspection



Source: Ofsted, ONS Geography

Map iii: Map showing the percentage of previously satisfactory secondary schools that were found to be satisfactory at their latest inspection, by local authority (education)

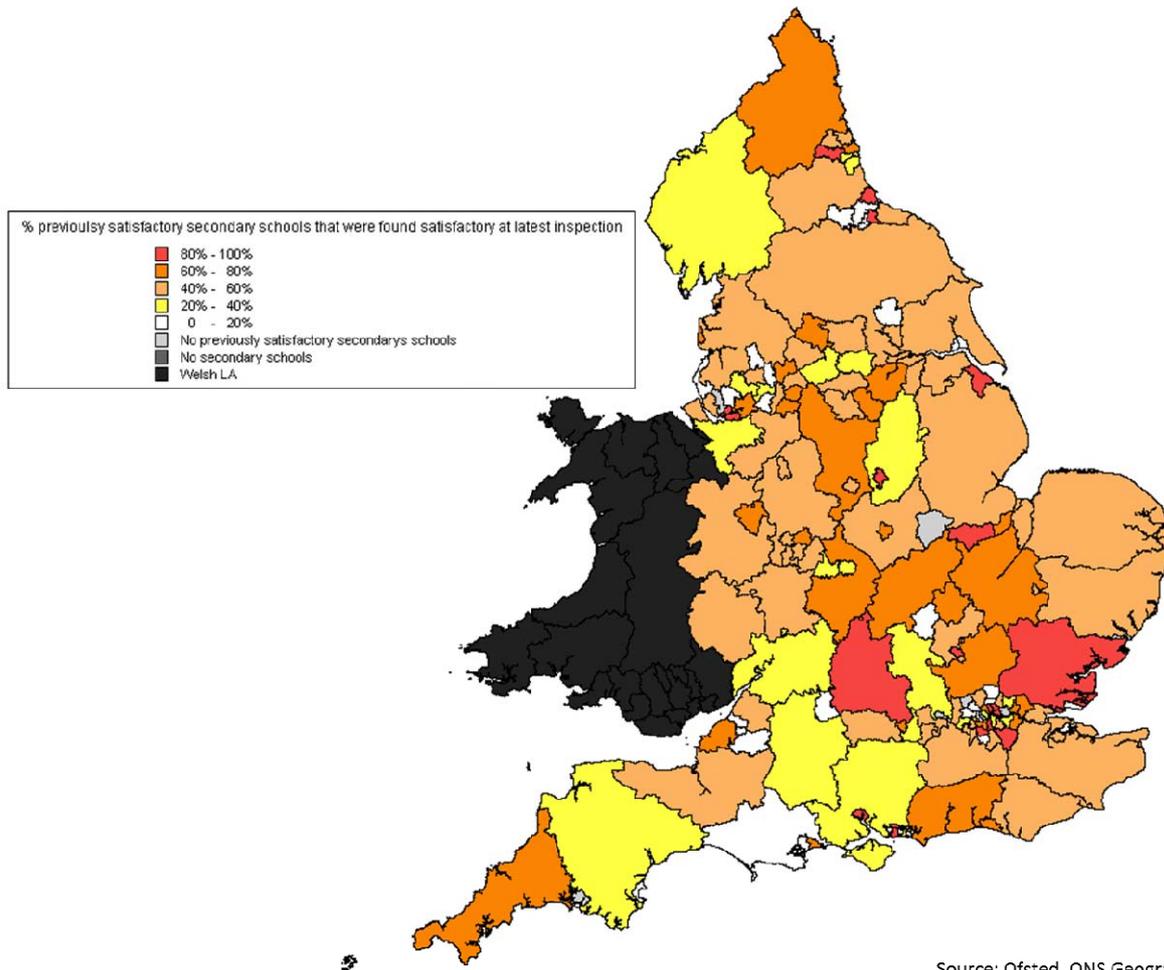


Table iv: Proportion and number of secondary schools judged to be satisfactory at latest inspection by government office region

Government Office Region	Total number of secondary schools inspected	No. of secondary schools found satisfactory at latest inspection	% of secondary schools satisfactory
Yorkshire and The Humber	290	115	40
East Midlands	264	100	38
East of England	380	144	38
North East	179	63	35
West Midlands	363	119	33
South East	440	137	31
North West	406	115	28
South West	283	75	27
London	391	99	25
Grand Total	2996	967	32

Source: Ofsted

Table v: Twenty local authorities (education) with the highest proportion of secondary schools judged to be satisfactory

Local Authority	Government Office Region	Total number of secondary schools inspected	No. of secondary schools found satisfactory at latest inspection	% of secondary schools satisfactory
North East Lincolnshire	Yorkshire and The Humber	6	5	83%
Blackpool	North West	8	5	63%
Merton	London	8	5	63%
Peterborough	East of England	8	5	63%
Kingston upon Hull City of	Yorkshire and The Humber	13	8	62%
Bradford	Yorkshire and The Humber	25	15	60%
Portsmouth	South East	9	5	56%
Rotherham	Yorkshire and The Humber	13	7	54%
Stoke-on-Trent	West Midlands	13	7	54%
Manchester	North West	19	10	53%
Northamptonshire	East Midlands	35	18	51%
Bracknell Forest	South East	6	3	50%
Bristol City of	South West	18	9	50%
Derby	East Midlands	12	6	50%
Reading	South East	4	2	50%
South Tyneside	North East	8	4	50%
Southampton	South East	12	6	50%
Central Bedfordshire	East of England	32	15	47%
Tower Hamlets	London	15	7	47%
Derbyshire	East Midlands	43	20	47%

Source: Ofsted

Table vi: Number and percentage of satisfactory secondary schools by urban/rural description

Urban/Rural Description	Satisfactory Secondary Schools	Percentage of all secondary schools
Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling - less sparse	2% (15)	2% (52)
Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling - sparse	0% (0)	0% (5)
Town and Fringe - less sparse	10% (94)	10% (308)
Town and Fringe - sparse	1% (11)	2% (45)
Urban > 10k - less sparse	84% (815)	83% (2480)
Urban > 10k - sparse	1% (5)	1% (16)
Village - less sparse	2% (24)	3% (79)
Village - sparse	0% (3)	0% (10)
Total Satisfactory Secondary Schools	967	2995

Source: Ofsted

Urban/rural descriptions based on Edubase as at 31 March 2011, excludes one school that did not have a designation.

Chart i: All secondary school inspections by academic year

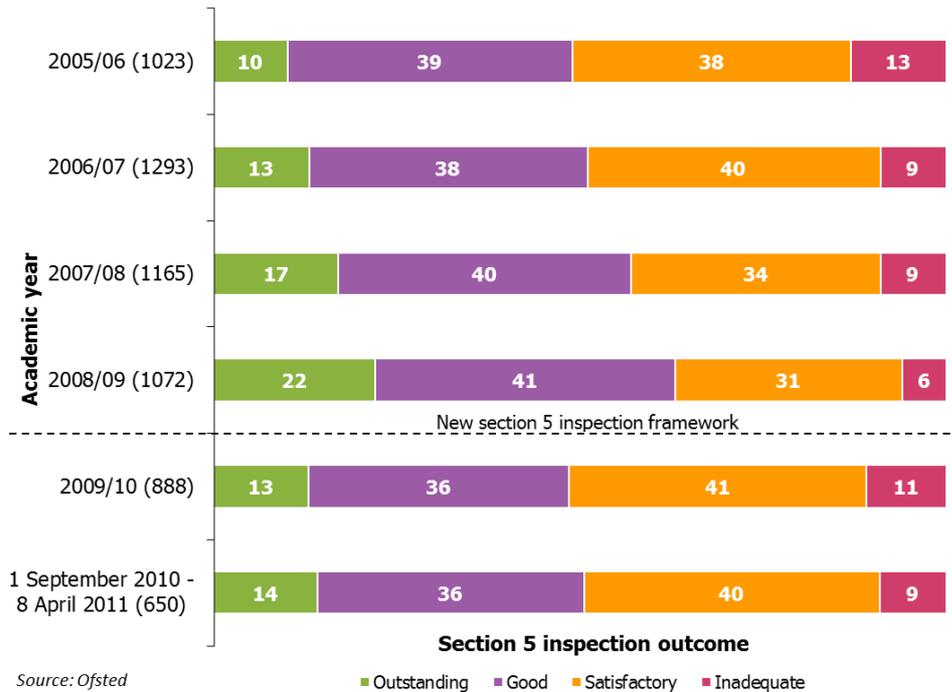


Chart ii: Comparison of previous and latest inspection of all secondary schools inspected twice

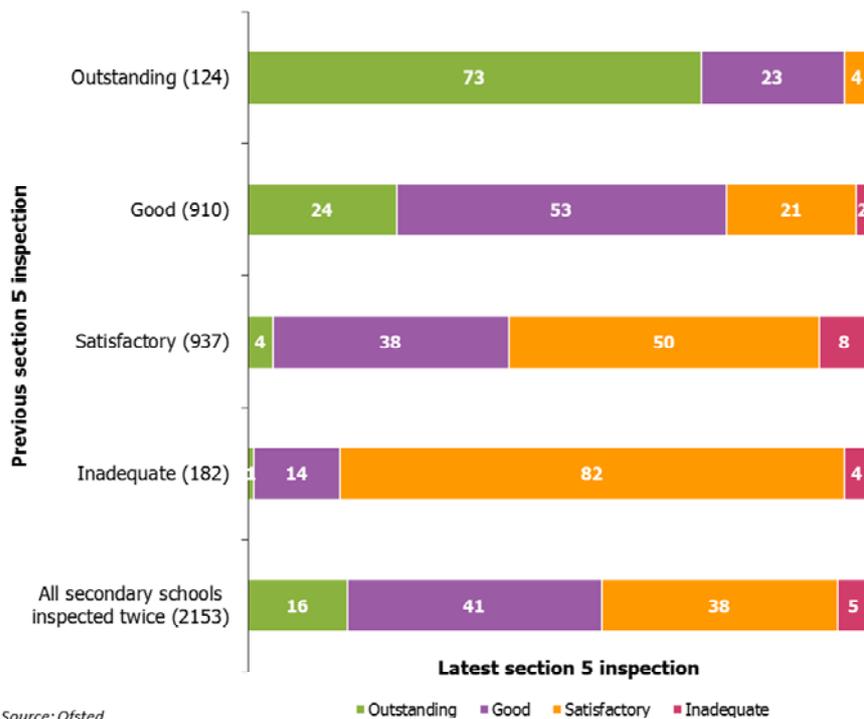
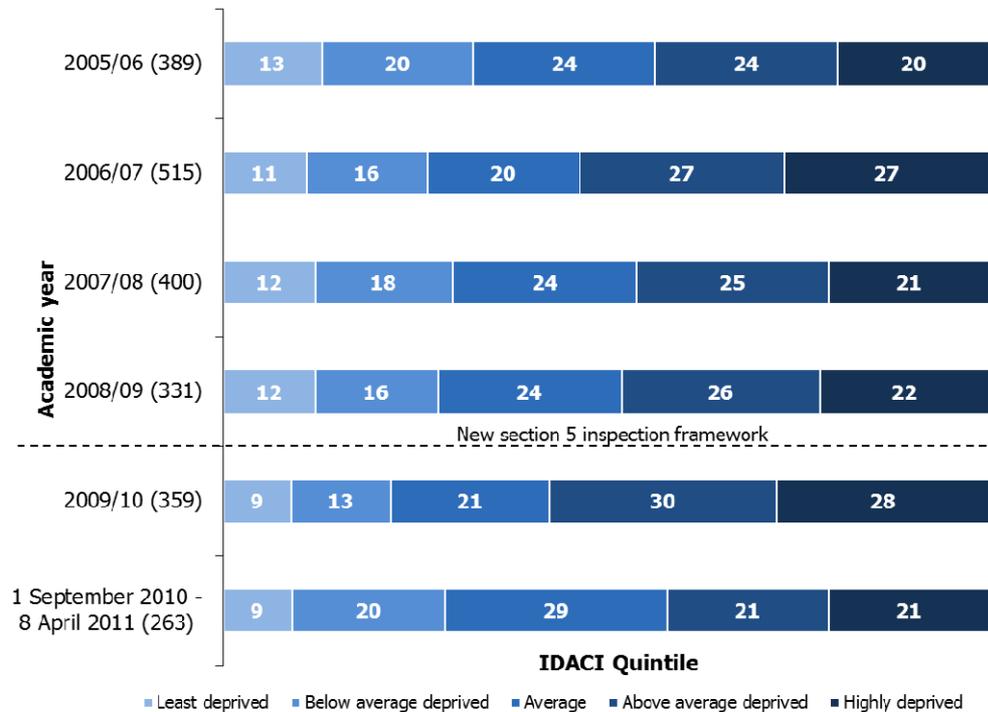


Chart iii: Secondary schools found to have satisfactory overall effectiveness by deprivation and year inspected



Source: Ofsted

Table is based on the deprivation of pupils on the school roll in January of the academic year as measured by the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) 2010. The table groups schools by quintiles of deprivation. 'Most deprived' indicates the 20% of schools with the most deprived pupils.

Figures exclude two schools that did not have an IDACI value for the year of their inspection.

Chart iv: Comparison of the previous overall effectiveness and the most recent overall effectiveness of secondary schools that are 'Deprived' and 'Most deprived'

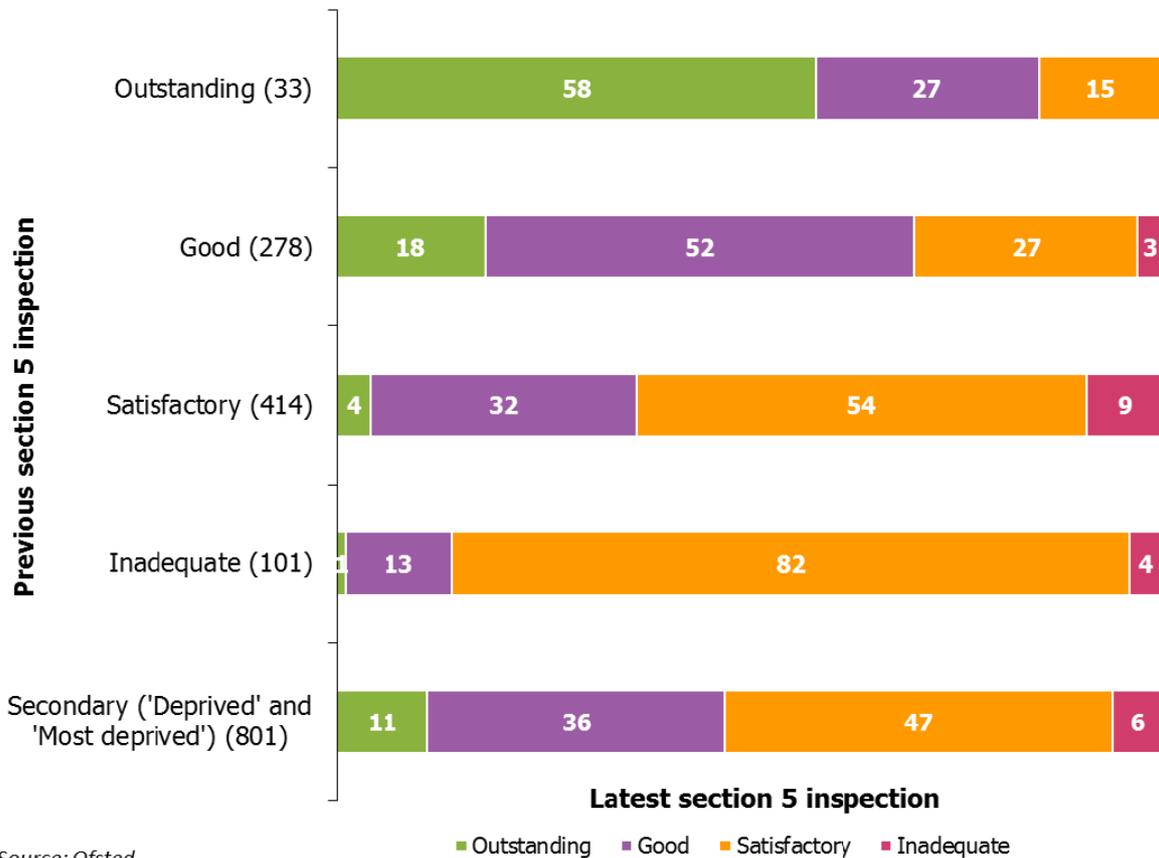


Chart v: Comparison of the previous overall effectiveness and the most recent overall effectiveness of secondary schools that have above national average deprivation

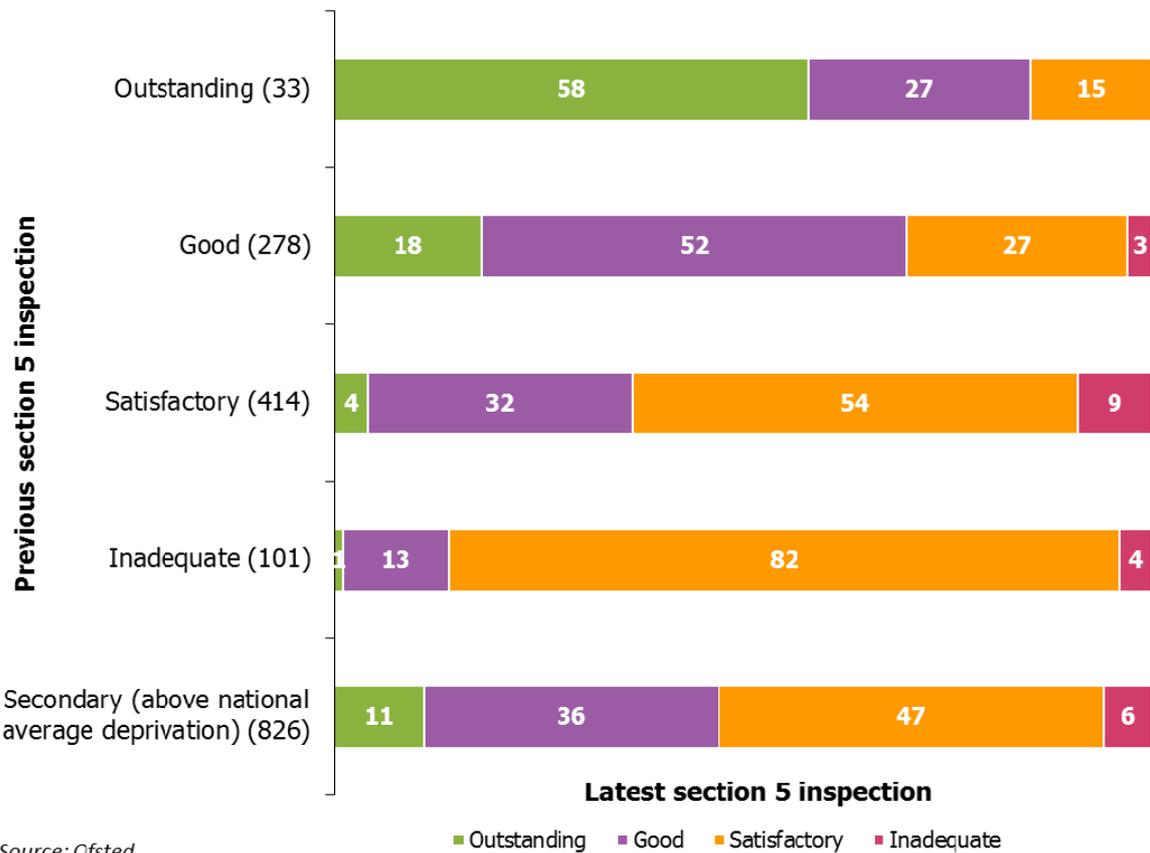


Chart vi: Comparison of the previous overall effectiveness and the most recent overall effectiveness of secondary schools that are 'Less deprived' and 'Least deprived'

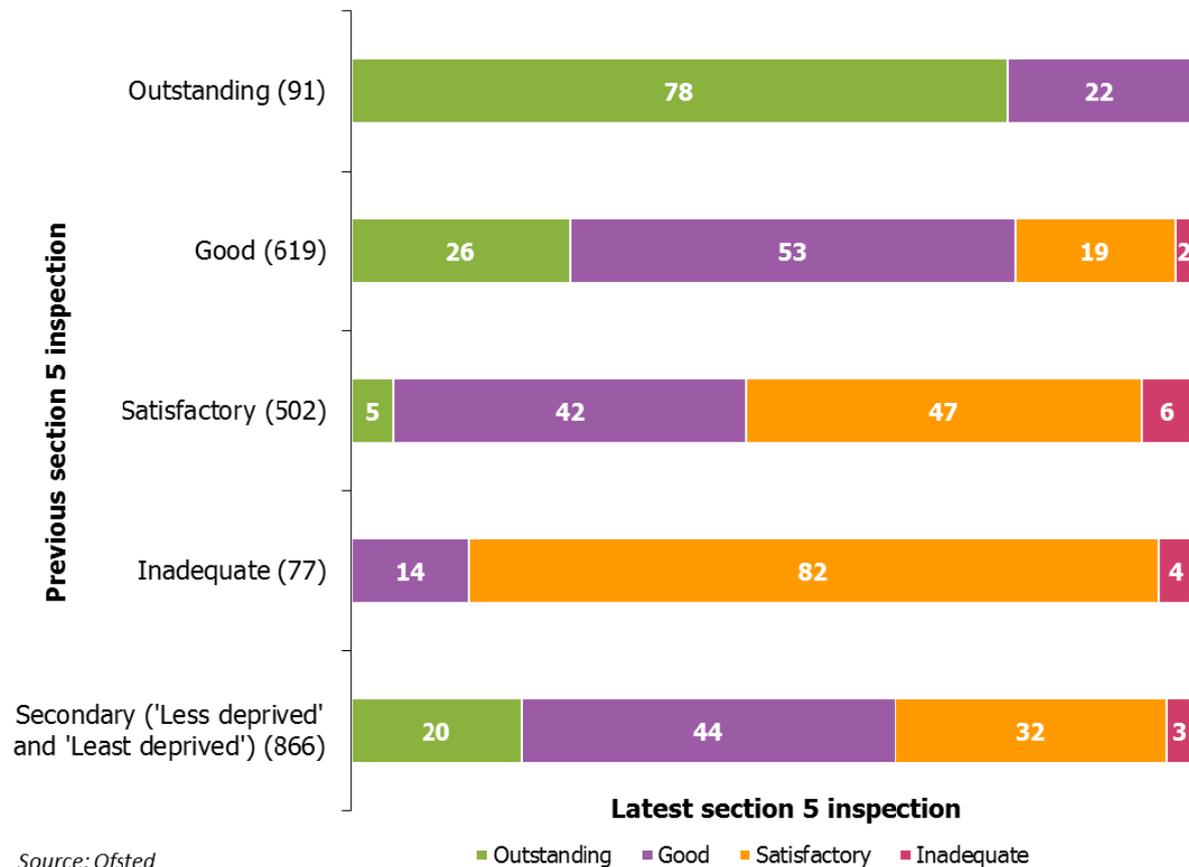


Chart vii: : Comparison of the previous overall effectiveness and the most recent overall effectiveness of secondary schools that have below national average deprivation

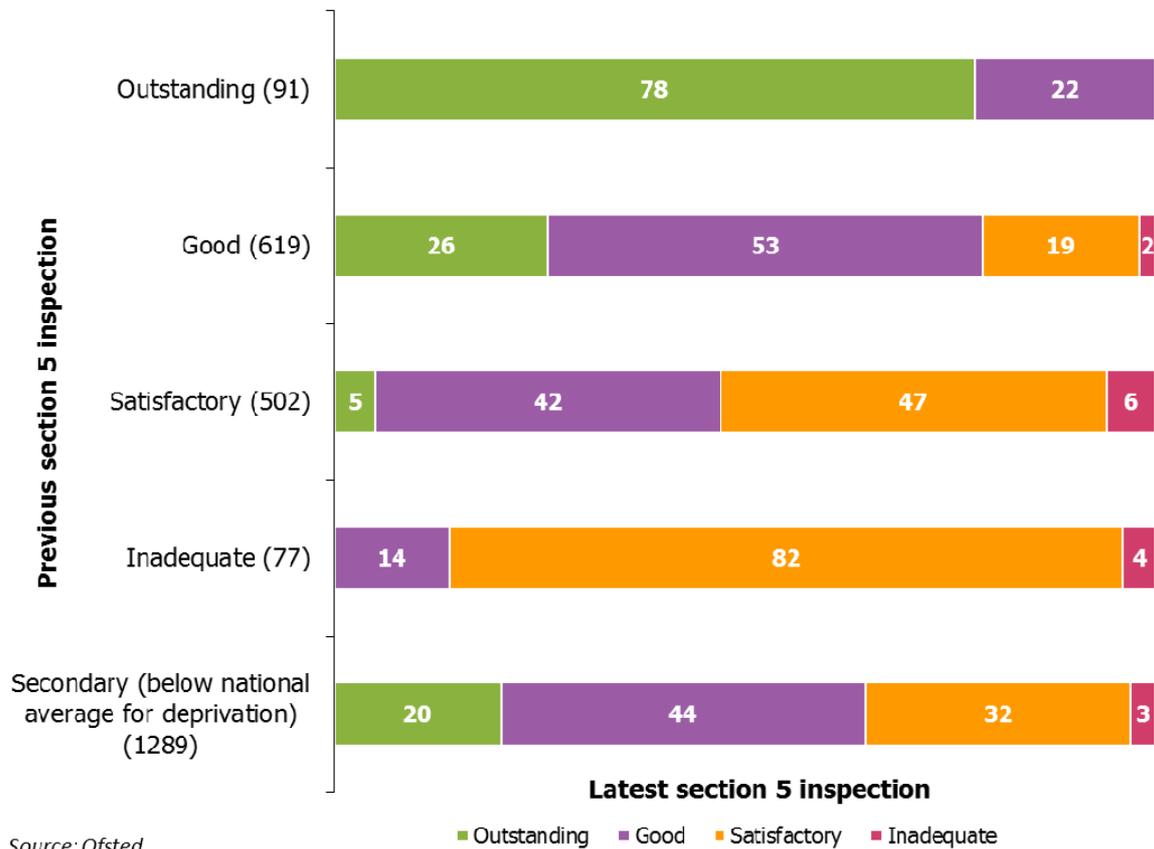


Chart viii: Comparison of the previous and most recent inspection of secondary schools that are large or above average for number on roll

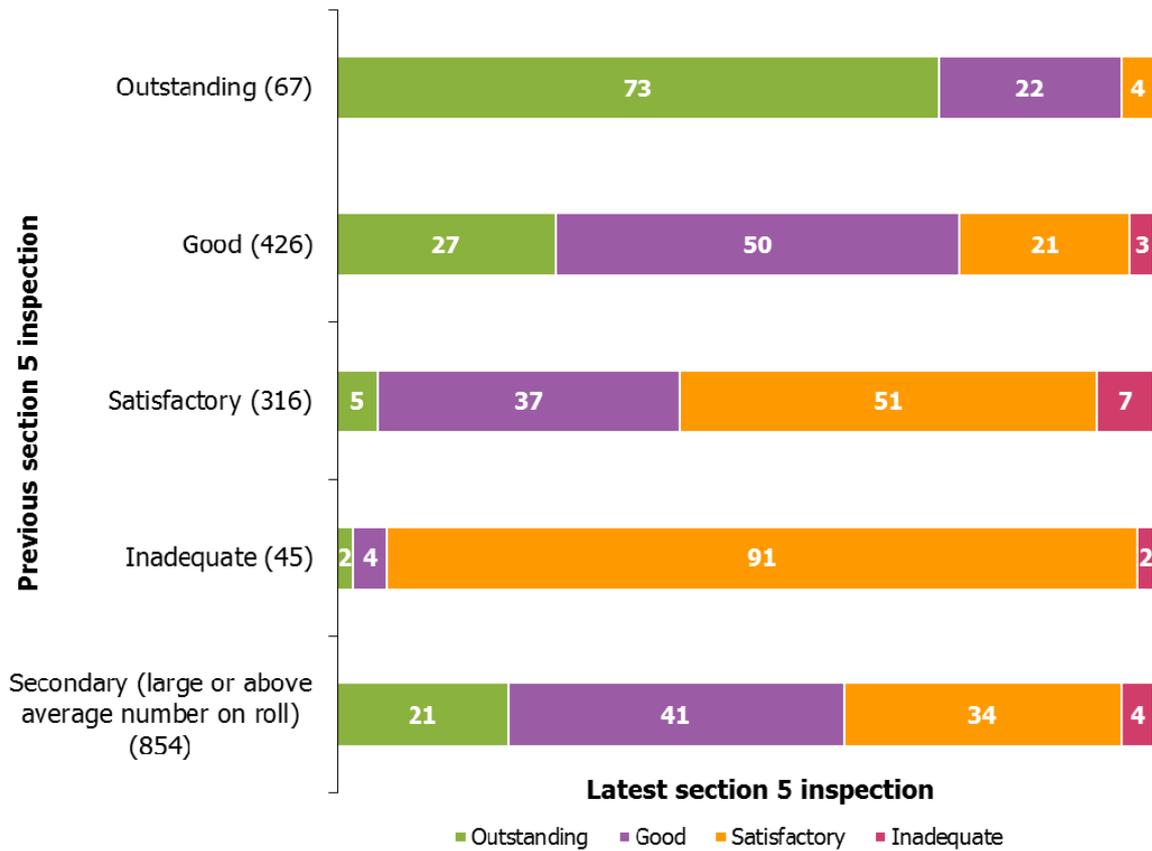


Chart ix: Comparison of the previous and most recent inspection of secondary schools that are small or below average for number on roll

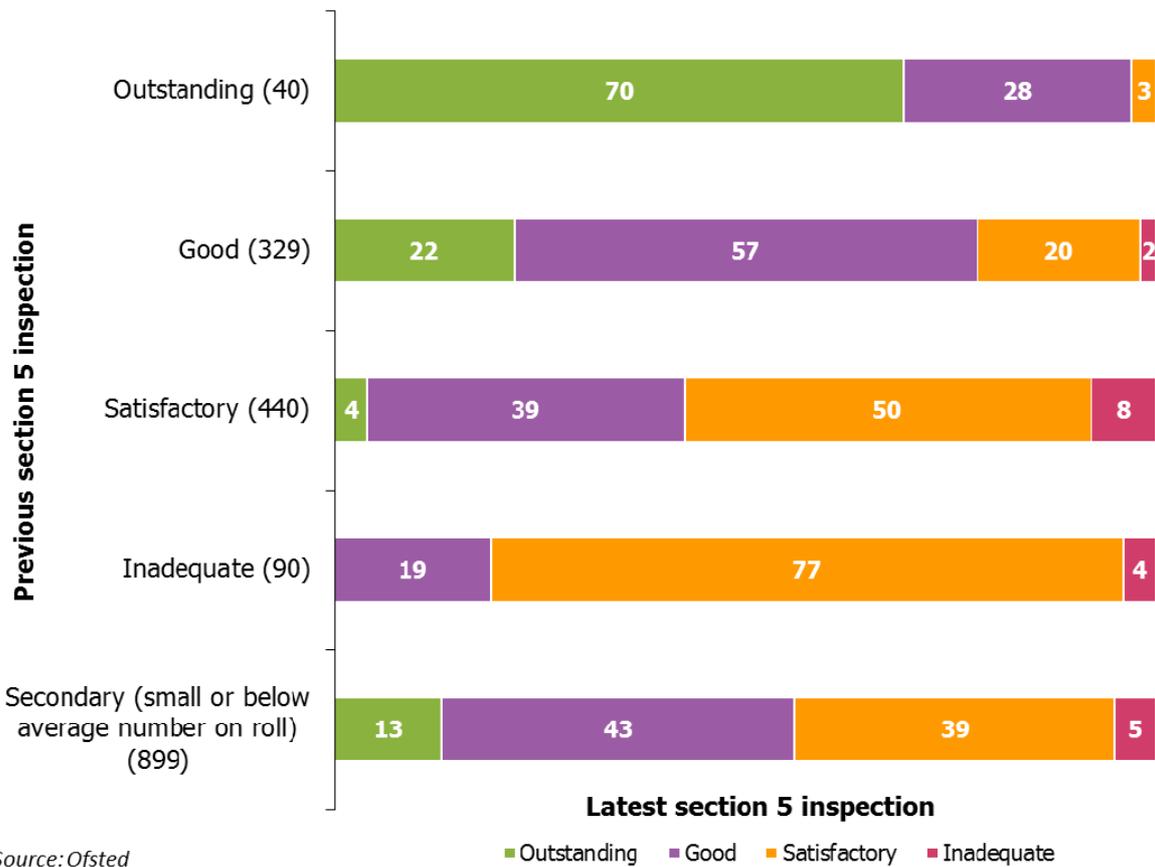


Chart x: Comparison with previous inspection: change in overall effectiveness of schools inspected between 1 September 2005 and 8 April 2011

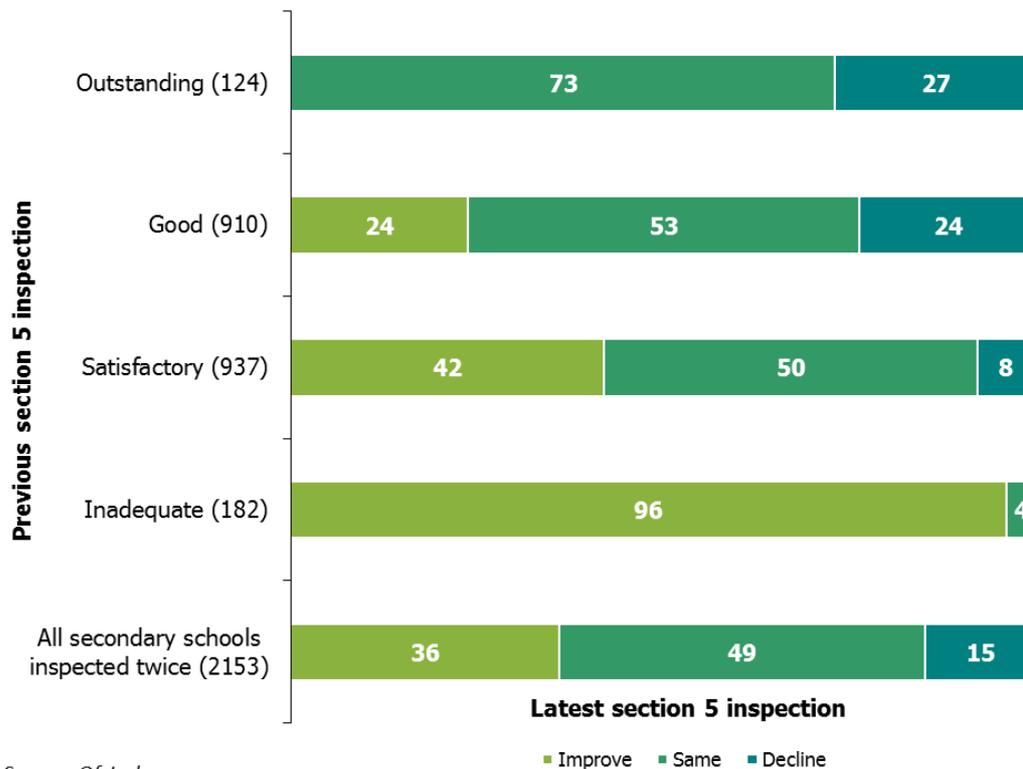


Chart xi: Comparison of the change in inspection outcomes of previously satisfactory secondary schools by academic year

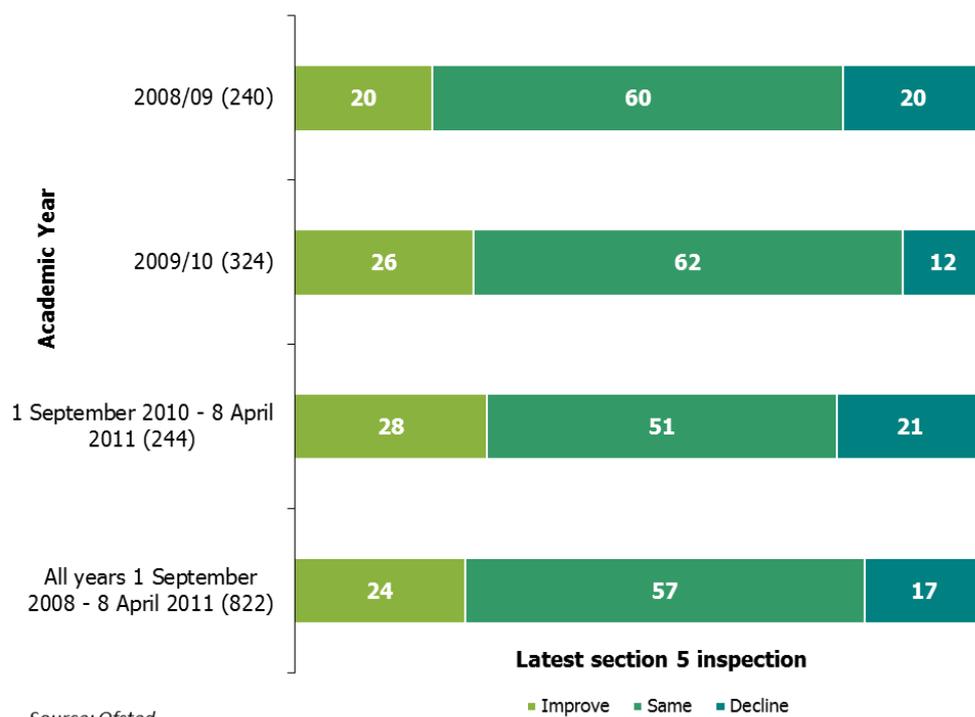


Chart xii: Comparison with previous inspection: change in overall effectiveness of schools inspected between 1 September 2005 and 8 April 2011 where the secondary school was 'Deprived' or 'Most deprived'

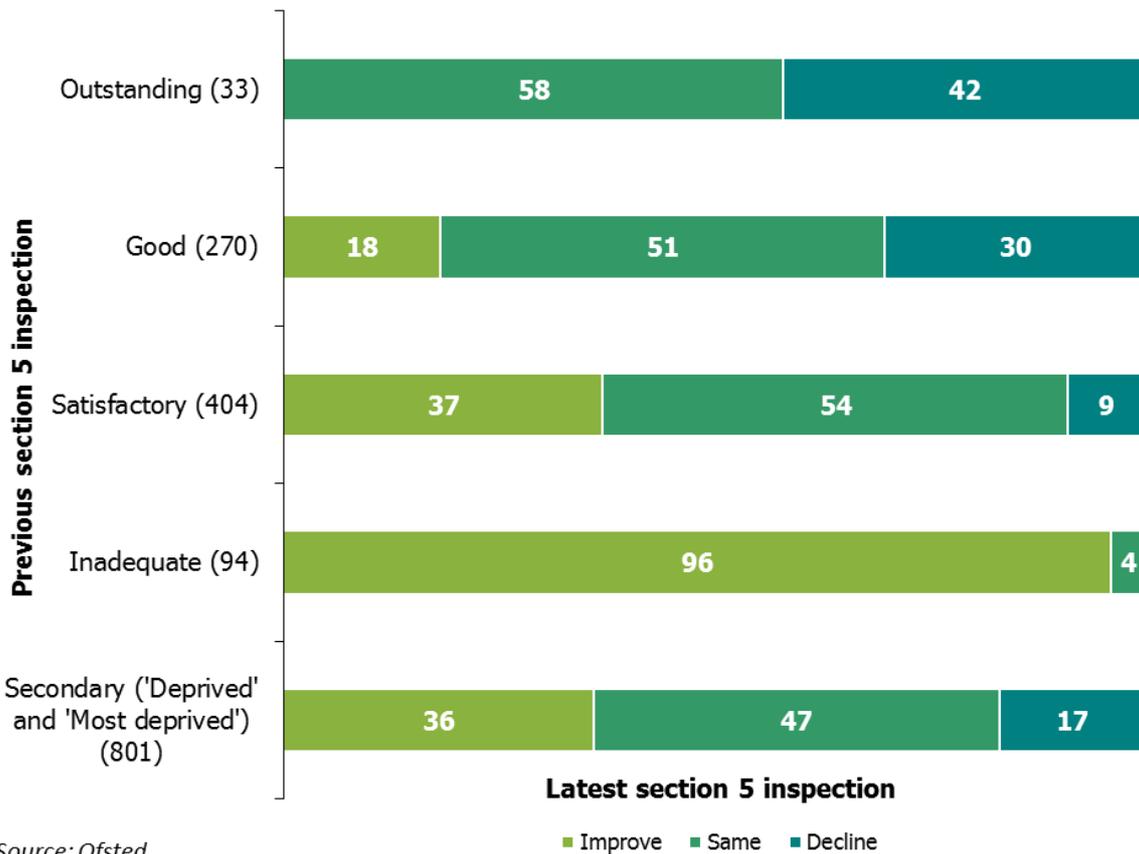


Chart xiii: Comparison with previous inspection: change in overall effectiveness of schools inspected between 1 September 2005 and 8 April 2011 where the secondary school was 'Less deprived' or 'Least deprived'

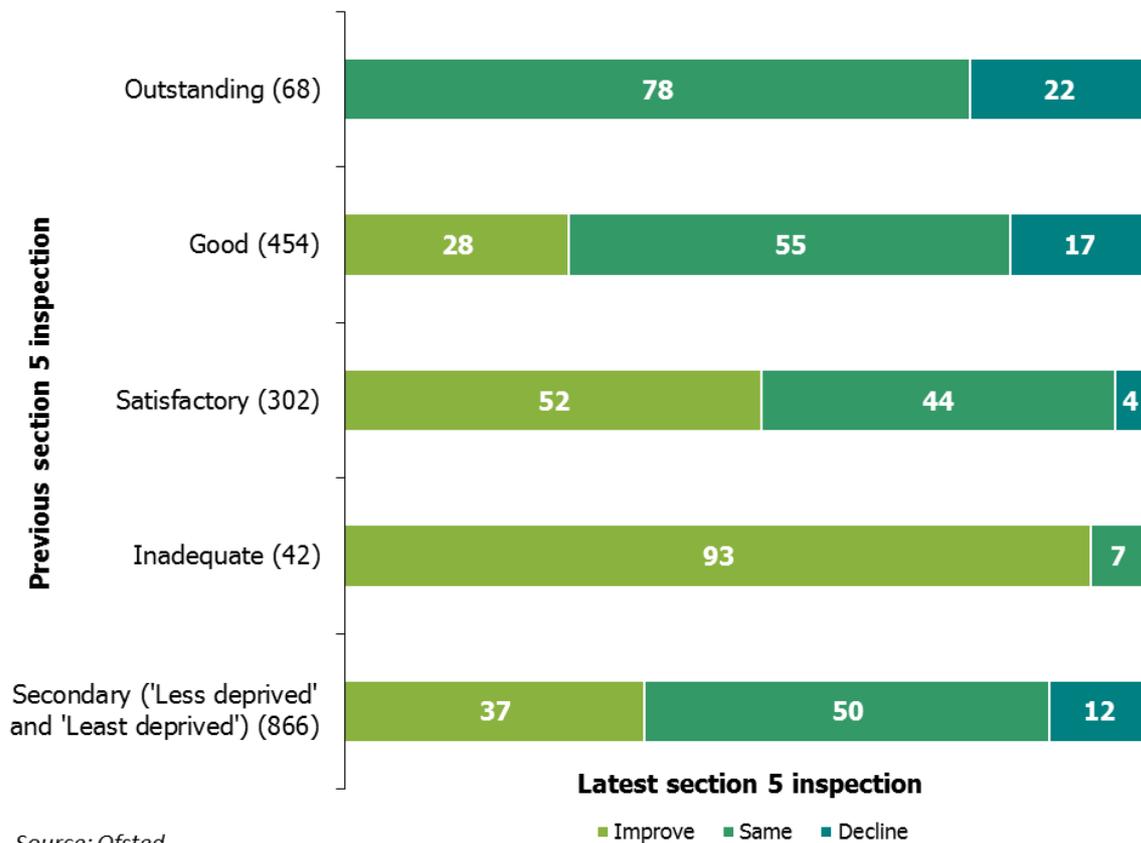


Chart xiv: Comparison with previous inspection: change in overall effectiveness of schools inspected between 1 September 2005 and 8 April 2011 where the secondary school was large or had above average number on roll

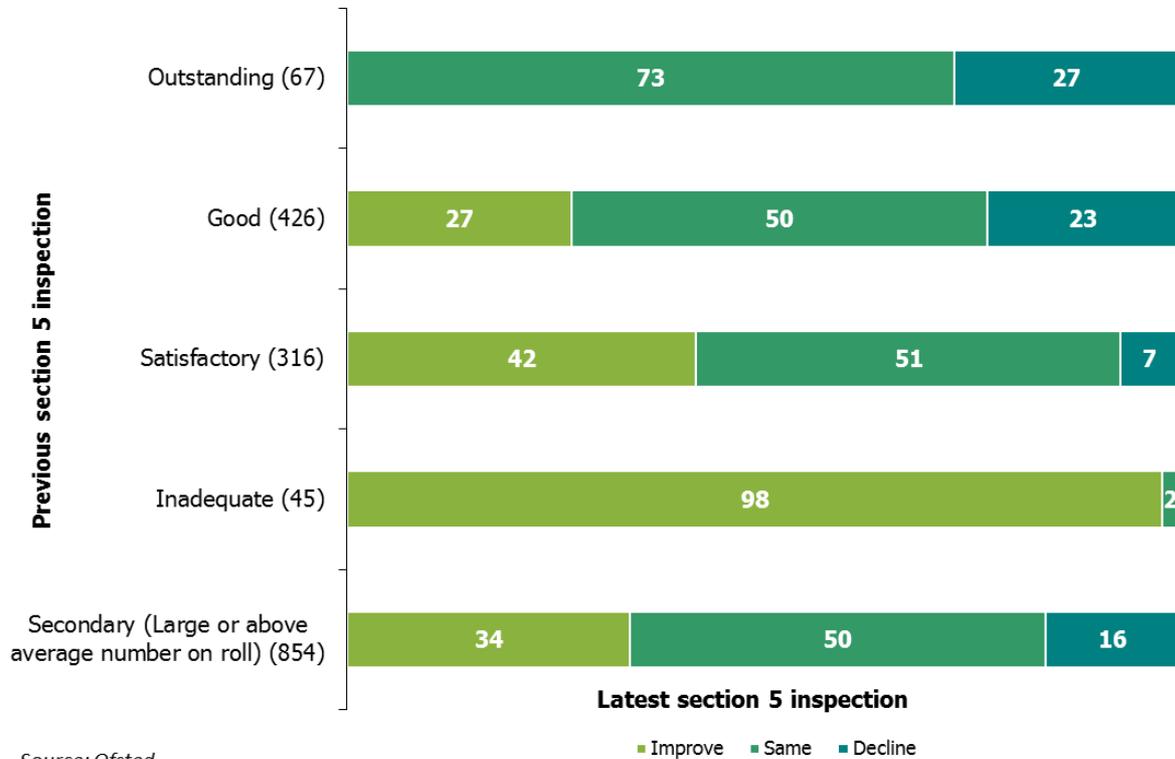


Chart xv: Comparison with previous inspection: change in overall effectiveness of schools inspected between 1 September 2005 and 8 April 2011 where the secondary school was small or had below average number on roll



Chart xvi: Deprivation (Income Deprivation Affecting Children) number on roll and percentage of pupils from a minority ethnic group, of secondary schools that remained satisfactory between their latest and previous inspection compared with those that were previously satisfactory but then became good or outstanding

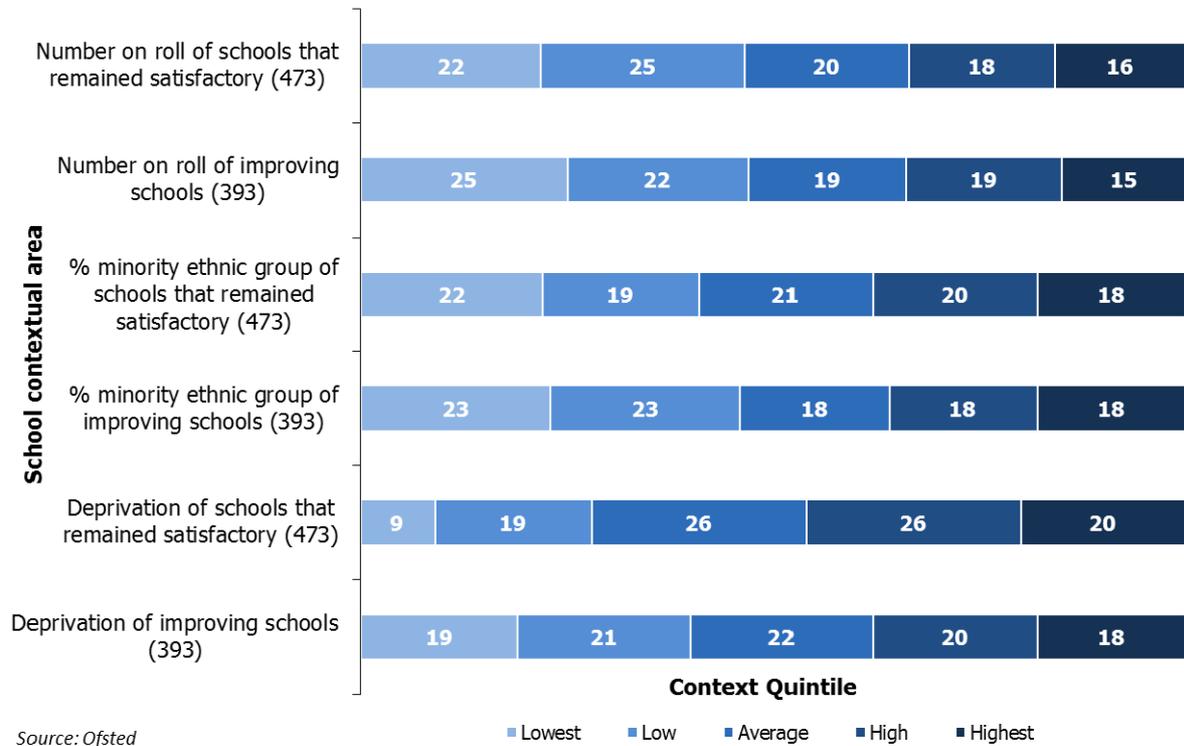


Chart xvii: Pupils' attainment judgement, learning and progress judgement of secondary schools that remained satisfactory between their latest and previous inspection outcomes compared with those that were previously satisfactory but then became good or outstanding

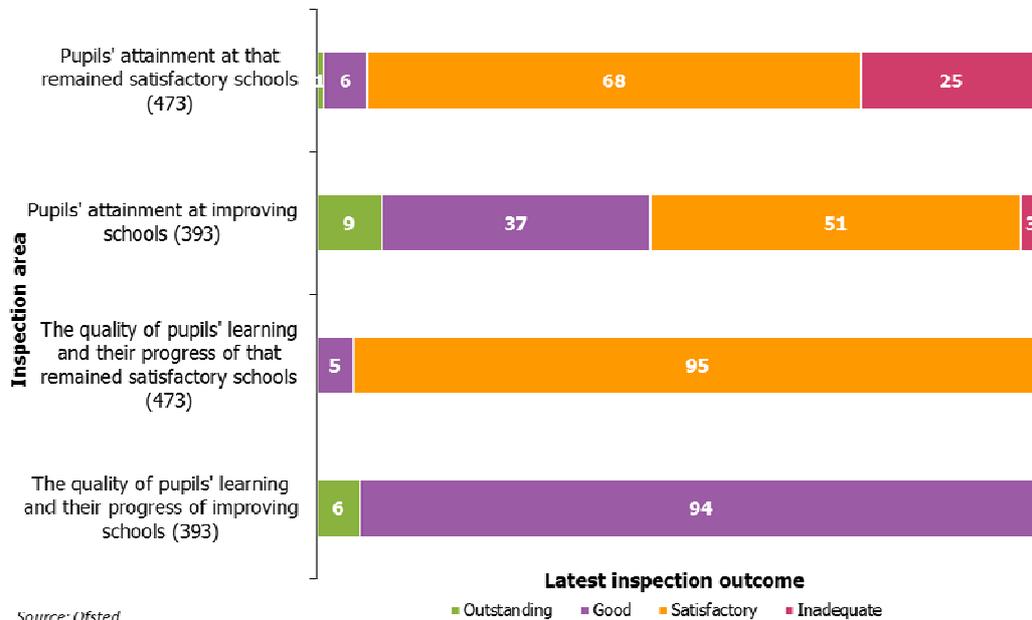
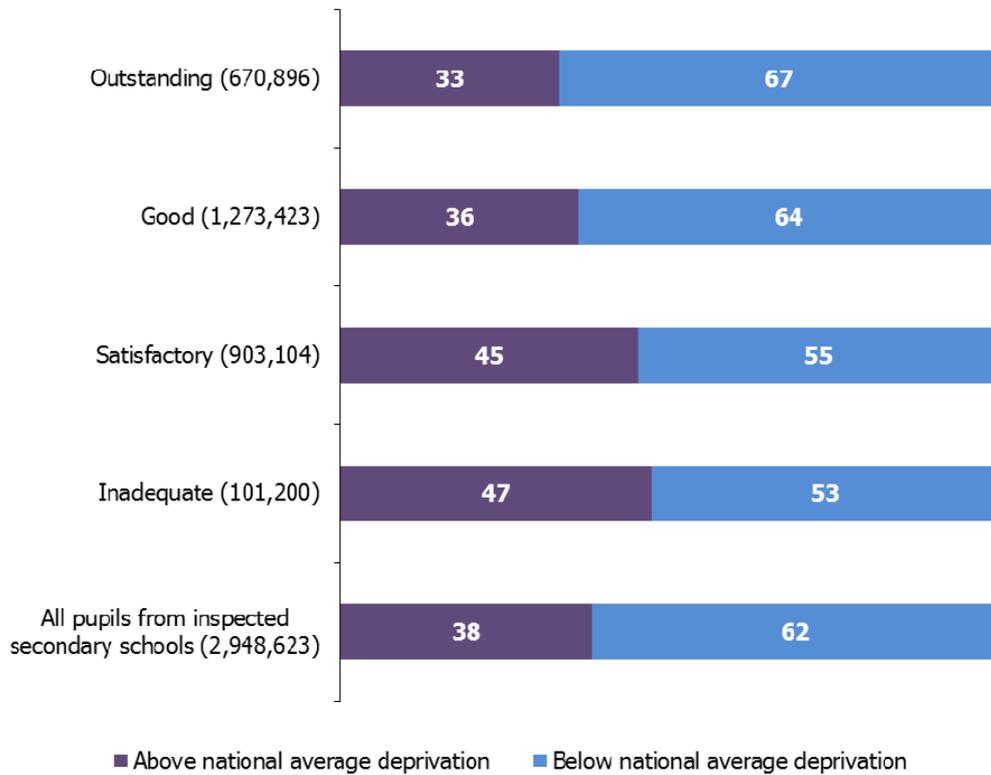
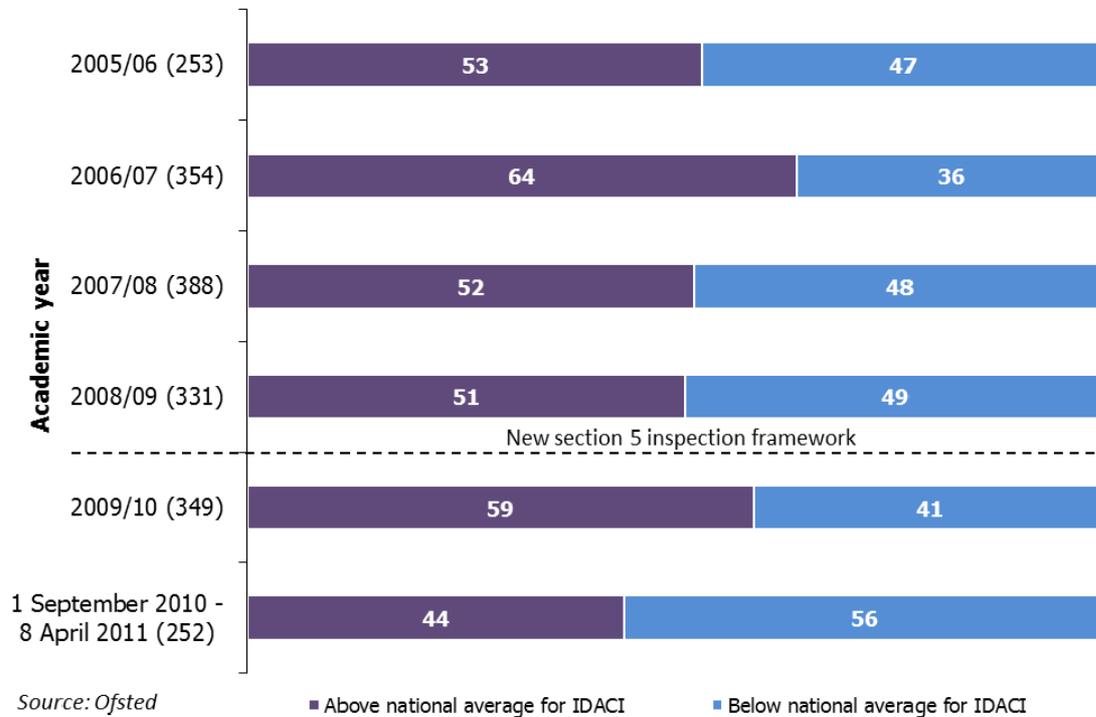


Chart xviii: Distribution of secondary school pupils' deprivation (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) by their secondary school's most recent overall effectiveness outcome



Figures may not match publications due to differences in the range of schools used (inspections use Edubase as at 31 March 2011 while RAISEOnline data is correct as at January 2011).

Chart xix: Distribution of satisfactory schools above and below the national average for deprivation (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index), by academic year



Excludes 331 schools where their IDACI was the same as the national average.