The contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in primary school geography

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PREFACE

Since the mid-1990s, a central feature of maintained English primary schools has been a system of regular inspection by teams of inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). This resulted from central government concerns to raise standards in education and to further the accountability of the nation's schools. Although inspections had been part of the education scene in England from the early days of state education, nothing of the scale of the Ofsted system of school inspections had existed before.

Geography is a well established subject of the primary school curriculum, and has a key part to play in children's education. However, recent reports by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) have become increasingly critical of the state of primary geography. In particular, the 2004-05 HMCI report (Ofsted, 2005a) noted that the quality of teaching and learning in geography had failed to improve at the same rate as in other subjects of the school curriculum. Further concerns about primary geography had also been raised in the preceding reports. Moreover, in my role as an Ofsted inspector and quality assurance reader of Ofsted inspection reports I had observed that Ofsted inspections of primary schools were paying progressively less attention to inspecting and reporting on geography, especially after the introduction of the revised inspection framework in 2003 (Ofsted, 2003a). It seemed possible that the two issues were connected.

As an enthusiastic geographer, I have been keen to share my interest in the subject with others – as a teacher in primary and secondary schools – and in institutions of teacher education. I am convinced of the value of geography in a child's education, and welcome the opportunity this study has afforded me to investigate and so deepen my understanding of the influence of Ofsted inspections on improvement in the subject.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in primary school geography. It explored the importance and role of inspection reports in guiding and informing improvement in geography, and examined how they had changed with revisions to the inspection framework in 2003. The role of the inspection process was also examined, as well as other key influences on improvement in geography in the schools.

A qualitative survey was employed, with a mixed method research design. Analysis of data was by means of a grounded theory approach, supplemented by statistical analysis. There were two main lines of enquiry. One comprised telephone interviews with Ofsted inspectors, and face-to-face interviews with primary school head teachers and geography coordinators. The other involved analysis of the geography sections of inspection reports from before and after the 2003 revisions to the inspection framework.

The study showed that, although there were variations in the quantity and quality of feedback in the reports, the majority could not be regarded as useful in guiding and informing improvement in geography. Furthermore, the number of reports in this category increased significantly with the introduction of the 2003 framework, and the accompanying reductions in the inspection of geography. Central government initiatives to raise standards in numeracy and literacy were seen to have a negative impact on improvement in geography, as schools and inspection teams prioritised English and mathematics at the expense of the non-core subjects.

Primary geography could be improved if national policy supported the development and inspection of a broad and balanced curriculum, in which no subject was marginalised. However, there is currently limited evidence that this is taking place, and the present inspection regime, with its focus on accountability in the core subjects is, instead, having the opposite effect on geography.

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GLOSSARY

The following definitions have been used to ensure consistency and clarity throughout the text:

Basic skills: The skills of numeracy and literacy, drawing upon those associated with mathematics and English respectively.

Core subject: A compulsory subject under the National Curriculum in England, and defined by it as one 'without which other learning cannot take place effectively.' The three core subjects in England are English, mathematics and science.

Foundation subject: The other compulsory subjects which combine with core subjects and religious education to form all of the compulsory subjects of the National Curriculum in England. Geography is one of the foundation subjects of the National Curriculum. Apart from a period between 1998 and 2000, schools have been required to follow the programmes of study in the foundation subjects.

Geography coordinator: The teacher who has responsibility for leading and managing geography throughout the primary school. On occasions the terms 'subject leader', 'subject coordinator', 'curriculum leader' or 'subject manager' have been used.

INSET: In-service education and training for teachers.

Judgement: The considered opinion of a trained Ofsted inspector about the quality of geography taught and learned in a school, or the standards achieved, based upon secure evidence and informed by published guidance from Ofsted.

Key Stage: The period in a child's education to which the elements of the National Curriculum apply. Key Stage 1 applies to the period from 5 to 7 years of age. Key Stage 2 applies to the period from 7 to 11 years of age.

Primary school: School which caters for pupils from 5 to 11 years of age and encompasses Key Stages 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum.

Programme of study: The knowledge, skills and processes which must be taught to students in each subject area during each key stage of the National Curriculum.

Standard Attainment Tests (SATs): National Curriculum Tests which, in the primary phase, are given to pupils for Key Stages 1 and 2. Key Stage 1 SATs cover English and mathematics. Key Stage 2 SATs cover English, mathematics and science.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

'The roots of geographical education lie in the natural curiosity that all of us have about places and ways of living other than our own' (Walford, 2001, page 3).

One of the significant outcomes of the 1992 Education (Schools) Act (Great Britain, 1992) was the setting up of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), with responsibility for a system of monitoring standards in schools throughout England and Wales, and for inspecting the provision of the National Curriculum (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) /Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), 1999). As a result, teams of accredited Ofsted inspectors visit schools at regular intervals to examine and report on the standards of education achieved and the quality of education provided. On the basis of this they make recommendations about how the schools might be improved. At the outset, Ofsted defined the purpose of inspection as 'to identify strengths and weaknesses in schools so that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils' (Ofsted, 1994a, page 5). More recently, Ofsted endorsed its improvement role and listed, as one of its inspection principles, that 'Inspection is evaluative and diagnostic, assessing quality and compliance, and providing a clear basis for improvement' (Ofsted, 2003a, page 3). An essential purpose of Ofsted inspections of schools is, therefore, to provide a basis for improvement. In the 2002-03 Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) (Ofsted, 2004a), Ofsted sought the views of those who had been inspected about the value of their inspection in contributing to improvement. The findings of this study should complement this debate.

This study investigates the contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in primary school geography. It examines the importance and role of the inspection reports in guiding and informing improvement in geography, and considers how

these reports have changed, especially as a result of statutory changes to the requirements for the inspections (Ofsted, 2003a). The study also explores the role of the inspections themselves on improvement in primary school geography, within the context of other key influences, particularly with respect to the standards achieved by the pupils; teaching and learning; the curriculum; resources; fieldwork; and the leadership and management of the geography coordinator. Interviews and documentary analysis are used as data sources. The data collection phase determined the limits of the timescale of the study, and this was completed prior to the introduction of the 2005 Ofsted inspection framework (Ofsted, 2005e). However, reference is made to this framework in Chapter 6, and a small sample of reports produced in its early stages was examined for purposes of comparison.

The study is of national importance, as it is concerned with key influences on improvement in primary school geography, a National Curriculum subject which has been reported as being in a relative state of decline. Based on evidence drawn from school inspection reports, HMCI described geography as 'the worst taught subject in the curriculum, with the rate of improvement lower than that of all other subjects' (Bell, 2005, page 4). The findings of the study could, therefore, contribute to national policy making to raise standards of teaching and learning in geography in primary schools. The study investigates whether Ofsted school inspections do contribute to improvement in primary school geography, or whether, instead, they inhibit it. This is important, because the Ofsted system of school inspection was established to contribute to improvement in schools (Ofsted, 1994a).

Complementary to this, the study examines the extent to which the Ofsted inspection requirements have assisted or impeded schools in providing their pupils with a balanced and broadly based curriculum – as required by section 351 of the Education Act 1996 (Great Britain, 1996). It raises fundamental questions about whether central government policies designed to raise standards in the core subjects of the school curriculum, particularly in English and mathematics, are at

the same time adversely affecting pupils' learning and progress in other subjects, such as geography.

Well conceived arguments concerning the relevance, value and importance of geography have frequently been promoted by professional bodies such as the Geographical Association (Scoffham, 2004) and by official sources such as HMCI (Bell, 2005). These arguments include reference to:

- the central role of geography in helping children to learn about the world they live in and on which they depend, and for them to understand change, conflict and key issues that impact on our lives today and that will affect our futures tomorrow;
- the importance that the adults of tomorrow should be aware of environmental issues, promote sustainability and respect human rights and social inclusion;
- the contribution of geography in developing well rounded citizens.

At a time when the world is grappling to cope with human and natural disasters on a local and global scale, and when controversies about the environment and the earth's resources remain unresolved, the need for a relevant and expertly taught geography curriculum in schools has never been more urgent. It is therefore a matter of great concern when it is reported that the subject has become neglected, marginalised and badly-taught in many primary schools, and that standards are too low (Ofsted, 2004b; Bell, 2005).

As a geographer, the study is of concern to me personally and professionally, and my academic and professional involvement with the topic has inevitably influenced my perspectives and interpretations of key ideas and findings arising from it. At a personal level, I am keenly interested in all things geographical and have greatly enjoyed exploring the world with a geographical eye. As a geography graduate I have spent much of my professional life teaching geography in primary and secondary schools, universities and institutions of teacher training. More recently, in my role as an Ofsted inspector of primary schools and a quality assurance critical reader of Ofsted inspection reports, I have noted, especially in the last three years, that geography is often subject to a minimalist level of inspection. In many

Ofsted inspections it was not even inspected at all. In such instances the paragraphs of the inspection reports concerned with geography were insignificant, and offered little, if any, feedback and advice to the schools about how to bring about improvement in the subject. Other foundation subjects of the curriculum, such as history, appear to have shared the same fate, as illustrated in the following extract from an inspection report:

> *Only one lesson was seen in history, and none in geography. It is therefore not possible to make a judgement about provision for either of these subjects, and they were not a focus of the inspection.* (School 32, November 2004)

THE OFSTED INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

The requirements for school inspections in England, which incorporate and reflect national policy, were set out by Ofsted in a succession of 'framework' publications (Ofsted, 1994a, 1996a, 1999a, 2003a, 2005b, 2005e). Accompanying them, and to be used in conjunction with them, were Ofsted inspection handbooks (Ofsted, 1994a, 1996b, 1999a, 2003b, 2005b). These were published to provide guidance for inspectors and inspection teams on the inspection of the schools, and to inform schools about the inspection process. Both the framework documents and the handbooks have been revised at intervals as the system of inspection developed and government policies and priorities for education changed. Revisions of the inspection framework and alterations to the ways in which inspections were conducted resulted in changes in the emphasis given to the inspection of various aspects of the schools and their curricula. Such changes in turn gave unequivocal messages to schools about Ofsted (and national) inspection priorities, and so both explicitly and implicitly set out expectations of what was considered to be important in the curriculum of the nation's schools, and constituted validated educational practice. For example, the drive to raise standards in the National Curriculum core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and to develop pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT), was reflected in the Ofsted requirement for inspections to:

> *... include the evaluation and reporting of standards achieved by pupils, the quality of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership, and any other factors that have a bearing on pupils' achievement, as applicable, in ... English (including literacy across the curriculum), mathematics (including numeracy), science, ICT ... and work seen in other subjects* (Ofsted, 2003a, page 8).

It should be noted that, whilst English, mathematics, science and ICT are specifically named in this requirement, other subjects of the school curriculum, such as geography, are not. This suggests that, for inspection purposes, Ofsted regarded subjects such as English, mathematics, science and ICT to be more important than the other subjects of the curriculum. The question thus arises that, if the purpose of inspection is to bring about improvement, why is it mandatory for inspection teams to inspect some subjects, but not others, such as geography?

GEOGRAPHY IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Geography has been an essential part of the curriculum for pupils of primary school age since the Education Act of 1902 (Great Britain, 1902), and it appeared on the curriculum as far back as the 1850s (Catling, 1998). More recently, the National Curriculum for primary schools in England arose from the Education Reform Act of 1988 (Great Britain, 1988) and was fully introduced in 1992, with geography listed as one of the foundation subjects. In common with the other subjects of the National Curriculum, there is a statutory requirement for geography to be taught as part of the curriculum in all primary schools.

A rationale for the place of geography in the primary school curriculum, and a summary of its scope and importance, is given in Box 1.1, which relates to the current edition of the National Curriculum.

Box 1.1 Rationale for geography in the primary school curriculum

National Curriculum Handbook for Primary Teachers in England
Key Stages 1 and 2 - Geography

Geography provokes and answers questions about the natural and human worlds, using different scales of enquiry to view them from different perspectives. It develops knowledge of places and environments throughout the world, an understanding of maps, and a range of investigative and problem-solving skills both inside and outside the classroom. As such, it prepares pupils for adult life and employment. Geography is a focus within the curriculum for understanding and resolving issues about the environment and sustainable development. It is also an important link between the natural and social sciences. As pupils study geography, they encounter different societies and cultures. This helps them realise how nations rely on each other. It can inspire them to think about their own place in the world, their values, and their rights and responsibilities to other people and the environment.

(DfEE and QCA, 1999, page 108)

As part of its role in providing curriculum support for teachers, the QCA publishes exemplar schemes of work based on the requirements of the National Curriculum. Those for geography include an outline of the aims and purposes of geography teaching in primary schools for Key Stages 1 and 2 (QCA, 1998a, page 3) which state that geography teaching offers opportunities to:

- stimulate children's interest in their surroundings and in the variety of human and physical conditions on the Earth's surface;
- foster children's sense of wonder at the beauty of the world around them;
- help children to develop an informed concern about the quality of the environment and the future of the human habitat; and
- thereby, enhance children's sense of responsibility for the care of the Earth and its people.

Undoubtedly, these aims and purposes are most worthy, and the value of geography in children's education is undeniable. However, despite this, the annual reports by HMCI on the state of primary school geography in recent years (Ofsted, 2004b, 2005c, 2005d) give cause for concern.

The 2003/04 HMCI Ofsted subject report for geography in primary schools noted that:

> *There is weaker provision in geography than in any other National Curriculum subject ... The uninspiring provision in most schools is particularly disappointing when compared with the rich and exciting geography in schools where it is thriving* (Ofsted, 2005d page 3,).

In 2005, HMCI expressed concern about the relative decline in primary school geography, as highlighted in Ofsted inspection reports, and described the picture as being 'particularly stark' because, in many primary schools, the subject had become 'neglected and marginalised' (Bell, 2005, page 4,).

The overall state of primary school geography appears, therefore, to be bleak, with the standards of teaching the subject a matter for grave concern. HMCI also noted that this trend was being followed through into secondary schools, and that the number of pupils taking geography as a subject in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) had declined by one third in the eight years between 1996 and 2004 (Bell, 2005).

BREADTH AND BALANCE IN THE CURRICULUM

The debate about the balanced curriculum and its relationship to standards in the 'basic skills' has been prominent in educational circles for many decades (Campbell, 1993; QCA, 1998b; Alexander, 2004). Strong arguments in favour of a rich and broad curriculum, which embraces the subjects of the humanities, were advanced by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) in their Primary Survey (Department of Education and Science (DES), 1978). The survey concluded that:

> *... there is no evidence in the survey to suggest that a narrower curriculum enabled children to do better in the basic skills.*

The basic skills are more successfully learnt when applied to other subjects.

The general educational progress of children and their competence in the basic skills appear to have benefited where they were involved in a programme of work that included ... history and geography (DES, 1978, page 114).

Subsequent legislation, embodied in Section 351 of the 1996 Education Act (Great Britain, 1996), required that all maintained schools should provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum. This requirement was further endorsed in the National Curriculum, the current handbook of which advises primary school teachers that 'Schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils' (DfEE and QCA, 1999, page 30). More recently, the government's Primary Strategy – *Excellence and Enjoyment* – (DfES, 2003) announced the intention to enable schools to design broad and rich curricula which made the most of links between different areas. In its introductory paragraph, it describes outstanding primary schools as being characterised by 'a rich, broad and balanced curriculum' (DfES, 2003, page 9) and adds that 'High standards and a broad and rich curriculum go hand in hand' (DfES, 2003, page 27).

However, the achievement of this objective has been inhibited in many schools because of their response to Ofsted's messages about inspection priorities, which many schools translated into curriculum priorities. The degree to which schools responded to these messages varied, depending upon the values they wished to uphold, and their confidence and strengths in those areas of the curriculum to be inspected. As schools inevitably wished to portray themselves as well as possible, the majority tended to follow the inspection priority agenda. This was particularly the case with those which lacked confidence in their ability to demonstrate high standards in those aspects of their work that were to be inspected. This frequently affected the balance and breadth of the curriculum provided by them, with greater or less emphasis being placed upon certain subjects. In most cases, this meant that the schools focused particularly on the core subjects, and the 'work seen in other subjects' referred to earlier in this chapter was given considerably less priority. Official guidance from Ofsted to inspection teams in the framework

documents (Ofsted, 2003a) appears to condone this, suggesting that the 'other subjects' might not necessarily be inspected during an inspection and that, instead, they could be subject to sampling. In the *Ofsted Handbook for Inspecting Nursery and Primary Schools* (Ofsted, 2003b) it was suggested that these subjects could be grouped to facilitate the sampling of the curriculum. As a consequence, there might be little or no inspection of foundation subjects, such as geography. Such a situation would be exacerbated if they were timetabled to be taught on days outside the inspection period.

After the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework in September 2003, the likelihood of geography being marginalised during an inspection increased considerably due to a reduction in the overall time allocated for each inspection (Ofsted, 2003a). Since then, and during the course of this study, the introduction of the 2005 inspection framework (Ofsted, 2005e) has further reduced the length of the inspections, and the number of inspection days allocated to each school, resulting in even fewer opportunities for geography to be inspected. Preliminary evidence for this has been obtained from an examination of a sample of primary school Ofsted inspection reports produced since the introduction of the 2005 framework. These reports were published in September and October 2005, and in February 2006. In them there is no reference to geography at all, and the only references to any of the subjects of the curriculum are to English, mathematics, science and ICT, for which there are only cursory comments. The prospects for Ofsted inspections contributing to improvement in primary school geography under this framework are, therefore, very limited.

The breadth and balance of the primary school curriculum have also been affected by national educational initiatives, such as the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) and the National Numeracy Strategy (DfEE, 1999). These resulted in many schools giving additional priority to the teaching of literacy and numeracy, as well as dedicated time to them, at the expense of other subjects in the curriculum, such as geography. The effect of this was to reduce the amount of timetabled time available for the teaching of these other subjects, and hence their contribution to

pupils' learning, whilst reducing pupils' entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum.

As a consequence, a two-tier curriculum has been reinforced (Ofsted, 2004a), with the core subjects in the upper tier being given higher status, greater emphasis, more timetabled time and better resources than the non-core foundation subjects in the lower tier. Official concern about this was voiced in the 2002/03 Annual Report of HMCI (Ofsted, 2004a), that drew attention to a wide gap in pupils' achievement between subjects, with geography, history and religious education among those suffering. This report noted that:

> *There is still some way to go in ensuring all pupils in our primary schools enjoy a rich and fulfilling curriculum as well as being taught the basics of English and mathematics effectively. We cannot afford, and our children do not deserve, a two-tier curriculum* (Ofsted, 2004a, page 3).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The reported lack of improvement in primary school geography, compared with other subjects of the curriculum, provides a compelling case for the investigation of the influences on improvement in the subject. The role of Ofsted inspections, in particular, merits investigation, as their declared purpose is to provide a basis for improvement. The study therefore addresses the following key research questions:

1) In what ways and to what extent do Ofsted inspection reports on schools guide and inform improvement in primary school geography, and how have they changed?

2) What effects do the Ofsted inspections themselves, among other key influences, have on improvement in primary school geography?

The study is based within an interpretivist paradigm (Williams, 2000; Bryman, 2001; Robson, 2002) and consists of a qualitative survey which uses a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2003). The strength of the mixed methods approach is that it enables the requirements for data generation and analysis to be met by the most suitable quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Quantitative methods, based upon the positivist paradigm, are used for the analysis of data from the inspection reports, as the numbers involved are large enough to merit its use. The analysis was assisted by the use of the Excel computer program for data handling purposes, and by statistical testing to examine the significance of relationships between key variables.

Qualitative methods, based upon the interpretivist paradigm, are used for generating and analysing data from the inspection reports and the interviews. In the analysis of the inspection reports, qualitative methods are employed in the identification of judgements and for the grouping of these judgements into categories for further analysis. They are also used for identifying and grouping the reports into different categories. In the analysis of the inspection reports and the interview transcriptions, the qualitative methodology is informed by Blumer's methodological approach, using the construct of 'sensitizing concepts' (van den Hoonaard, 1997, pages 1 – 3). The data analysis therefore enables the development of themes from the data, and 'knowledge claims based largely on constructivist perspectives' (Creswell, 2003, page18).

There were two main lines of enquiry. One involved a survey using semi-structured interviews. These comprised telephone interviews with six Ofsted inspectors who had extensive experience of inspecting geography in primary schools, and face-to-face interviews with head teachers and geography subject coordinators in a sample of 12 primary schools in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. The purpose of the interviews was to generate data about the factors that influence primary school geography and the contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in the subject. The other line of enquiry involved documentary analysis of a sample of 100 Ofsted inspection reports on primary schools in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. In this case, the purpose was to examine the usefulness of the reports for guiding and informing improvement in geography, and to determine how they had changed as a result of the revision of the inspection framework in 2003. It was thus possible to generate and collect data

both from authors and recipients of Ofsted inspection reports, although it was not possible to match these for reasons of logistics and confidentiality.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS

The study is presented in six chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the key literature on primary school geography and school inspections, with particular reference to Ofsted. It examines the nature of geography as a subject of the primary school curriculum, the factors that influence its improvement and broader issues of curriculum balance and breadth. It also explores the background to present-day school inspections, the Ofsted system of school inspections and the links between inspections and improvement.

In Chapter 3, the methodological foundations of the study are discussed, and the sampling procedures and methods of data generation, collection and analysis are explained. Ethical issues related to the research are also addressed, as well as questions of validity and reliability. Chapter 4 is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data generated from examination of the sample of Ofsted inspection reports. It considers the importance of the inspection report in the study, discusses the processes by which data were generated and examines the results of the data analysis. Chapter 5 examines the influences on geography which originate mainly from outside the schools, such as central government initiatives to raise standards and the impact of Ofsted inspections. It is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data generated from telephone interviews with Ofsted inspectors and face-to-face interviews with primary school head teachers and geography coordinators. Chapter 6 concludes the study with a discussion of the key findings and their implications, and reflection on the conclusions to be drawn from them.

CONCLUSION

It can be contended, therefore, that among the key factors which contribute to improvement in primary school geography, the role of Ofsted inspections merits further investigation. This study has been undertaken because of critical concerns about the state of primary school geography and the role of Ofsted inspections in guiding and informing improvement. The two research questions provide a focus and framework for the study, and a sequence for addressing its key components. Chapter 2 sets the context for the study through a review of related literature. It examines a range of key studies and publications concerned with primary school geography, pressures on the curriculum and the relationship between Ofsted inspections of schools and improvement. It also explores and contextualises a number of the concerns raised by other analysts about Ofsted's methods and role in school improvement.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

The research questions introduced in the previous chapter are concerned with the influence of Ofsted inspections on improvement in geography in the primary school and the role of Ofsted inspection reports as a contributory factor. The review of literature in this chapter provides a context for the study and is organised around the themes underpinning the research questions. These themes address:

1) Geography in the primary school curriculum
2) The evolution of school inspections and the development of Ofsted
3) The effect of Ofsted inspections on schools
4) HMCI Annual reports on geography
5) Influences on geography in the primary school

The sources of information used for this review include official publications such as those produced by Ofsted, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and its predecessors and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). They also include academic and professional publications, such as doctoral theses, textbooks and articles in journals. At the end of the chapter the implications of the literature for the focus of this study, as defined by the research questions, are drawn out.

1. GEOGRAPHY IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The importance of geography as a subject in the school curriculum was given compelling endorsement by a former HMCI (Bell, 2005), who stressed the relevance of geography as a key to understanding the world of today and its essential role in the education of the citizens of tomorrow:

> *This practical discipline enables us to understand change, conflict and key issues which impact on our lives today and which will affect our futures tomorrow.*
>
> *... it is important that children learn about the world they live in and on which they depend. It is important that the adults of tomorrow understand the management of risk, appreciate diversity, are aware of environmental issues, promote sustainability and respect human rights and social inclusion. If the aspiration of schools is to create pupils who are active and well rounded citizens there is no more relevant subject than geography* (Bell 2005, pages 4-5).

HMCI also reiterated the distinctive concern of geography as a discipline for the study of places and its potential to make far-reaching contributions to developing understanding of global issues:

> *Geography is about places. It is not just knowing about places themselves, but understanding the interdependence and connectivity of places. It is about empowering tomorrow's adults to develop real global understanding and global citizenship, so they have the intellectual understanding to participate individually and collectively in shaping the world around them.* (Bell 2005, pages 4-5)

In Chapter 1 of this study, reference was made to the importance of geography in the school curriculum, and to the aims and purposes of geography in the National Curriculum. Along with those for the other foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, the programmes of study for geography are statutory and schools are required to follow them in their entirety (Ofsted, 2000; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2000; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2002). The importance of geography as a subject of the primary school curriculum is thus officially recognised.

The programmes of study for geography in Key Stages 1 and 2 provide for a progressive development of pupils' geographical education in essential aspects of the subject. They require schools to 'ensure that geographical enquiry and skills are used when developing knowledge and understanding of places, patterns and processes, and environmental change and sustainable development' (DfEE/QCA,

1999, page 110). The implications of this for pupils' learning are shown in the summary in Box 2.1 that is taken from the National Curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 :

Box 2.1 Summary of programmes of study for geography Key Stages 1 and 2

Key Stage 1

During Key Stage 1 pupils investigate their local area and a contrasting area in the United Kingdom or abroad, finding out about the environment in both areas and the people who live there. They also begin to learn about the wider world. They carry out geographical enquiry inside and outside the classroom. In doing this they ask geographical questions about people, places and environments, and use geographical skills and resources such as maps and photographs.

Key Stage 2

During Key Stage 2 pupils investigate a variety of people, places and environments at different scales in the United Kingdom and abroad, and start to make links between different places in the world. They find out how people affect the environment and how they are affected by it. They carry out geographical enquiry inside and outside the classroom. In doing this they ask geographical questions, and use geographical skills and resources such as maps, atlases, aerial photographs and ICT.

(DfEE/ QCA, 1999, pages 110-112)

It can be seen that the key focus of primary school geography is, therefore, concerned with people and places and the relationship between them. Geographical education embraces both the physical and the human environment, and fosters the development of pupils' attitudes to sustaining and improving them. Catling (2004a, page 76) explained that:

> *primary geography teaching is concerned with knowing about and understanding the Earth, with developing the skills to do this well, and with fostering attitudes and values that enhance peoples' lives, places and the environment.*

The development of pupils' skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in the context of learning about the Earth and its peoples is central to primary school geography, and so should permeate the geography curriculum of all primary schools. For this to occur, schools need to ensure that geography has its fair share of the timetable.

However, as one of the foundation subjects of the primary school curriculum, geography has to be accommodated within a complex pattern of curricular provision and, when schools are faced with timetabling geography, there are many competing priorities to be taken into account. Advice from the QCA on designing the curriculum (QCA, 2002) affirms that schools are to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, and to teach the programmes of study in each National Curriculum subject. But, it has been argued by Kelly and Blenkin (1993) that there is a major contradiction between the rhetoric of a broad and balanced curriculum and one which is subject-based, such as the National Curriculum. They contend that the imposition of a body of content on children - which may be inappropriate to them - ignores what is known about children's learning styles and how they make sense of the world. Such a contradiction is compounded by further advice from the QCA that:

> *English and mathematics are a priority at Key Stages 1 and 2, as children need to become secure and confident learners in these subjects if they are to make good progress in their education.* (QCA, 2002, page 7)

Whilst the importance of English and mathematics in the primary school curriculum cannot be denied, it can be argued that their predominance should not be at the expense of the other subjects of the curriculum, such as geography. Indeed, a primary school curriculum which is neither broad nor balanced - possibly due to the over-prioritising of English and mathematics - can undermine the provision for a foundation subject such as geography. Marsden (2005, page 3) takes this argument further and states that 'any prospect of improvement in geographical education I believe must stem from a renewal of the idea of a broad and balanced curriculum both within and without the subject ...'

It has been shown that the presence of geography in the curriculum can have beneficial effects on other subjects. Large-scale studies, such as the HMI Primary Survey (DES, 1978), have concluded that the presence of subjects such as

geography in the primary school curriculum can have a beneficial effect on pupils' standards in English and mathematics:

> *The general educational progress of children and their competence in the basic skills appear to have benefited when they were involved in a programme of work which included ... history and geography* (DES, 1978 para 8.29)

A similar conclusion was reached in a study by Ofsted in which a link was discovered between curriculum breadth, balance and standards (Ofsted, 2002a). They argued that a broad and rich curriculum gave children a meaningful context in which to apply, reinforce and extend their learning in the 'basics'. In relation to the place of geography in the primary curriculum, Scoffham (2004, page 9) maintains that 'The knowledge, concepts and skills that geography covers are essential components of a broad and balanced curriculum'.

Alexander (2004, page 23) suggested that a legacy of the elementary school system was not one primary curriculum, but two – the 'basics' and the rest. The former he described as a 'high status, protected and heavily assessed 3Rs 'Curriculum I' which was justified by reference to utilitarian values'. The latter he referred to as a 'low priority, unassessed, vulnerable and even dispensable 'Curriculum II' of the arts and the humanities which was justified by ultimately empty notions of a 'rounded' or 'balanced' education'. With the introduction of the National Curriculum (DES, 1991), these were redesignated as the 'core' and the 'other foundation' subjects respectively. Meanwhile, additions to 'Curriculum II' were made to accommodate subjects such as science, ICT and design and technology, whilst 'Curriculum I' remained sacrosanct and occupied at least 50% of the timetable. Children's entitlement to a genuinely broad and balanced curriculum was thus threatened. This situation was exacerbated for two years between 1998 and 2000 when the government removed schools' obligation to teach the specified content of the non-core subjects. Alexander also concluded that, more recently, the introduction of the government's Primary Strategy (DfES, 2003) has done

nothing to alleviate the problem of a curriculum which fails to treat the arts and humanities as seriously as literacy and numeracy.

A further significant influence in the balanced curriculum debate arose from changes to the government's requirements for initial teacher training (DfES/TTA, 2002). These stated that newly qualified teachers should 'know and understand the curriculum for each of the National Curriculum core subjects, and the frameworks, methods, and expectations set out in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies' (DfES/TTA, 2002, page 7). However, they merely required them to 'have sufficient understanding of a range of work' (whatever that means) in the rest, including history *or* geography but – bizarrely – not both. Furthermore, Ofsted full inspections of primary teacher training were required to concentrate on 'English, mathematics and, where possible, science', but only to sample the rest – depending on what happened to be available. Alexander concluded that 'There is little evidence ... that the newfound commitment to breadth and balance in the primary curriculum is serious. Were it so, teacher training and inspection requirements would reinforce rather than undermine it' (Alexander, 2004, page 24).

It has been seen, therefore, that there is a strong case to be made for the inclusion of geography in a child's education, and for its place in the primary school curriculum. However, this has been undermined by central government concerns to prioritise the core subjects of the curriculum – in particular English and mathematics. This has led to the relegation of foundation subjects, such as geography, to a minor place in the curriculum of many primary schools. In the next part of this review, the relationship between inspection and improvement in English schools is considered in a historical and developmental context, leading to an examination of the Ofsted system of school inspection.

2. THE EVOLUTION OF SCHOOL INSPECTIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF OFSTED

A study of the antecedents of the Ofsted system of school inspections illuminates the evolution of the fluctuating symbiotic relationships between inspection and improvement. It also shows how central government has used school inspections to implement political ideologies by exerting control over the school curriculum. The following analysis traces the origins and development of the formal system of inspection led by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI), and the more limited role of the LEA inspectorate. It then examines the establishment up of Ofsted, its role, its subsequent development and its modus operandi as a contextual framework for the study.

HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS (HMI)

The role of school inspections is inextricably bound up with economic and political ideology. The origin of a formal system of inspection of schools in England, and the appointment of the first inspectors, dates from the Victorian era. At this time, publicly funded grants were awarded to voluntary (religious) societies for the establishing of elementary schools (Walford, 2001).

In 1839, the first two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) were appointed, with the remit of overseeing the allocation of the publicly funded grants and ensuring that the schools were providing value for money (Brighouse and Moon, 1995; Wilcox and Gray, 1996). The instructions which defined their duties at the time included reporting on: mechanical arrangements (details of the school building and the disposition of desks); means of instruction (the range of subject text books and apparatus); organisation and discipline; methods (teaching methods and deployment of staff); and attainments (in different subjects). Later in the century, as the number of inspectors increased, their roles became increasingly those of tester and enforcer of the Revised Code of 1862, with its associated system of

'payment by results'. The inspectors' visits to schools at this time focused particularly on testing pupils' ability to reach certain 'standards' in reading, writing and arithmetic and, after 1867, in language, geography and history (Lee and Fitz, 1998).

It can be seen, therefore, that monitoring of standards and accountability were key dimensions of the inspectors' agenda during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Following the repeal of the Revised Code in 1895, the emphasis of the work of HMI moved towards advisory and developmental work, and they became regarded more as autonomous professionals providing expert advice (Dunford, 1998; Case *et al*, 2000).

During the first half of the twentieth century, inspections of elementary schools proceeded at three to five year intervals and, towards the end of this period, the principal role of HMI continued to be advisory. Subsequently, most of HMI became centrally involved in a wide range of different types of inspections and national surveys of educational provision. Important among these was the HMI Primary Survey of 1978 (DES, 1978), which made important contributions to educational policy in an era of increasing educational accountability.

Thus, HMI advised the government of the day on the state of education in the country, contributing to improving and maintaining standards through the identification of strengths and weaknesses in provision, providing advice and disseminating good practice. Their role as agents of improvement at this time was, therefore, significant. The importance of HMI at a national level increased further during the 1980s when the government made the decision to publish HMI reports on the schools they inspected, thus placing emphasis on the accountability role of the inspections.

Following the creation of Ofsted, which will be discussed in the next section, the role of HMI involved a measure of inspection work. This included monitoring

Ofsted inspectors and inspecting schools which had poor Ofsted inspection reports, and were judged to be failing or having serious weaknesses.

LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY (LEA) INSPECTORS

Another important contribution to the inspection of schools arose at a more local level. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, LEAs evolved from former school boards, and they too employed school inspectors. These were independent from HMI and their numbers were, for some considerable time, quite small, but gained impetus with the curriculum development projects of the 1960s and 1970s. Nonetheless, inspections by these LEA inspectors were often carried out on a fairly random basis, and their role and job description were frequently biased towards an advisory function (Wilcox and Gray, 1996). For this reason they were often known as LEA advisers and, where serious shortcomings were identified in a school, their response was frequently to provide special support and resources to improve the situation (Laar, 1997). In the 1980s, national concern about standards in schools led to pressure for them to conduct more formal inspections, although their advisory roles were maintained.

However, until the 1990s, at both LEA and national levels, there were few regular inspections of schools taking place. Opportunities for them to influence improvement in subjects such as geography were therefore limited, and there was very little scope for inspectors to play any part in raising the standards of performance of individual schools (Perry, 1995). Since then, many LAs have cut back on their advisory services, especially on those supporting the foundation subjects, and specific geography advisers are now a rarity.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OFSTED

During the 1980s and 90s, debates about educational standards and value for money resulted in plans for reorganisation of the education system based on

market principles, with parents as the customers (Brighouse, 2001). The ensuing reorganisation was formalised in the Education Reform Act of 1988 (Great Britain, 1988). This resulted in the creation and implementation of the National Curriculum for England (DES, 1991), and paved the way for the establishment of a new organisation, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), to monitor standards in education.

Ofsted was set up in 1992 under the provisions of the Education (Schools) Act (1992) (Great Britain, 1992), with the purpose of managing and regulating a national system of school inspection. The political agenda of the Conservative government of the time was thus explicitly to exert control over schools by means of this new system of inspection, the remit for which is summarised in Box 2.2:

Box 2.2 Summary of remit for Ofsted

- regular inspections of schools by independent inspectors
- public reporting, with a summary of the reports distributed to parents
- an annual report by HMCI to parliament
- providing advice to government ministers.

(Matthews and Sammons, 2004 page 13)

The establishment of Ofsted profoundly changed the arrangements for the inspection of schools, and represented 'an unprecedented attempt to apply a universal model of inspection of ambitious frequency and comprehensiveness' (Wilcox and Gray, 1996, page 23). Ofsted was a separate government department, independent from the Secretary of State and under the direction of HMCI, which meant that decisions about school inspections were to be taken centrally. Its three initial main tasks were described by Ouston *et al* (1995) as being:

- to devise a framework for school inspections
- to oversee a system of four-yearly inspections of all schools
- to train and accredit inspectors.

THE ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT OF OFSTED

The ideological basis for the Ofsted system of school inspections was analysed by Cullingford (1999), who observed that the political beliefs which promote inspection rest on the assumption that external forces can make real differences, and that political will was all that mattered. An outcome of this was the setting of targets and the measurement of competencies.

Inspection of schools in this country can be regarded as having two major purposes, one being concerned with accountability and the other with school improvement (Wilcox and Gray, 1996). Once established, Ofsted took on these two roles. Earley (1998) drew attention to the tensions and contradictions between external inspection, whose main purpose is accountability, and external inspection for school development or improvement. He argued that 'one of the difficulties with the Ofsted inspection process is that it claims to do both' (Earley, 1998, page 169). Although the school improvement dimension of inspections is the main concern of this study, it is useful to review briefly the accountability dimension, as the two are interlinked.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY DIMENSION

The accountability dimension of inspections involves the collection of data from inspections of schools throughout the country to provide a detailed picture, both nationally and locally, of standards and pupils' progress. At a local level, this was achieved by publishing reports of individual schools soon after the completion of an inspection. The availability of this information to parents and other concerned members of society clearly contributed, to a large extent, to the accountability function of the inspections. At a national level, this was achieved through the publication of the annual reports of HMCI (for example, Ofsted, 1994b; Ofsted, 2004a) which were based on data derived from the inspections of individual schools.

Earley (1998, page 2) focused attention on the dual roles of inspection and argued that 'inspection is more than a mechanism to ensure accountability to government, the taxpayer and parents – more importantly, it is also about school development and the raising of standards.' In this sense, the HMCI reports could also serve as stimuli for improvement, by commending examples of good practice and highlighting deficiencies.

THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DIMENSION

The school improvement dimension of inspections is a central concern of this study, and is consistent with Ofsted's mission of 'improvement through inspection' (Matthews and Sammons, 2004 page 3). The first annual report of HMCI (Ofsted, 1994b) endorsed the message that Ofsted was fundamentally concerned with securing improvement, and that the intention of Ofsted was to raise standards and to improve the quality of educational experience and provision.

Hargreaves (1995) expressed reservations about the claims that inspections could contribute to improvement in education. He acknowledged that the HMCI's Annual Report could give 'a succinct, overall and well-evidenced picture of the state of the nation's schools and the quality of teaching and learning' (Hargreaves, 1995 page 123). However, he argued that there was evidence that partnerships between a school and outside advisers, jointly diagnosing the school's strengths and weaknesses and developing an agenda for development in a climate of trust, were more likely to improve schools than any model based on inspection.

Concerns about the ability of Ofsted to fulfil its mission of 'improvement through inspection' were also voiced by Lonsdale and Parsons (1998). They suggested that the position occupied by Ofsted within the country's political and administrative structure was incompatible with a supportive and developmental role, and that there was, instead, a disciplining role through a climate of threat and fear. They

regarded the role of Ofsted as being negative, and described the Ofsted inspection process as 'a punitive process' which was unlikely to motivate workers to achieve higher standards. As such, they felt that Ofsted inspections could not contribute to improvement in schools. Chapman (2001) investigated the relationship between Ofsted inspections and school improvement. He concluded that, in terms of 'improvement through inspection', Ofsted had made only minimal contributions to changing teachers' practice, with negligible impact on classroom processes and school improvement.

A similar view on the effects of Ofsted was expressed by Brighouse (2001) in an analysis of New Labour's record on education in its first term of office. In this, he attributed their strategy for successful educational change to be based on providing the right mix of pressure (challenge) and support, which they had not achieved. He referred to Ofsted as 'an inspection regime ... which was geared more towards the public humiliation of those who failed its inquisitorial system' and which, it was hoped 'would be moderated and perhaps shifted towards a method of school inspection with a more explicitly developmental purpose' (page 20).

However, one of the stated aims of Ofsted inspections was to provide schools with feedback on their work to enable them to bring about improvement. For example, the 2003 edition of the Ofsted *Framework for Inspecting Schools* (Ofsted, 2003a) claimed that:

> *Inspection provides a valuable opportunity for people working in schools to experience clear, impartial evaluation of the quality of their work and an analysis of strengths, weaknesses and priorities for improvement* (Ofsted, 2003a page1).

More specifically, the foreword to the related edition of the Ofsted *Handbook for Inspecting Nursery and Primary Schools* (Ofsted, 2003b) states:

Inspections should:

- *provide an independent and reliable view of the school;*

- *be a means of accountability;*
- *enable Ofsted to provide parliament with an analysis of the quality and standards of schools throughout England; and*
- *help schools to raise achievement.*

The coexistence of both the accountability and the improvement dimensions of Ofsted inspections was endorsed by Brimblecombe *et al* (1996). They argued that the setting up of the Ofsted system for inspecting schools was intended both to satisfy demands for the public accountability of the state school system by monitoring standards, and to achieve improvement through inspection. However, Earley (1998, page 4) suggests that there may be an imbalance in these roles, and that 'Ofsted may be performing its accountability function more effectively than that of 'improvement through inspection' '.

THE OFSTED INSPECTION FRAMEWORK AND THE OFSTED HANDBOOK

The Ofsted inspection framework publications referred to in the previous paragraphs set out the statutory requirements for the inspection of schools, and were revised at intervals as government priorities for inspections changed. The 2003 inspection framework (Ofsted, 2003a), which governed the requirements for inspections between September 2003 and July 2005, includes information on:

- the nature and purpose of inspections, and the composition of the inspection teams;
- the inspection process and the inspection report, and
- an evaluation schedule, which specifies the aspects of the school to be inspected, such as the quality of teaching and learning and the standards achieved in the subjects of the curriculum.

The 2003 inspection framework was in place for the duration of the data collection phase of the study, and so it was used as a point of reference in the investigations. It differed from the previous framework (Ofsted, 1999a) in that it reflected changes to the inspection system which reduced the size of an inspection for most schools. It also introduced differentiated inspections in which the inspections were tailored to the circumstances and performance of the schools.

The scope of the inspections, and the emphasis to be placed on inspecting the subjects of the primary school curriculum, were clearly defined in the framework documents. For example, the 2003 inspection framework stated:

> *Primary school inspections include the evaluation and reporting of standards achieved by pupils, the quality of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership, and any other factors that have a bearing on pupils' achievement, as applicable, in:*
> - *English (including literacy across the curriculum), mathematics (including numeracy), science, information and communication technology (ICT) and ICT capability across the curriculum and religious education (where it is inspected)*
> - *work seen in other subjects* (Ofsted, 2003a, page 8).

It is noticeable that the core subjects of the curriculum, such as English, mathematics and science, were mentioned by name, but foundation subjects, such as geography, were not. The underlying message from Ofsted to the inspection teams therefore seemed clear – to ensure that English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education (where required) were inspected. But, as far as the inspection of the other subjects of the curriculum was concerned (the 'work seen in other subjects'), the framework was equivocal. There was therefore no certainty that a subject such as geography would be inspected on any given occasion.

Complementary to the inspection framework, and published by Ofsted at the same intervals of time, was the *Handbook for Inspecting Nursery and Primary Schools*, which elaborated on the areas addressed in the framework. It was designed both to provide support and guidance to inspectors in their work and to inform schools about the inspection process. As such, it specified all the aspects of the school which were to be inspected. The 2003 edition (Ofsted, 2003b), for example, included a commentary and grading system to assist inspectors in making judgements, as well as detailed case study material to facilitate decisions about grades.

The Ofsted framework (Ofsted 2003a) and the accompanying handbook have as their core the Evaluation Schedule, which is of particular relevance to this study. This focuses upon the quality of education in the subjects of the curriculum, and specifies what inspectors must consider in order to judge the effectiveness of the school. It is concerned with key questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and about where improvement is needed. Specifically, it required that, for each subject inspected in depth, inspectors had to evaluate and report on the overall quality of provision; the standards achieved by the pupils; the quality of teaching and learning; the quality of curriculum leadership; other factors that explained pupils' achievement; and how quality and standards had changed since the previous inspection.

However, the requirements in the handbook for the 'other subjects' referred to above (including geography) matched those set out in the framework, and so were also equivocal. For instance, for work seen in these subjects, inspectors were only required to:

> *... reach a judgement on standards and the quality of provision in all the National Curriculum subjects about which there was evidence at the time of the inspection* (Ofsted, 2003b, page 128)

It can be seen, therefore, that Ofsted has defined a hierarchy of importance for the inspection of the subjects of the primary school curriculum, with geography, along with other foundation subjects, in the lower levels.

SPECIFIC GUIDANCE ON INSPECTING SUBJECTS

In addition to the framework document and the inspection handbook, Ofsted provided specific guidance on the inspection of the subjects of the primary school curriculum in a succession of publications, such as *Inspecting Subjects 3 -11* (Ofsted, 2000). This publication, which was current for the duration of the study, was designed to complement the *Handbook for Inspecting Nursery and Primary*

Schools (Ofsted, 1999b; Ofsted, 2003b), and was intended 'to help inspectors, head teachers and subject coordinators to evaluate standards, achievement, teaching and learning, and to inform governors' (Ofsted, 2000, page 1). It offered subject-specific guidance on the inspection of the subjects of the National Curriculum and addressed key aspects of the inspection, such as standards and achievement; analysing pupils' work; talking with pupils; observing teaching and learning; and writing the report. Importantly, it endorsed Ofsted's objective of 'improvement through inspection' and informed inspectors that 'Your evaluation must help the school to move forward in order to raise standards' (Ofsted, 2000, page 6). It also proposed that the following procedures be adopted in communicating judgements made during the course of an inspection:

> *Throughout the inspection discuss your judgements with the teachers you observe. Towards the end of the inspection, meet with the co-ordinator to discuss your findings. Explain clearly and helpfully how teaching affects the standards achieved. Judge unequivocally standards, teaching, learning, and improvement since the last inspection. Leave no doubt about the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and the priorities for improvement* (Ofsted, 2000, page 6).

(The significance of judgements as indicators of the usefulness of the inspection reports to improvement in geography in the schools is addressed in Chapter 4 of this study.)

Specific guidance on the inspection of geography was given in a dedicated section of the publication (Ofsted, 2000). An example of the advice included on inspecting standards in geography is given in Box 2.3:

Box 2.3 Evidence to be used in evaluating standards in geography

- knowledge of where places are and what they are like, including an appreciation and understanding of the lifestyles of the people who live there and how places and environments change over time;
- understanding of patterns and processes in physical and human geography;
- knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development;
- appreciation of the application of geography to environmental, social and political issues;
- ability to carry out geographical enquiry, applying questioning skills and analytical and presentational techniques – particularly the skills required to effectively use maps, photographs, plans, atlases, and diagrams, fieldwork and information and communication technology.

(Ofsted, 2000, page 72)

As an influence on improvement in a subject such as geography, the guidance in *Inspecting subjects 3-11* (Ofsted, 2000) has the potential to have a positive impact, because it provides schools and other interested parties with a useful source of information about the criteria to be applied by Ofsted inspection teams when inspecting the schools.

It can be seen from the foregoing review of Ofsted publications on primary school inspections that a new discourse – the 'Ofsted discourse' – is being introduced to the schools through their involvement in the inspections. This is based on the notions such as improvement, standards, targets, quality, efficiency, value for money and performance. According to Lowe (1998, page 7) the introduction of this discourse results in the establishment and maintenance of power relations within a school and between the school and external agencies. He describes this process as a means by which central government is seeking to take over or 'colonise' the schools' discourses with Ofsted's views of the schools.

THE OFSTED INSPECTION PROCESS

The first round of Ofsted inspections of primary schools began in 1994. Each school was inspected by an inspection team consisting of a Lead Inspector (sometimes referred to as a Registered Inspector) and other accredited inspectors who had undergone the requisite training. Among these was a Lay Inspector who had a professional background from outside the teaching profession. Responsibility for recruiting the inspection teams and publishing the inspection reports was contracted out by Ofsted to recognised inspection contractors who enforced, and were subject to, strict quality assurance by Ofsted. Training of the inspectors was undertaken initially by HMI working for Ofsted, although some aspects of the training were devolved to the inspection contractors.

In the early stages of Ofsted, the law required all schools to be inspected normally once every four years, but in 2000 the frequency of inspections was reduced to once in six years. All schools were inspected to a specified format and against pre-determined criteria, which were published in the Ofsted framework documents and the accompanying handbooks and so were accessible to the schools (Earley, 1998). Inspectors were required to record their judgements on Ofsted evidence forms using the Ofsted prescribed descriptors and a seven point scale (Ofsted, 2003b) as shown in Box 2.4. These then formed the basis for the inspection reports.

Box 2.4 Ofsted judgement and grading system

Quality descriptor and alternatives	Grade	Implications
Excellent: exceptional; outstanding; first-rate; very highly effective; very rapid (as in progress)	1	Worth disseminating beyond the school
Very good: well above average; highly effective; rapid	2	Worth sharing within the school
Good: above average; effective	3	Worth reinforcing and developing
Satisfactory: average; acceptable; sound; typical	4	Adequate, but scope for improvement
Unsatisfactory: below average; inadequate; slow; ineffective	5	Needs attention
Poor: well below average; very ineffective; very slow	6	Needs urgent action
Very poor: extremely ineffective; extremely slow	7	Immediate radical change needed

(Ofsted, 2003b)

It can be seen, therefore, that Ofsted required inspectors to adopt a formulaic kind of language in writing their reports, and this underpinned the Ofsted discourse

which was thrust upon the schools. It can also be seen that the criteria against which the judgements were to be made are not clearly defined, which places undue reliance on the judgements made by individual inspectors. As a consequence, what one inspector regarded as 'good' may be regarded only as 'satisfactory' by another, or vice versa. The use of terms such as 'sound' or 'effective' could also be interpreted differently between one inspector and the next, or from one inspection to another. The validity and reliability of these judgements can therefore be open to question. Furthermore, there was no way to check retrospectively the accuracy and fairness of the judgements once the inspection teams had completed their inspection and moved on from the schools.

The successive stages of the inspection process are prescribed in the Ofsted framework documents and the inspection handbooks, and so clear guidance was given to the inspection teams and the schools. For instance, the 2003 inspection framework specified that schools were to be notified 6 to 10 weeks before the planned inspection, and that Ofsted would inform them about what information and data were needed from the school (Ofsted, 2003a). The framework also stipulated that during the inspection, 'The time allocated to inspection must be used mainly for gathering first-hand evidence that leads to conclusions about the effectiveness of the school, its main strengths and weaknesses and what it must do to improve' (Ofsted, 2003a, page 20).

The framework document defined the roles of the inspection teams and the schools in the various stages of the inspection process – before, during and after the visits of the inspection team to the school. It also acknowledged the importance of school self-evaluation to the inspection process, in providing the school and the lead inspector with a means of ensuring that the inspection covered matters of potential significance to the school. To facilitate this, schools were required to complete a short self-evaluation report in a pre-determined format on forms provided by Ofsted to help provide a focus for the inspection. This move towards a higher profile for the school's self-evaluation as part of the Ofsted

inspection process was given further impetus with the introduction of the 2005 inspection framework (Ofsted, 2005e).

The importance Ofsted inspection teams placed upon the inspection of subjects such as geography depended upon the emphasis given by the teams to the inspection of the other subjects of the curriculum. It was noted earlier in this chapter that the Ofsted framework documents and handbooks required that the inspection of the core subjects should be given priority over foundation subjects, such as geography. The 2003 inspection handbook (Ofsted, 2003b) further offers guidance to inspection teams on how to prioritize subjects for inspection on the basis of their relative strengths and weaknesses in a school:

> *the lead inspector must use discretion in deciding the weighting given to the different subjects and aspects inspected. In schools where core subjects are weak, they must have more attention and inspection time. Where subjects are strong, inspectors must assess why and identify outstanding practice. If this proves relatively easy, more time can be given to the rest of the curriculum* (Ofsted, 2003b, page 7).

The message this appears to give to inspection teams is that the 'rest of the curriculum' should only be given attention if the core subjects are strong. It would therefore appear that improvement through inspection in a foundation subject, such as geography, would only be permitted in schools where the core subjects were confirmed to be strong, as shown by the Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) results. This in turn could be construed to give schools a message that Ofsted did not regard the foundation subjects as a priority.

At the conclusion of the inspection in the school, the 2003 inspection framework required that oral feedback should be given to key staff in the school, senior managers and the governing body (Ofsted 2003a). This was then followed by the preparation of a draft copy of the report by the inspection team for perusal by the school. After the correction of any factual errors, the definitive copy of the report was then prepared and, within six calendar weeks of the team leaving the school, the report was published and subsequently posted on the Ofsted web-site.

Following the inspection, schools were required, within 40 days of the inspection, to draw up an action plan in response to issues identified in the report (Ofsted, 2003a).

Reference has already been made in this chapter to the 2005 inspection framework, in which a number of major changes were made to the inspection process. Entitled *Every Child Matters,* (Ofsted, 2005e), it was implemented in September 2005 and, as part of a cost-cutting exercise, the number of inspection days allocated to each inspection was greatly reduced. The amount of notice of an inspection given to schools was also reduced to approximately three working days. One of the stated purposes of this revised framework was to require schools to take greater responsibility for evaluating their own performance, and so completion of pre-inspection self-evaluation forms by the schools gained increased significance.

THE OFSTED INSPECTION REPORT

As a permanent record of the inspection of a school, to which reference can be made by all interested parties, the Ofsted inspection report has considerable potential to influence improvement in a subject such as geography. A key part of this study is therefore devoted to the analysis of inspection reports (see Chapter 4). One of the prime functions of the report is to help a school in the process of internal review, which culminates in the requirement to produce an action plan addressing the points identified in the report. Ofsted's overall requirement for the written report of the inspection was that it should give 'a clear and convincing account of the findings of the inspection' (Ofsted, 2003a, page 23). Their guidance on writing the subject sections of the report, including the geography paragraphs, was quite specific:

> *The subject section of an inspection or evaluation report needs to be a coherent and convincing evaluation of the subject and explain why standards are as they are. Link explanations to the quality of teaching and learning and pupils'*

> *achievement. Show how much the subject has improved since the last inspection and give a clear indication of the action needed to improve it further* (Ofsted, 2000, page 76).

Ofsted inspection reports were written to a required format, as set out in the inspection handbook (Ofsted, 2003b). In addition to providing information about the school and the inspection, they contained a summary, a commentary on the main inspection findings and a section on areas of learning, curriculum areas and subjects. It was within this latter section that the report on geography occurred, and it was from this section that the geography paragraphs analysed in Chapter 4 were abstracted. Specific guidance on how to write reports on geography was given in the form of illustrative examples in the subject guidance publication, *Inspecting Subjects 3 -11* (Ofsted, 2000).

The importance of the inspection report was highlighted in a report of an independent evaluation of the Ofsted system of school inspection (Centre for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Practice, and Helix Consulting Group, 1999). This noted that a high premium was placed upon the inspection report by the schools in their research sample 'since it essentially shapes the esteem in which the school is held' (page 61). However, despite this high premium, the study conceded that:

> *The reports were not seen to be telling the schools anything they did not know already* (page 81).

In terms of the contribution of the reports to improvement in the schools, the research also noted that, overall, the inspection reports were not believed to have made much difference to the schools or to have been very useful in guiding further development. Similarly, Field *et al* (1998, page 137) question the ability of the written report to inform and direct future action in a school, and conclude that 'A fundamental omission in the written reports is the general absence of suggestions or advice by the inspection teams as to how the school might make the required improvements identified in the report'.

3. THE EFFECT OF OFSTED INSPECTIONS ON SCHOOLS

There has been a considerable amount of published discussion and research on the relationship between Ofsted inspections and improvement in primary and secondary schools. Some of these publications argue that inspections can lead to improvement (Brimblecombe et al, 1996; Ouston et al, 1998; Earley, 1998; Matthews and Sammons, 2004) whilst other studies maintain that the inspections have little or no influence, or even have a negative effect on the schools (Lonsdale and Parsons, 1998; Cullingford and Daniels, 1999; Case *et al*, 2000; Rosenthal, 2001; Snelling, 2002; Blunsdon, 2003; Shaw et al, 2003)

Shaw et al (2003, page 70) studied the effects of Ofsted inspections on secondary schools in England. The research examined the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) results in LEA maintained, mixed comprehensive schools in the year of the inspection, and concluded that 'Ofsted inspection had no positive effect on examination achievement' and that 'If anything, they made it worse'.

The relationship between inspection and improvement in primary and secondary schools in one LEA was examined by Hopkins et al (1999, page 689). The study highlighted the centrality of the LEA in school improvement, and concluded that 'where there is trust, respect and partnership between schools, the LEA and Ofsted, sustained school improvement is likely to occur'. However, it was conceded that inspection itself is not a sufficient means to improvement.

A more positive picture of the contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in schools was presented in a highly sophisticated official evaluation of the impact of Ofsted's work (Matthews and Sammons, 2004). This concluded that there was 'considerable evidence that Ofsted has made a strong contribution to the improvement of providers in all sectors, but most notably over the last decade in schools ...' (para 476). As part of a wider study, Matthews and Smith (1995) had earlier reviewed improvement through inspection under the Ofsted system of

school inspections. They argued that an effective school inspection system can provide a powerful incentive for, as well as contribute to, school improvement and development. In a study by Ouston *et al* (1995), most secondary head teachers said that the Ofsted inspection process had made a positive contribution to their school's development. Other research, by Brimblecombe *et al* (1996), explored the extent to which Ofsted inspections of secondary schools resulted in improvement. The results of this research were also positive, and showed that just over one third of the teachers intended to change some aspect of their professional practice as a result of inspection. Also in relation to the inspection of secondary schools, but equally applicable to primary school inspections, Kent (1996) argued that the visit of an Ofsted inspection team on a regular basis provided an 'external stimulus, validation and cutting edge' (page 136) to support the review of a geography department.

The major independent evaluation of the Ofsted system of school inspection referred to earlier in this chapter (Centre for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Practice, and Helix Consulting Group, 1999) identified both positive and negative outcomes from inspections. Among the positive outcomes, the researchers cited the value to schools of having an external perspective on their work, and their involvement in a process of self-examination in the period of time leading up to the inspection week. They also reported that there could be greater rigour in the self-evaluation process as a result of the systematic form of the inspection process. The Ofsted framework was seen to be of particular value in assisting school improvement – even more than the inspection itself. The case for developing a culture of self-evaluation at all levels in a school had previously been put forward by Earley (1998), who considered this to be the most likely way to achieve improvement in schools. Specifically, Earley argued for both internal and external approaches to evaluation, and the findings of the aforementioned evaluation study give further support to these views.

The researchers for the evaluation study also reported that head teachers had attributed some improvements on a range of performance indicators to the effects of inspections. The heads felt that the inspections had led them to be more focused and rigorous in school development activities, such as target setting, curriculum development, pupil assessment and classroom observations. The use of this and similar terminology illustrates the adoption by the schools of key elements of 'Ofsted discourse', most probably as a result of their involvement in the Ofsted inspection system. Research by Lowe (1998 page 97) has suggested that a central government strategy, through the medium of Ofsted, has been to change the way teachers think and act through a process of top-down change. This has involved management-oriented initiatives which appear to have changed the beliefs underpinning schools' discourses towards a more managerial type of discourse.

Case *et al* (2000) examined the impact of this type of 'managerialist discourse' on primary school teachers before, during and following an Ofsted inspection. Their study explored the accounts of teachers, particularly in relation to the effects of intensified control on their overall well-being, and concluded that the Ofsted experience had no lasting impact on what they do in the classroom. They described Ofsted as 'stage-managed public accountability' (page 605).

The Ofsted independent evaluation study (Centre for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Practice, and Helix Consulting Group, 1999) also reported that, on a range of Ofsted's own performance criteria, inspection was judged to have had an impact in only a minority of schools. Less than one fifth of the teachers and head teachers interviewed believed that standards would rise as a result of Ofsted, and schools believed that, whilst Ofsted may have accelerated them, most changes would have occurred in any case.

More recently, Snelling (2002) investigated Ofsted's claim of 'improvement through inspection' with particular reference to the effects of inspection on the improvement

of teaching quality. The study showed that the value of inspection in improving teaching quality was limited, with most teachers having the opinion that the process had little positive impact on them professionally. In addition, many teachers believed that it undermined their professionalism and could actually lower pupils' standards of attainment. Further support to this view of the ineffectiveness of Ofsted inspections as agents of improvement was given by Blunsdon (2003) in a case study of six primary schools. This investigated the perceptions of teachers, support staff and governors on the impact of the Ofsted process of inspection on the teaching and learning process, and its relationship to school improvement. The findings from the study indicated that the Ofsted system of inspection had only a limited positive impact upon primary school practice. It concluded that it was difficult to justify the inspectorate's validating objective of 'improvement through inspection', and that the positive impact of inspection upon primary schools remained questionable. Further evidence of the negative impact of Ofsted inspections can be drawn from a study of the examination performance of secondary schools (Rosenthal, 2001), which concluded that there was a small, but significant, negative effect associated with the Ofsted inspection event.

Whilst one of the major aims of Ofsted inspections was to bring about improvement through inspection (Ofsted, 1994c), it can be seen from the research studies quoted above that this has not often occurred in practice, and some inspections have even had the opposite effect. Although Ofsted inspections can provide a valuable external perspective on a school – and can enhance school development activities – their impact on the work in the classroom remains questionable.

4. HMCI ANNUAL REPORTS ON GEOGRAPHY

Ofsted is in a unique position to be able to collect data from the inspection of all the schools in the state sector of this country, and so to have an overview of standards. As part of its public accountability role, this information has been

published annually in the reports of HMCI (Ofsted, 1994b; Ofsted, 2001; Ofsted, 2002b; Ofsted, 2003c; Ofsted,2004b; Ofsted, 2005d; Ofsted, 2005e), but the findings of these reports also have the potential to be used as a basis for improvement. In terms of guiding and informing improvement in primary school geography, the subject sections of these reports could be particularly useful, and so reference will now be made to a sample of them.

HMCI ANNUAL REPORTS ON GEOGRAPHY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The 2004/05 HMCI report offered a censorious account of the state of primary school geography. It stated that 'Geography continues to have a marginal status compared with core subjects and those foundation subjects which are perceived to have greater priority. This lack of status is frequently reflected in the amount of time allocated' (Ofsted, 2005a). Reference has already been made in this chapter to the prioritisation of the core subjects: the foundation subjects perceived to have greater priority were those that had been targeted by the government for additional funding and emphasis, such as ICT and physical education.

The 2004/05 HMCI report showed that, in addition, there remained many problems to be addressed in geography, as summarised in Box 2.5:

Box 2.5 HMCI Annual Report for primary school geography 2004/05 Main findings and areas of concern

- although the overall quality of provision for geography is satisfactory in the majority of schools, there is less that is good than in any other subject and the gap continues to widen. Only one third of schools have improved their provision since the previous inspection.
- pupils' achievement in both key stages is good in only one third of schools.
- low achievement is closely associated with teachers' fragile subject knowledge, insufficiently high expectations and weak planning.
- teaching and learning were judged to be good in just under half of schools.
- the leadership and management of geography compare unfavourably with all other subjects, and are unsatisfactory in one tenth of schools.
- assessment remains a significant area of weakness with unsatisfactory practice in one third of schools; in only one fifth of schools was it considered to be good.
- in the overwhelming majority of schools resources are satisfactory, and in only two fifths are they good.
- nearly half of schools make good use of the time available, but this is often below recommended allocations and geography is sometimes displaced by the teaching of other subjects.
- in schools without strong subject leadership, use of outdoor learning, such as fieldwork is underdeveloped. Better use is made of the immediate locality by schools during Key Stage 1 than Key Stage 2.

(Ofsted, 2005a)

The unsatisfactory state of primary school geography outlined in this report is not, however, a recent phenomenon, and it has been one of the main reasons for undertaking this study. In the 2003/04 HMCI annual report (Ofsted, 2005d), for instance, the paragraphs concerned with standards in geography in primary schools began with the statement:

> *There is weaker provision in geography than in any other National Curriculum subject, and in 7% of schools overall provision is unsatisfactory...The uninspiring provision in most schools is particularly disappointing when compared with the rich and exciting geography in schools where it is thriving.* (Ofsted, 2005d)

In the previous year, the 2002/03 HMCI report on primary school geography (Ofsted, 2004b) was also unsatisfactory, as shown in the following extract in Box 2.6:

Box 2.6 HMCI 2002/03 Subject Report on Primary Geography (extracts)

- whilst there were significant improvements in geography in one quarter of schools since their previous inspection, one in six failed to improve, and these figures compare unfavourably with other subjects, indicating a further weakening of geography in primary schools
- pupils' achievement in relation to their capabilities was good or better in only a quarter of schools, which was significantly lower than in other subjects
- teaching was good overall in only just over one third of schools – there was more unsatisfactory teaching in geography than in other subjects
- subject leadership was good in fewer than one third of schools
- the use of geography to teach basic skills, in particular literacy, was slightly better in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2, but it was poorly developed, especially in relation to numeracy and ICT
- pupils' learning was not as good in geography as in other subjects.

(Ofsted, 2004b)

It is clear from examining these and the other HMCI annual reports on primary geography published over the past five years that standards of provision, achievement, teaching, learning and subject leadership and management were all in dire need of improvement. Although there were fluctuations during this time – such as an improvement in teaching and pupils' achievement between the reports for 2003/4 and 2004/5 – the overall rate of improvement between 1999 and 2005 had slowed, and the gap in provision between geography and other subjects had continued to widen.

The marginalisation of primary geography reported in the 2004/05 HMCI report is also reflected in the report on history over the same period – although not to the same extent. The similarities in issues of concern identified across both these subjects are not unexpected, as many of the contextual factors impinging on primary history are common to geography. For instance, both are foundation subjects of the National Curriculum and major components of the humanities. They are therefore affected by the prioritisation of the core subjects and, in many schools, they share similar timetabled slots. The HMCI report on primary school

history for 2004-05 (see Box 2.7) bears some resemblance to that for geography in that both reports express concern about pupils' achievement; improvements in teaching; displacement of the subject by other subjects; teachers' subject knowledge; and teachers' skills in assessment.

Box 2.7 HMCI Annual Report for primary school history 2004/05
Main findings and areas of concern

- **Rate of improvement has slowed in recent years and there is now lower achievement than in most other subjects**
- **The quality of teaching has improved since 1998, though not as fast as in some other subjects**
- **The slower pace of improvement in history can be linked to schools' emphasis on literacy and numeracy and the consequent limited curriculum time available for history when teachers fail to exploit the opportunity to link history with literacy development**
- **There have been too few opportunities for continuing professional development in history**
- **The delivery of the National Curriculum is often piecemeal and does not provide pupils with a coherent story over time**
- **The assessment of pupils' achievements in history is underdeveloped; teachers often do not have the information necessary to set work that meets their needs**

(Ofsted 2005f)

One notable difference between the reports in geography and history related to the use of fieldwork. In the geography report fieldwork was criticised and described as 'underdeveloped' in schools without strong subject leadership. However, no reference at all was made to fieldwork in the history report. This could be because of schools' concerns about the potential risks involved in some aspects of geographical fieldwork – and hence their reluctance to engage in it – compared to fieldwork in history. However, although there are similarities in the reports on these two subjects, the 2004/05 HMCI subject report on geography is less favourable overall than that for history. Similar parallels can be drawn between the state of primary geography and history in the 2003/04 HMCI reports.

An important role of the HMCI subject reports is to point out overall strengths and weaknesses in each subject of the curriculum in schools throughout the country, as an initial stage in guiding and informing improvement. However, in terms of providing feedback on a specific subject in an individual school these reports are of no value, and it is possible that, for this reason, responses in the interviews conducted in the schools as part of this study (see Chapter 5) indicated that teachers are unable to relate to the HMCI report findings in geography.

A particularly important role of HMCI subject reports is to provide examples of good practice, and hence to indicate ways in which schools could improve. In this respect, the geography subject reports – and those on the other subjects of the curriculum - contain valuable advice for the schools. For example, in the 2003/04 HMCI report, the geography subject section stated that, where schools have developed effective practice in geography, they demonstrate some, or all, of the characteristics shown in Box 2.8:

Box 2.8 HMCI Report 2003/04 – Examples of good practice in geography

- there is a subject leader, not necessarily a specialist, but a teacher who has made him/herself aware of current developments in the subject and is able to offer support and advice to colleagues
- there is visible support from the senior managers who recognise the value of the subject and include it, for example, in the school development plan and in plans for staff training and discussion
- schemes of work have been adapted to meet the specific requirements of the school and the resources available
- there is a clearly organised teaching programme which is adhered to and provides continuity in the learning experience
- pupils' achievement is enhanced through the regular use of an enquiry based approach. This engages pupils and supports the development of practical skills and also allows for the use of extended work, which stretches the most able pupils in particular
- very good use is made of the out-of-classroom environment and fieldwork to support learning and to develop geographical skills
- funding is used creatively to purchase appropriate resources, especially a variety of maps (particularly of the local area) and a range of photographs
- very effective use is made of resources and advice from subject associations in developing the subject throughout the school.

(Ofsted, 2005d)

The report also identified and listed the following areas for development:

a) providing effective leadership for the subject
b) providing for continuity in pupils' geographical learning
c) getting the most from resources, including fieldwork.

The 2004/05 Annual report of HMCI (Ofsted, 2005a) was the last in the series to be published by Ofsted over several years, as substantial changes were made to the inspection framework from September 2005. These resulted in considerable reductions in the size and scope of inspections, which in turn are likely to have a considerable impact upon future inspections of subjects such as geography. To enable HMCI to continue to draw on inspection data for their annual reports on the subjects of the curriculum, subject evidence on subjects such as geography is now gathered from qualitative inspections of the subject in a small sample of schools. The validity of this has yet to be proved.

The HMCI Annual Reports on primary school geography provide a summary of the strengths and weaknesses in standards and provision in the subject throughout the country, based on the inspections of schools over the previous year. In terms of the accountability role of Ofsted, they clearly fulfil an important function. However, as they do not refer to the specific situation in individual schools, they fail to offer relevant strategies to facilitate improvement to which the schools can relate. As such, they could be regarded as irrelevant to improvement, other than providing examples of good practice for schools to follow.

5. INFLUENCES ON GEOGRAPHY IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The extent to which there is improvement or deterioration in standards or provision in geography in a primary school depends upon the interplay of positive and negative influences which originate both from within the school and from outside of it. These in turn result from political, economic and professional factors working within the school or the education system at large.

INFLUENCES FROM WITHIN THE SCHOOL

Among the contexts that support effective geography teaching in a school, Catling (2003a, page 14) identified subject leadership/coordination, the quality of planning and resource provision.

An effective geography coordinator

The introduction of the National Curriculum into primary schools in England in 1989 (National Curriculum Council, 1989) led to increased demands on the subject knowledge of the class teachers who, as generalists, were responsible for teaching all the subjects of the curriculum to their classes. In response to this, most schools, depending on their size, appointed a teacher to be responsible for coordinating one or more subjects of the curriculum (Burton and Brundrett, 2005).

In line with other subjects, coordinators were therefore appointed for geography, with whole school responsibility for leading and managing the subject.

Owen and Ryan (2001) and Halocha (1998) defined the role of the geography coordinator as being essentially concerned with developing the quality of teaching and learning in geography across the school. Key qualities they regarded as necessary for this role were the possession of up to date subject knowledge and expertise, and interpersonal skills. The former required coordinators to keep abreast of developments in geographical education so that they could share them with colleagues, whilst the latter required them to be able to support colleagues in teaching the subject and to promote it across the school. One of the most important aspects of the geography coordinator's role is to support colleagues in their geography teaching and to organise or facilitate INSET for them – usually within the school. Owen and Ryan (2001) explained that the form this INSET takes can range from offering one-to-one advice and support to whole day sessions, sometimes with the help of an outside speaker. The 2004-05 HMCI Annual Report (Ofsted, 2005a) noted that, in one third of the schools where the quality of provision for primary geography was high, senior managers promoted geography and there was an active coordinator who was knowledgeable and aware of current trends. As an influence on improvement in geography in a primary school, the geography coordinator is therefore of great importance. Krause and Millward (2004, page 335) regarded the role of the geography coordinator as 'crucial to the success of geography teaching in a primary school.'

Krause and Millward (2004) considered that continuing professional development (CPD) for the coordinator was essential for effective curriculum leadership, - especially externally provided INSET and the help of a curriculum adviser. From the early 1970s to the mid 1990s INSET in geography was usually provided by the LEA and led by the LEA geography or humanities adviser, although INSET was also provided by professional bodies such as the Geographical Association. A further source of support for geography coordinators, according to Krause and

Millward (2004), was the use of networks and cluster groups with colleagues in similar schools - often those linked with the same secondary school. These were also often initiated and supported by the LEA geography or humanities advisers.

The quality of curriculum planning

In the DfES *Excellence and Enjoyment* strategy for primary schools (DfES, 2003), schools were encouraged to examine their curricula and the organisation of their timetables in order to enrich the learning for their pupils. Where a school curriculum is rich and varied, full provision is made for foundation subjects, such as geography, and suitable links are made between geography and other subjects. In the 2003/04 HMCI report (Ofsted, 2005d), schools with a rich and varied curriculum were identified as those where:

- there is a commitment to a well-balanced and challenging curriculum that enables pupils to be actively engaged in learning and achieve well;
- the planning of work makes links across subjects to strengthen relevance, coherence and the application of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding;
- expertise within the school and from the local community is well used;
- effective use is made of blocks of time, enabling pupils to engage in sustained learning covering two or more subjects.

Sympathetic timetabling, which enables classes to spend blocks of time out of the classroom on geographical fieldwork, can be an important positive influence on geography in a school. The value of fieldwork in geography was endorsed in the 2004/05 HMCI Annual Report (Ofsted, 2005a), which noted that it was an integral part of the teaching programme in successful schools.

Resource provision

The 2003/04 HMCI Annual Report (Ofsted, 2005d) noted that, where there was effective practice in geography, schools made very effective use of resources and advice from subject associations in developing the subject throughout the school. They also ensured that funding was used creatively to purchase appropriate

resources, especially a variety of maps (particularly of the local area) and a range of photographs.

Good resource provision can therefore greatly enhance the teaching of geography, as it is a subject which relies on the use of pictures, maps and text for the effective teaching about places beyond the locality of the school. It is also a subject for which a wide range of excellent resources is available. Among these, the increased use of ICT is an important development, which was recognised in the 2004/05 HMCI Annual Report (Ofsted, 2005a).

INFLUENCES FROM OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

National priorities to raise standards in numeracy and literacy

The National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) and the National Numeracy Strategy (DfEE, 1999) were central prongs in the government's drive to raise standards in literacy and numeracy in the nation's schools. However, their impact upon the rest of the curriculum has led to disquiet in many quarters. Reports for the QCA Geography Officers (Catling *et al*, 2002, 2004) expressed concerns about the negative influences of these strategies on primary school geography. Noteworthy among them were the reduction in the amount of time allocated for the teaching of geography, and the fact that geography had become largely an 'afternoon subject'. However, it was also noted that both the literacy and the numeracy strategy exerted positive influences on geography. For example, the literacy strategy gave support to geographical enquiry and investigation through the use of non-fictional texts, access to appropriate fiction and improved vocabulary and writing skills. In addition, the numeracy strategy encouraged links between geography and mathematics. These included teaching about coordinates and their use, measurement and scale, directions and compass points – all linked to mapwork – as well as data handling and the use of graphs, and work on shape and space.

Concern about the negative influences of the national literacy and numeracy strategies on provision for other subjects of the primary school curriculum resulted in research conducted for Ofsted by HMI (Ofsted, 2002a). This examined whether, given the requirements of these strategies, the primary curriculum was overloaded. The resulting Ofsted report *The Curriculum in Successful Primary Schools* (Ofsted, 2002a) concluded that it *was* possible to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and still maintain an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy.

However, the 2003/04 Annual Report of HMCI (Ofsted, 2005d) noted that only a small proportion of schools were able successfully to combine high standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science with a rich and varied curriculum, and that in these schools, the national strategies for literacy and numeracy did not have a narrowing effect on the curriculum.

The impact on primary school geography of the requirements of the national literacy and numeracy strategies is investigated further in Chapter 5 of this study.

Ineffective geography coordinators

Although geography coordinators may be willing and enthusiastic, they may be ineffective as a result of their lack of subject expertise. In large and average size primary schools, coordinators' responsibilities can usually be shared out on a reasonably fair basis – with each teacher having responsibility for no more than one subject (Krause and Millward, 2004). However, teachers in smaller schools are frequently given responsibility for coordinating more than one subject. In such cases, coordinators can be placed in the situation of having responsibility for subjects in which they have only limited subject expertise (Owen and Ryan, 2001). Even in larger primary schools, teachers with limited understanding of geography are sometimes required to take on the role of its coordinator. It is, therefore, not always possible for the coordinators to have the subject knowledge that Owen and Ryan (2001) regard as essential for them to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

The HMCI Annual Report for 2004/2005 (Ofsted, 2005a) noted that the leadership and management of primary school geography compared unfavourably with all other subjects, and were unsatisfactory on one tenth of schools.

Owen and Ryan (2001) reported that little if any non-contact time is given to geography coordinators to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities. In the absence of allocated timetabled time for visiting each class within the school coordinators are therefore unable to monitor effectively the teaching and learning of geography as a means to bringing about improvement in the subject.

Teachers with weak subject expertise in geography

Weaknesses in the teaching of geography have been a barrier to improvement for several years. The 2004/05 Annual Report of HMCI (Ofsted, 2005a, page 3) noted that 'many of the features of weaker geography teaching that remain are linked to inadequate subject expertise and a lack of understanding of how to deliver geographical principles and ideas within a conceptual framework'. Although many teachers do not feel confident in teaching geography, newly qualified teachers seem to be especially weak in this area. This is linked to the fact that the current requirements for primary initial teacher training (ITT) focus on the core curriculum and so only a limited amount of time is available for the trainees to learn about teaching subjects such as geography. The requirements specify that either geography **or** history should be included in a primary ITT subject programme. Catling (2006a) reported that the average amount of time that primary ITT students spent on learning to teach geography was only about 10 hours, with some courses allocating less time. Three courses did not include geography at all.

Lack of CPD in geography

An effective solution to teachers' weak subject expertise in geography is the provision of suitably designed CPD. However, the ineffectiveness of geography

coordinators, and the fact that many LAs are no longer appointing geography subject advisers - or even humanities advisers - has meant that the availability of these sources of expertise to support improvement in geography in the schools is diminishing (Ofsted, 2005c).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THIS STUDY

The foregoing review shows that geography has an essential role to play in the curriculum of the primary schools in this country. This is by virtue of the powerful arguments for its value in children's education and the high regard in which it is held by HMCI (Bell, 2005). Furthermore, its importance is recognised as a foundation subject of the National Curriculum, which ensures that the programmes of study for geography are taught in English state primary schools (DfEE/QCA, 1999).

Among the factors which facilitate improvement in primary school geography are the active support and leadership throughout a school of a capable, well qualified and experienced geography coordinator, and the provision of INSET courses and programmes for developing the subject expertise of geography coordinators and primary school teachers (Krause and Millward, 2004). Schools can also sustain the subject by ensuring that timetabling enables teachers to spend blocks of time on geographical work, especially fieldwork, and that there is proper provision and use of resources to support teaching and learning in geography. Improvement is impeded where these conditions are absent.

External factors which impede improvement in primary geography have resulted from national priorities to raise standards in the core subjects of the national curriculum, especially in literacy and numeracy. These have undermined the possibilities for schools to provide their pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum (Alexander, 2004; Marsden, 2005).

Ofsted was set up as a result of the political agenda of central government to exert control over the curriculum in schools. As a result, the main purposes of Ofsted school inspections are concerned with improvement and with accountability. The intention is that these should be achieved through the publication of the inspection reports on individual schools, and the annual report of HMCI. However, research evidence about the relationship between inspection and improvement in schools has often been inconclusive, and continues to be the subject of considerable debate. Some major studies, for example, Matthews and Sammons (2004), have reported that Ofsted has made a strong contribution to improvement, and that the reports from the inspections of individual schools can guide and inform improvement in them. Other studies, including those of Chapman (2001) and Lonsdale and Parsons (1998), have concluded that Ofsted inspections can have ultimately a negligible, or even negative, impact on school improvement.

National policy on inspections has meant that the core subjects of the National Curriculum have been prioritised for inspection (Ofsted, 2003a), and that other subjects of the curriculum, such as geography, have been marginalised. The Ofsted framework documents and accompanying inspection handbooks instruct Ofsted inspection teams to prioritise the inspection of the core subjects of the curriculum over the foundation subjects, such as geography. This can be seen to be giving messages to the schools that the core subjects are particularly valued by Ofsted, even though both the QCA and Ofsted commend the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum. The advice to schools from these sources could thus be regarded as confusing, if not contradictory.

The Annual Reports of HMCI (Ofsted, 2004b; Ofsted, 2005d; Ofsted, 2005a) show that standards in primary school geography over the past few years have been judged to be too low. These reports identify clearly the weaknesses in geography in many primary schools, but the impact that this information will have on individual schools is questionable. At the best, where the reports identify features of good

practice it seems that schools might be encouraged to emulate the role models provided.

There is currently a lack of published research and literature on the contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in primary school geography, and, indeed, on the contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in the other subjects of the primary curriculum. This study aims to address this deficiency in relation to primary school geography. It investigates the views and experiences of head teachers, geography coordinators and Ofsted inspectors to determine what they consider to be the influences on improvement in geography in the schools, and the extent to which Ofsted inspections have contributed to them. It also analyses Ofsted inspection reports on individual schools to determine how useful they can be as agents for guiding and informing improvement in geography in the schools.

The next chapter examines the rationale for the research methodologies employed in this study, and explains the methods employed for generating, collecting and analysing the data associated with it.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The study investigates the contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in primary school geography. The research questions (see page 10) are concerned with determining the importance and role of Ofsted inspection reports in guiding and informing improvement in primary school geography, and the ways in which they have changed. They also ask about the role of Ofsted inspections and other key influences on improvement, or otherwise, in geography in primary schools.

This chapter addresses the research methodology central to the study. It examines the research traditions underpinning the investigation, describes the data generation and collection methods employed, and explains the modes of data analysis. Following the convention adopted by Guba and Lincoln (1998), the use of the terms 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' are reserved for a description of types of methods, and not to refer to the type of research paradigm. The terms 'interpretivist' and 'positivist' are reserved for descriptions of the research paradigms. It is necessary to make these distinctions because it has been noted by some researchers that the use of these terms is often neither precise nor agreed (Mason, 2002; Williams, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), and that 'Interpretivism and qualitative research are sometimes used interchangeably' (Williams, 2000, page 209).

The chapter is organized into three main parts. Part 1 is concerned with the research paradigms and approaches, which provide the theoretical basis for the study. It includes an examination of the contribution of qualitative and quantitative

approaches to the investigation. Part 2 addresses the methods employed for generating and collecting data, which were principally by means of semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. Attention is also paid to how issues of research ethics were addressed. Part 3 focuses on the methods of data analysis and the means by which the data were presented.

PART 1. RESEARCH PARADIGMS AND APPROACHES

The study is based within the interpretivist paradigm, where 'the researcher attempts to interpret what is going on according to the subjective frame of reference of those observed (Williams, 2000, page 212). Mason (2002) describes an interpretivist approach as one which sees people as a primary data resource and seeks their perceptions, rather than imposing a view from the outside.

In defining 'interpretivism', Williams (2000) stated that it is commonly used to describe those approaches to investigation in the human sciences which are not hypothetic-deductive – and that qualitative research itself has even been characterised as having an interpretivist approach. He applied the term 'interpretivism' to denote 'those strategies in sociology which interpret the meanings and actions of actors according to their own subjective frame of reference' (Williams, 2000, page 210). The close association of interpretivism with qualitative research was also noted by Mason (2002), who accepts that the interpretivist tradition is a particular view of the world with which qualitative research is most frequently associated.

The interpretivist philosophical position is important in this study, and a key part of it relies on the use of semi-structured interviews in the data generation stage. In these, the head teachers, geography coordinators and Ofsted inspectors described and explained their views and experiences of Ofsted inspections and the contribution of these inspections to improvement in geography in primary schools. Furthermore, even though a quantitative element was used, much of the

documentary analysis in the study was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. This was because it was concerned with the written inspection reports on geography produced by members of the Ofsted inspection teams, which reflected their perceptions and interpretations of the state of geography in the schools they inspected, and their values in relation to this.

In contrast to the interpretivist paradigm, the positivist paradigm is '... an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond' (Bryman, 2001, page 12). The positivist paradigm provides a basis for the quantitative methods employed in a complementary role for analysing the Ofsted inspection reports. These methods involved the enumeration of judgements within the reports and the use of statistical analysis in examining the impact of contextual factors on the reports, such as the date of the inspection and the size of the school. Quantitative methods were used for this part of the study, as they were an effective way of handling data from a large number of different sources.

Limitations of the positivist perspective in educational research have been advanced by Cohen and Manion (2000) and Robson (2002). They describe positivism as mechanistic and reductionist, failing to take account of the abilities of individuals to interpret and represent their experiences. The study did not lend itself overall to the use of a positivist approach. To have narrowed the study overall to a few variables, which could then have been analysed by statistical means, would have overlooked the significance of the range of responses from the different individuals interviewed, and the variety of data derived from the analysis of the Ofsted reports. This detailed information was an important feature of the research. It encompassed the experiences and perceptions of the different professionals associated with primary school geography and Ofsted inspections (see Chapter 5), together with the reports from differing school and inspection contexts (see Chapter 4).

RESEARCH APPROACH

The study consists of a qualitative survey which employs a mixed method research design, drawing principally on qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, supplemented by quantitative analysis of documentary sources.

Although surveys in social science research are more frequently employed within a positivist research paradigm, and use quantitative methods (Edwards and Talbot, 1994; McQueen and Knussen, 2002; Cresswell, 2003), they can also be employed within an interpretivist research paradigm (Robson, 2002). Surveys are often carried out for descriptive purposes (Edwards and Talbot, 1994; Cohen and Manion, 2000; Robson, 2002) and can also play an important part in evaluation studies (Edwards and Talbot, 1994). A qualitative survey approach was therefore designed, as it met the overall requirements of the study as outlined above.

The survey approach is well suited for the collection and examination of data from a wide range of different sources and, as Edwards and Talbot (1994, page 32) point out, the scope of surveys can vary from a national or international study to that of a local setting. They can incorporate the findings of a few, or of a large number of people.

The survey is further likened, by Edwards and Talbot (1999, page 88) to an onion: data from questionnaires is similar to peeling off the outer layers of skin of a research problem, with interviews being used to get to the inside, in-depth layers.

The study employs a mixed methods approach where qualitative and quantitative methods are combined. Borkan (2004, page 4) describes the mixed methods approach as '...those studies or lines of enquiry that integrate one or more qualitative and quantitative techniques for data collection and/or analysis.' Bowen (1996) advocates the benefits of this process and argues that, in combining methods, the advantages of each methodology complement the other, and make a

stronger research design, with more valid and reliable findings. Similarly, Bryman (1993, page 131) affirms that 'the researcher's claims for validity of his or her conclusions are enhanced if they can show mutual confirmation.' A further advantage of the use of a mixed methods approach in this study is the opportunities it provides for triangulation (Bryman, 2001; Robson, 2002). This involves the use of multiple sources to enhance the rigour of the research and contribute to its verification and validation.

Contribution of the qualitative approach

Qualitative methods were employed in addressing Research Question 1 (see Chapter 1, page 10), as part of the mixed methods approach for the collection and analysis of data from the sample of Ofsted reports. This involved the identification of judgements and the grouping of these judgements into categories for further analysis. It also involved grouping the reports into different categories. A qualitative approach was also employed in response to Research Question 2, as the sole approach for the collection and analysis of data from the semi-structured interviews. Silverman (2000, page 8) claims that the methods of qualitative research can provide 'a "deeper" understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data'.

Hammersley (1993) and Bryman (2001) identified key characteristics of qualitative research. Those which apply to this study are:

- an emphasis on the inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research, in which the emphasis was placed on the generation of theories
- rejection of a natural scientific model, and particularly of positivism, in favour of an emphasis on ways in which people interpret their social world
- a view of social reality as emergent and socially contructed
- analysis of words rather than numbers
- use of semi-structured rather than structured interviews.

Creswell (2003) contends that the qualitative researcher makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives. In relation to this study, these refer

to the multiple meanings of the spoken and written individual experiences of the participants, socially and historically constructed, with the intent of developing a theory or pattern. By these means, a grounded theory approach was employed, by which open-ended, emerging data were collected, with the primary intent of developing themes from them (see pages 88, 89, 91 and 93). In developing subjective meanings of these experiences, the complexity of the participants' views was sought. In the data collection stage of the study, reliance was placed on the participants' views of the subject of the study, and the questions in the interviews were normally broad and general (see Appendices H, I and J), within a context of discussion and interaction.

Ontological and epistemological considerations (Mason, 2002) were acknowledged. Data sources relied upon the participants' perceptions of the nature and essence of the social world surrounding geography in the schools and school inspections, and their knowledge about them. There may therefore have been different versions of these things, which may have affected the interpretations to be placed upon data generated from the interviews and the documentary analysis.

Tooley and Darby (1998) argued that one of the limitations of the qualitative approach is its subjectivity. However, they conceded that it does enable researchers to gather data that are inaccessible in any other way, and that these data can be very rich and fine grained. In this study, the richness of the qualitative data from the interviews and the documentary analysis far outweighed the disadvantages of its subjectivity. Furthermore, the use of a purely quantitative approach would, in any case, have involved a measure of subjectivity in initially defining the numeric parameters to be examined.

Contribution of the quantitative approach

A quantitative research approach was included, to supplement and enrich the data generated from the qualitative investigations arising from Research Question 1. The more notable differences between a qualitative and a quantitative research approach were characterised by van den Hoonaard (1997) who stated that, whilst qualitative researchers tend to use an inductive approach, quantitative researchers prefer a deductive approach. The essential properties of the quantitative approach, according to Bryman (2001), include:

- a deductive approach to the relation between theory and research, with emphasis on the testing of theories
- the incorporation of the practices and norms of the natural scientific model, and of positivism in particular
- the embodiment of a view of social reality as an external, objective reality

A quantitative approach proved informative in the analysis of the Ofsted reports, in order to determine their usefulness to guide and inform improvement in geography (see Chapter 4). This approach enabled the study to examine a much larger number of inspection reports than was possible when using the qualitative approach, and so to gain a wider picture of their characteristics. The Microsoft Excel computer program was used to facilitate data handling. Statistical tests (Chi square) were employed to examine the significance of relationships between key contextual variables and the number of judgements occurring within the inspection reports; this was used as an indicator of their usefulness.

Methodological triangulation

Methodological triangulation (Denzin,1989; Robson, 2002) uses combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to enhance the rigour of research. In this study, qualitative semi-structured interviews and qualitative documentary analysis were combined with quantitative documentary analysis. In addressing Research

Question 1, which involved the analysis of Ofsted inspection reports, the methodology relied on a mixed method approach, although only qualitative methodologies were employed in addressing Research Question 2. Robson (2002) supports the case for the use of triangulation, on the grounds that it can counter threats to the validity of the research. However, he warns that it may open up possibilities of discrepancies and disagreements among the different data sources. In this study, these could have arisen between the interviews with the various individuals, or between the interviews and the documentary analysis. However, these were minimised, because the interviewees were selected on the basis of being familiar with information derived from the geography paragraphs of Ofsted inspection reports.

Triangulation of different data sources

The study also involved triangulation by checking the findings from several data sources, namely, those from the interviews with the head teachers, geography coordinators and Ofsted inspectors. This was a means of examining the consistency of different data sources within the same method. Cohen and Manion (2000) describe this technique as a means of attempting to map out, or explain, phenomena more fully by studying them from more than one viewpoint. Following the transcription and analysis of the data from these three different interview sources, they were then triangulated.

Triangulation of data collection methods

An important form of triangulation employed in this study was that which was done by checking the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods. Denzin (1989) refers to this as 'data triangulation'. In this study, it meant making comparisons between data derived from interviews with head teachers, geography coordinators and Ofsted inspectors with those from the analysis of the sample of Ofsted reports (These will be discussed later in this

chapter). Following the transcription and analysis of the data from the interviews, and the analysis of the inspection reports, the data generated from these different forms of data collection were triangulated.

Reliability issues

The case study approach was considered as an alternative to the survey approach, and the study could have concentrated on a particular case in a single school, studied in its own right (Yin, 1994; Robson, 2002), or provided in-depth information about a limited number of such individual cases. However, this may not have answered the research questions as well as the current study, where different views, attitudes and relationships are surveyed and where data is examined from across a wider range of sources. The use of the qualitative survey approach has therefore enhanced the validity of the study, and contributed to reducing the likelihood of bias. In one sense, the study does provide a case study of primary school geography in relation to its Ofsted inspections. However, the essence of the survey is that it is a 'snap-shot' (Edwards and Talbot, 1994, page 29) of the changing context of Ofsted school inspections, set within the complex relationships between Ofsted, the inspectors and the staff of the schools.

PART 2. METHODS FOR GENERATING AND COLLECTING DATA

The most accessible and authoritative sources of data on the subject of this study were the key professionals who had been most closely involved in the Ofsted school inspection process, together with the documentary records of the inspections. The professionals were the head teachers and the geography coordinators whose primary schools had been subject to Ofsted inspections, as well as the Ofsted inspectors, who had wide experience of inspecting geography in primary schools. The survey sought to draw from their knowledge and experience of the inspection process through the use of semi-structured interviews. The interviews with these professionals were considered reliable because, collectively,

they had extensive experience of Ofsted inspections both from the perspective of the schools and also from that of the Ofsted inspectors. Their responses, therefore, ranged from those based upon a very specific experience in a school to a more generalised overview of inspections across schools and subjects of the curriculum. These provided both an in-depth insight into the impact of the Ofsted inspection process, as well as a broader perspective.

The semi-structured interviews were used instead of questionnaires, because previous experience of using questionnaires in research with serving primary school teachers (Brown, 1978) showed that they were more likely to respond to interviews.

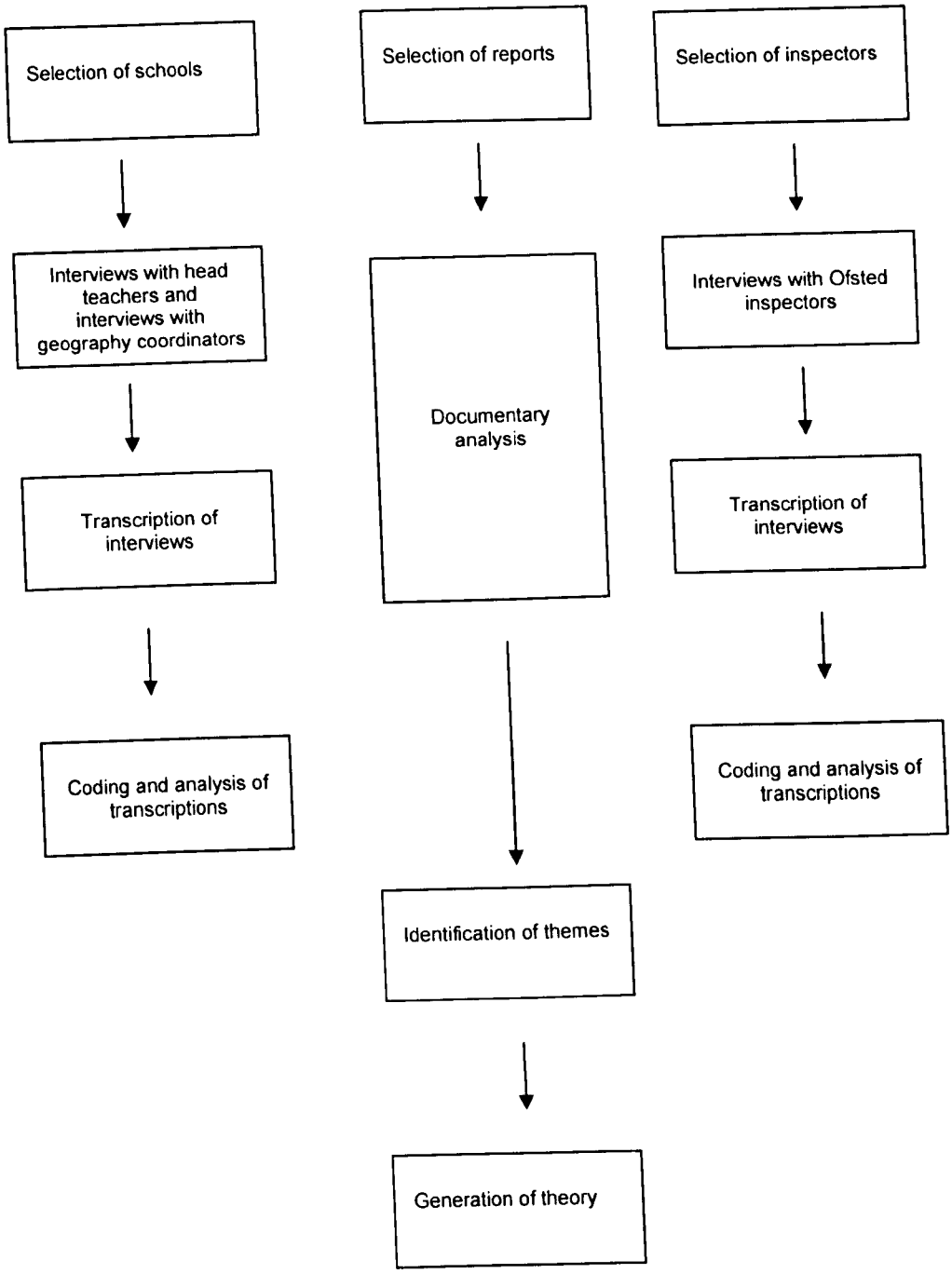
The Ofsted inspection reports were included in the study as they provided written evidence of the inspection of geography in a comparatively large number of schools over a period of time. The geography paragraphs in these reports were analysed in order to explore themes, categories and patterns across the whole sample. The reports were, therefore, a valuable source of information about the role played by inspections in guiding and informing improvement in geography in the schools. As the reports were also official documents, drawn up in relation to the Ofsted framework and handbook, precautions had been taken by Ofsted to ensure that they were a reliable source of evidence. For instance, following an inspection, the schools were invited to comment on matters of accuracy in a draft copy of the report produced soon after the inspection. The report was then subjected to rigorous quality control through a critical reading process, itself monitored by Ofsted, prior to publication.

Despite these safeguards in the later stages of the inspection process, there is, nonetheless, a serious weakness in the early stages, and consequently the reliability of the process by which the judgements in the inspection reports are reached can be questioned (Field *et al*, 1998). This is because inspectors are required to grade their findings on a scale that is published in both the inspection

framework and the Ofsted handbook. However, the criteria against which inspectors make these judgements are not carefully defined. The process by which this is done is, therefore, subjective and relies upon the professional judgement of the inspector that remains unchallenged. The analysis of the inspection reports is addressed in Chapter 4 of this study.

The key elements of the survey research process employed in this study were documentary analysis and interviews (see Fig. 3.1). The documentary analysis was of a sample of Ofsted inspection reports from schools in two local authorities. The interviews consisted of face-to-face interviews with primary school head teachers and geography coordinators in a range of schools, and telephone interviews with Ofsted inspectors.

Fig 3.1 The survey research process



From Fig 3.1 it can be seen that the survey employed the following methods of data generation and collection:

a) *Documentary analysis:* This was undertaken to examine the potential of the geography sections in the inspection reports to bring about improvement in geography in the schools. It also examined the changes in these reports over the period of time before and after the introduction of a revised inspection framework, and considered the implications of these changes for improvement in geography. It is recognised that reports can be criticised, but schools do rely upon them and so they can be regarded as a valid source of data – not least because schools have been able to comment on their accuracy in the draft stage.

b) *Semi-structured face-to-face interviews:* These were conducted with primary school head teachers and geography coordinators in their schools. Their purpose was to provide up-to-date and in-depth data about the factors which influence geography in a school and the impact of Ofsted inspections on improvement in the subject.

c) *Semi-structured telephone interviews:* These were arranged with Ofsted inspectors who had extensive experience of inspecting primary school geography, and so were able to draw upon a considerable breadth of experience to complement the more specific experience of the head teachers and geography coordinators in the schools.

All the individuals who were interviewed were selected by virtue of being able to offer a range of differing perspectives and experiences of Ofsted inspections and primary school geography.

SELECTING THE SAMPLE OF OFSTED REPORTS FOR ANALYSIS

The sample consisted of 100 inspection reports on primary schools, which were down-loaded from the Ofsted web-site. It comprised reports on schools from two LAs, to reduce the possibility of bias due to particular factors - such as size of schools or provision of LA courses - which might come into play when drawing upon only one authority. The number of schools chosen from each was in proportion to the number of primary schools in each authority, and they included the schools in which the interviews were conducted. The sample was selected alphabetically in 2004 from a total of 419 primary school reports published on the Ofsted web-site for the LAs of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Of these, 234 were from Oxfordshire and 185 from Buckinghamshire.

The selection was made to ensure a balance between those inspection reports published prior to the introduction of the revised Ofsted inspection framework in September 2003 and those published after this date. The reason for this was to discover whether there had been any changes in the way geography was reported in these reports between the two successive inspection frameworks. As there had been several significant changes to the framework (Ofsted 1994a, 1996a, 1999b, 2003a, 2005a), it was reasonable to expect that the style and focus of the reports might have changed, resulting in better (or worse) feedback and guidance to schools to inform improvement in geography. The sample also included the inspection reports on those schools in which the interviews were conducted for purposes of cross-referencing to the interviews with the head teachers and the geography coordinators.

One of the limitations of the sample was that it was restricted to those reports which were published on the Ofsted web-site at the time of the study. It might have been useful to have had the opportunity to study some earlier editions of the reports than those which were in the sample, but the web-site only included the most recent editions and so earlier reports were not available from this source.

Correspondence with the Ofsted library revealed that it did not retain a full range of past reports, whilst efforts to locate earlier examples of reports from the Ofsted archivist and Ofsted inspection contractors proved to be unsuccessful. However, as some of the reports on the web-site dated from as early as 1998, it was possible to examine some examples of the earlier reports.

The selection of reports for analysis was made at the same time as schools were being approached to participate in the study, and so the overriding considerations to be taken into account in their selection were the same. In deciding on the size of the sample, reference was made to published research on the subject. Cohen and Manion (2000) point out that a minimum sample size of thirty has generally been advocated if researchers plan to use statistical analysis on their data. However, they stress that the ultimate decision about sample size should be determined by the sorts of relationships to be explored within the subgroups of the sample, the number of variables to be controlled in the analyses and the types of statistical tests to be made. As the Ofsted website contained a total of 419 inspection reports on primary schools in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, a sample of 100 reports was chosen. This represented a selection ratio of approximately one in four, and provided reports from a sufficiently broad range of schools in terms of number of pupils on roll, type, location and dates of inspection. The reports were chosen to include:

a) A range of different sizes of schools in terms of number of pupils on roll.
The reason for this was to compensate for possible differences in the influence of the inspection reports on improvement in geography due to the size of the schools.

b) A balance between the number of schools which had been inspected prior to the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework and those which had been inspected after that time.
This was to enable the study to investigate whether the introduction of a revised inspection framework had resulted in changes in the inspection reports on

geography, and hence the improvement which could occur as a result of them. In the sample, 50% of the reports were of inspections conducted prior to September 2003, and 50% were of inspections conducted between September 2003 and June 2004 (the latest date when reports were selected).

c) *Only schools which catered for the full primary school age range, so ensuring that their geography curriculum covered both Key Stages 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study.*
This meant that first and middle schools, and separate infant and junior schools, were excluded. These represented 17% of the overall number of schools in the two LAs of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire and so the sample was drawn from 83% of the schools.

d) A balance in the number of schools from each of the LAs of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire in proportion to the number of schools in each authority.
The intention was to avoid any bias which might occur due to a school being located in one or the other of the LAs, and so there were 70 schools from Oxfordshire and 30 from Buckinghamshire.

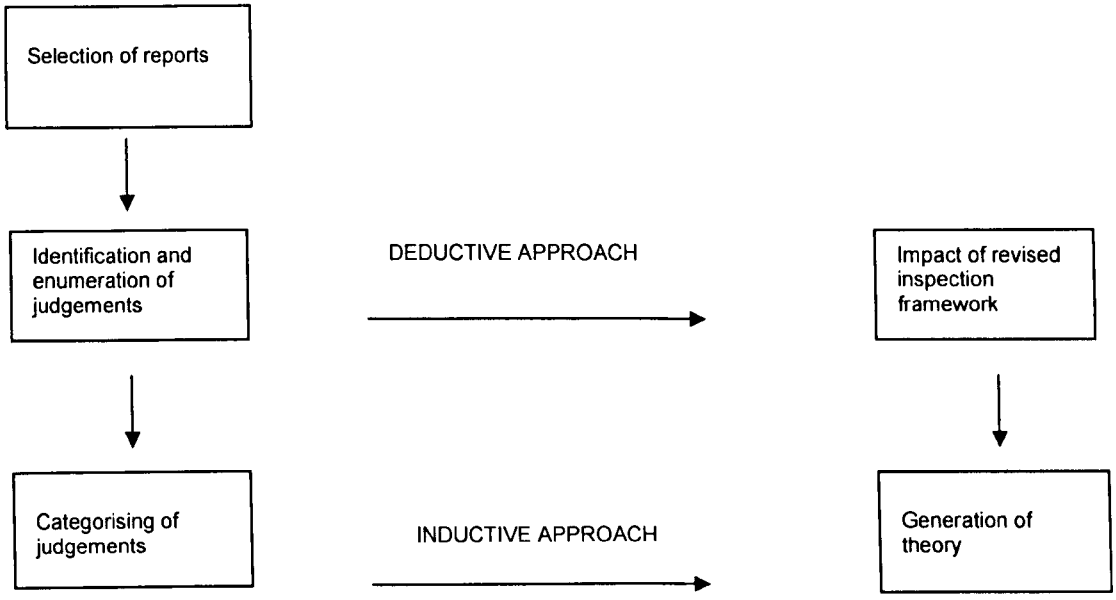
e) Schools where the interviews for the study were being conducted.
In order to provide opportunities for triangulation of the methods used in the study it was arranged to analyse the inspection reports of the schools in which interviews were being conducted.

In terms of the development of the study, it might have been preferable to analyse the sample of 100 inspection reports prior to approaching the schools about the interviews. The required number of schools from this sample could then have been approached to arrange the interviews. However, this proved to be impracticable because, as explained later in this chapter, initial approaches to the schools showed that some were unwilling to participate in the study. It was therefore necessary to prioritize the procurement of the required number of schools

for the interviews. This meant that approaches were made to a much greater number of schools than those for whom the original 100 reports had been selected for analysis before the requisite number which met the required criteria agreed to participate. As a consequence, some schools whose reports were not in the original sample of 100 were brought into the study, in order that the interviews could be completed within the available time frame, and others were removed.

The analysis of the documentary evidence, which employed methods of both inductive and deductive reasoning, is illustrated in Figure 3.2. In this analysis, the method of inductive reasoning entailed the examination of 100 Ofsted inspection reports on geography, from which generalisations could be drawn and theories generated – a data driven process of moving from the specific to the general. The method of deductive reasoning, on the other hand, was theory driven, and involved moving from the general to the specific. Null hypotheses were constructed following thorough inspection of all the reports, and these were then tested statistically using a Chi square test. Edwards and Talbot (1994, page 10) propose that a mixed design should be created, to include both perspectives, and that researchers should 'remain sensitive to the blurring of boundaries between the two approaches'.

Fig 3.2 The research process – documentary analysis



SELECTING THE SAMPLE OF SCHOOLS FOR THE INTERVIEWS

A major part of the survey was based on interviews with primary school head teachers and geography coordinators. The schools for the interviews were selected to ensure they represented an acceptable cross-section in terms of their size, type, dates of inspections and accessibility for conducting the interviews. The investigation was based on a sample of twelve primary schools in the LAs of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Schools in these two counties were chosen for two main reasons. Firstly, they encompassed a suitable range of large and small, urban and rural primary schools which were reasonably accessible to me, as the researcher, for the purpose of making visits. Secondly – and importantly – I had not had any previous contact with them in my professional role as an Ofsted inspector, and so there was no conflict of interest or other concerns when approaching them.

The sample size of twelve schools was determined by the need to generate and collect data from a sufficiently wide range of schools to provide a representative portrayal of the interviewees' experiences and perceptions of Ofsted inspections and primary school geography. It had also to satisfy the requirements for the validity and reliability of the study (Mason, 2003). [In addition, logistical considerations such as the time taken in conducting interviews, travelling and analysing the data placed limits on the number of schools which could be selected to participate.]

Table 3.1 Information about schools where interviews held

Table 3.1 summarises information about the schools where the interviews were conducted. It can be seen that six of the schools were large primary schools with more than 300 pupils on roll, whilst the other six were of about average size or less. In terms of location, half of the schools were situated in city or large town environments, whilst the others were in small towns or villages. In addition, half of them had last been inspected prior to the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework and the others had been inspected after it had been introduced. All the schools were subject to the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, and so were required to provide a specified curriculum in geography. Furthermore, the inspectors who inspected these schools had all been trained for inspection in the same way and were required to follow the same guidance for inspecting the subjects of the curriculum, as the inspection process was standardised. It can therefore be argued that, allowing for idiosyncratic variations in the responses of the interviewees, the interview data could be regarded as representative of a wider population.

At the outset, it was decided to seek professional guidance about which schools might be suitable to approach for the interviews, and so letters were sent to the LA geography advisers in the two counties. This information could have proved helpful at the initial phase of identifying a variety of schools in terms of their type, size, location and dates when they had been inspected. However, the approach to the advisers proved to be unproductive, although there were helpful comments from one of them.

The method which was subsequently employed for selecting the schools to approach about the interviews was through the use of the Ofsted web-site, which was also used when selecting the reports for analysis. This approach turned out to be very useful, as basic information about the schools, such as number of pupils on roll, socio-economic factors and location were available on the published inspection reports from this source. Other useful information which was also available in these reports included the dates when the schools were previously

inspected, the overall judgements on the strengths and weaknesses of the schools and, importantly, the subject paragraphs for geography.

Initially, a list of 24 schools was compiled so that, even allowing for a 50% refusal rate, a minimum of 12 would agree to participate in the research. However, this initial estimate proved to be grossly over-optimistic, and eventually a total of 16 Buckinghamshire schools and 18 Oxfordshire schools were approached before the required overall number of 12 agreed to participate in the study. It was originally intended to select an equal number of schools from each of these LAs, but it was subsequently decided to select a higher proportion from Oxfordshire, as it had many more primary schools. One of the reasons for this was because, until 2003, the majority of schools in Buckinghamshire had been organised on a First and Middle School basis, catering for pupils in the 5 to 7 and 9 to 12 age range respectively. This meant that, prior to the reorganisation, there were few with single inspection reports which covered the whole of the 5 to 11 primary age phase. However, in certain parts of the county, First and Middle Schools had been combined to create 'Combined Schools', and reports from these schools were eligible to be included in the sample. There were no such difficulties in compiling the sample of schools from Oxfordshire, despite a history of First and Middle Schools in the City of Oxford, because it is a larger county than Buckinghamshire.

In order to make the selection, a list was compiled of all the schools in the two counties which had been inspected prior to the introduction of the revised inspection framework of September 2003. From this, taking into account factors such as size, type, dates of inspection and accessibility for the purpose of interviews, copies were made of 12 of the earliest published reports on the lists. Similarly, copies were made of 12 reports published after September 2003, thus ensuring that there was available for scrutiny a selection of reports published prior to, and after, the introduction of the revised framework.

The schools to which the reports related were then approached by letter to the head teachers, inviting them and their geography coordinators to participate in the research (See Appendices A and B). This letter sought agreement to an interview with the head teacher and the geography coordinator and gave an outline of the planned research. Several days later, this was followed up by a telephone call to the school. Names and contact details of the schools and head teachers were taken from the reports on the Ofsted website. Additional schools were contacted from the selection list after approaches to the initial 24 schools had fallen short of the required number for the interviews.

SELECTING THE OFSTED INSPECTORS FOR INTERVIEW

As there is no official list of Ofsted inspectors published in the public domain, I relied upon my professional contacts with other inspectors, and my personal judgements, in making the selection of inspectors for interview. As an Ofsted inspector myself, I had worked in inspection teams with many experienced inspectors and so had the means of contacting them personally about the study. In order not to put them under any pressure, the initial invitation for them to participate was by means of an e-mail message with an information sheet attached (see Appendices C and D). Arrangements for the interviews were made by telephone and, prior to the interviews, advance information on the topics to be discussed was sent by e-mail. Communicating with the inspectors was not easy as they were frequently working away from home on school inspections, but all those who participated were helpful and ready to give of their time and expertise. On examining the transcripts of the first three interviews with the inspectors, it was noted that a pattern of responses was beginning to emerge, and so it was decided to conduct a further three interviews as a means of consolidating this pattern. In so doing, a grounded theory approach to the analysis was employed.

Professional experience of the inspectors, head teachers and geography coordinators

All of the inspectors who were interviewed were very experienced in inspecting, and most had been actively involved in inspecting geography in primary schools since the early days of Ofsted inspections in the mid 1990s. One Registered Inspector (Inspector C) informed me that he had led over 150 inspections. The majority of the others had led inspections on many occasions and had worked to the requirements of a succession of Ofsted inspection frameworks. All were experienced educational professionals who had held senior posts in primary education, such as those of head teacher or LEA adviser or inspector.

Likewise, all the head teachers who were interviewed were very experienced and had been in charge of primary schools since the inception of Ofsted inspections. One head teacher was also a trained Ofsted inspector who occasionally took part in inspections.

I was therefore confident that the perceptions and recollections of the head teachers and the inspectors who were interviewed would provide an informed and accurate picture of the focus of the study. It is accepted, however, that their recollections of the early days of the inspections would be less clear than those of more recent times, and this became apparent during the interviews.

The length of experience in post of the geography coordinators was more variable. Some were experienced primary school teachers who had been geography coordinators for several years, whilst others were fairly newly appointed to the post and were relatively new to teaching. Nonetheless, all had up to date experience of coordinating geography in a primary school and were aware of the factors influencing provision and standards in the subject. Their experience of the changing patterns of Ofsted inspections, however, and the effects of these inspections on primary school geography, was more variable.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In approaching and interviewing participants in the research, care was taken to observe a clear code of research ethics. Burns (2000) reminds researchers that concerns about ethics can relate to both the subject matter of the research as well as to its methods and procedures. At the outset of this study, clear and thorough guidelines were provided by the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee and, prior to embarking on the main stage of data collection through interviews, the committee's approval for the study was sought, and subsequently granted (see Appendix E). As a result of recommendations from the committee, additions were made to the invitation letters to the schools and the Ofsted inspectors, and also to the consent forms which participants were asked to sign before the interviews (see Appendix F). These additions were chiefly concerned with matters of anonymity, confidentiality and the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any stage.

The initial approaches to the schools about the interviews, by means of the formal letter, advised them that they would be contacted within a few days by telephone to seek their response. This ensured that they were not put to the trouble of having to respond to me by letter. Arrangements for the interviews were also made by telephone for the same reason. Subsequently, confirmation of the arrangements, together with supplementary information, was sent by e-mail. In addition, care was taken to ensure that the interviews were arranged at times which were convenient to the school, and did not exceed the stated times. Interviewees were given written and oral assurances that strict confidentiality would be observed and that any quotations used would be non-attributable.

Before approaching the Ofsted inspectors about the interviews, the School Inspection Division of Ofsted was contacted by telephone to check that Ofsted's permission was not required. It was confirmed by the HMI on duty that no official

permission to do so was necessary. The mode of contacting the inspectors was different from that used for the schools, as Ofsted does not publish a list of inspectors with contact information. However, I did possess the e-mail addresses of inspectors with whom I had previously worked in a professional capacity. This enabled me to gain access to a valuable source of information for the study that would not have been available to researchers without these professional contacts. In the e-mail message of invitation to participate in the study, they were given the option of not replying if they felt unwilling or unable to take part, and so they were under no pressure to participate. Arrangements for the interviews were made by telephone discussions and e-mail, depending upon what was more convenient for the inspectors. As in the case of the interviews in the schools, attention was paid to the duration of the telephone interviews, to ensure that they did not exceed the stated times, except when inspectors wished to do so.

When conducting the interviews, care was taken to avoid the use of leading questions, whilst aiming to prevent the respondents from deviating too far from the focus of the interviews. In my role as the interviewer I was also cautious to ensure that my comments on the responses to the questions did not influence the responses to subsequent questions. In the face-to-face interviews in the schools this also entailed being careful not to reveal my personal viewpoint through my body language. Furthermore, in the interview transcription and analysis stage I took care that my personal bias did not affect the research process. In such research situations, it is accepted that my place as the researcher could have affected the interpretation of the data collected (Cohen and Manion, 2000).

THE INTERVIEWS

An interview has been defined as 'a verbal exchange, often face-to-face, though telephone may be used, in which an interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs or opinions from another person' (Burns, 2000, page 23).

A significant part of the study was the generation of data by means of semi-structured interviews. This employed the method of phenomenological description (Kvale,1996), which describes the world as experienced by the subjects of the interviews, and studies their perspectives on their world. In this case the focus was on their perspectives of Ofsted inspections and improvement in geography in the schools.

The value of the interview in educational research is advocated by Seidman (2006, page 14) who argues that 'It is a powerful way to gain insight into educational and other important social issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues.' More specifically, Edwards and Talbot (1994) explain that using interviews in research provides a 100% response rate to the questions, offers the opportunity to probe and explore meanings and interpretations held by the interviewees and affords the opportunity to hear the language and concerns of the interviewees. Cresswell (2003) explains that an advantage of the use of interviews for the collection of qualitative data is that they enable the researcher to have control over the line of questioning.

However Creswell (2003) acknowledges that there are also disadvantages in using interviews. For instance, information collected by means of interviews is indirect, as it is filtered through the views of those being interviewed. In addition, the researcher's presence may cause bias in the responses of the interviewees, and all interviewees are not equally articulate and perceptive. The influence of the interviewer is further highlighted by Seidman (2006, page 22), who enquires 'Whose meaning is it that an interview brings forth and that a researcher reports?' He questions whether the same meaning would obtain with different interviewers or interviewees, and further suggests that interview data may not always be reliable if the interviewees fail to be honest in their responses.

These concerns were addressed in this study in a number of ways. Altogether, a total of 26 interviews were conducted and so the impact of the views of any

individual interviewee – truthful or otherwise – was reduced. Bias due to my presence as the researcher was countered by the adoption of a low-key and relaxed interview style, with an emphasis on being the sympathetic listener. Selection of the interviewees by virtue of their professional status also ensured that they were articulate and perceptive. However, it is accepted that, due to the scale of this study, I was the only interviewer and so the direction and reporting of the interviews were inevitably influenced, to some extent, by my perceptions of the process and the topic. But, due to my awareness of this, I endeavoured to be as impartial as possible.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study. Despite variations in how they have been defined, there is consensus that 'semi-structured' represents a half-way point between structured (or close-ended) and open-ended interviews. Robson (2000, page 278) describes them as consisting of a shopping list of topics, but with considerable freedom in the sequencing of questions, in their exact wording, and in the amount of time and attention given to different topics. He suggests that a likely interview schedule for a semi-structured interview would include introductory comments; a script of topic headings and possibly key questions to ask under these headings; a set of associated prompts; and closing comments. Burns (2000, page 423) proposes that 'Rather than having a specific interview schedule or none at all, an interview guide may be developed for some parts of the study in which, without fixed wording or fixed ordering of questions, a direction is given to the interview so that the content focuses on the crucial issues of the study. This permits greater flexibility than the close-ended type and permits a more valid response from the informant's perception of reality.' More succinctly, Rubin and Rubin (1995, page 5) describe the semi-structured interview as one in which 'The interviewer introduces the topic, then guides the discussion by asking specific questions.'

The type of interview employed in this study has also been described as an 'exploratory interview' or a 'depth interview' (Oppenheim, 2000), the function of

which is to try to understand how people think and feel about the topics under investigation. Cohen and Manion (2000) argue that one of the main advantages of this type of interview method is that it allows for greater depth than in other methods of data collection, but that it can be prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer. For this reason, as explained, I was careful to avoid steering the responses of the interviewees by using loaded questioning and biased prompting.

The semi-structured interviews were used instead of either open-ended interviews or structured interviews. Burns (2000) describes open-ended interviews as being free-flowing, unstructured conversations that are controlled minimally to ensure the focus stays relevant to the topic. As such, they would not have met the needs of this study, which had a clear focus defined by the research questions. Structured interviews were likewise considered to be unsuitable because they would have offered no scope for exploring the beliefs, feelings or perceptions of the interviewees that did not fit into pre-ordained response categories. This would have placed undue restrictions on the lines of enquiry.

In this study the subjects were the head teachers and geography coordinators from the schools in the sample, and the sample of Ofsted inspectors. As they had all been selected because of their knowledge and experience of Ofsted inspections and primary school geography, the interview method was a relevant and important means of generating data on the topic. Flick (2002, page 89) refers to such interviews as 'expert interviews' in which the interviewees are of interest in their capacity of being experts in a certain field of activity. As such, they were integrated into the research process, not as individual cases, but as representatives of a particular group of experts – in this case, on Ofsted inspections and primary school geography.

A major emphasis in this study was on the construction of knowledge arising from the discussions with the participants in the interviews. Kvale (1996, page 5)

portrays qualitative research interviews as 'professional conversations' and the knowledge acquired through them as 'post-modern constructive understanding that involves a conversational approach to social research.' Oppenheim (2000) claims that, unlike most other research techniques, the interview requires interpersonal skills of a high order, and that there is no other skill as important to the survey research worker as the ability to conduct good interviews. The demands on me as a qualitative interviewer were thus considerable, as I needed to have both a clear understanding of the subject matter of the interview and also an appreciation of the skills of creating knowledge through the interview process.

The interview process

The purpose of the interviews was to explore the interviewees' experience and perceptions of the factors which influence improvement in primary school geography and the contribution of Ofsted inspections to this. All the interviews were tape recorded. This enabled me, as the interviewer, to concentrate fully on the content of the interviews without having the distraction of taking notes.

Two types of interview were employed:

a) *Face-to-face interviews* with the head teachers and geography coordinators in the interviewees' schools.
b) *Telephone interviews* with the Ofsted inspectors, who were only accessible by this means.

The pilot interviews

Both the face-to-face interviews and the telephone interviews were piloted to check the suitability of the questions and to ensure they were conducted efficiently and correctly. One was piloted with the head teacher and geography coordinator in a local school (see Appendix G for verbatim transcription) and the other by telephone

with an inspector known personally to me. Yin (1994) views pilot tests as helping the researchers to refine their data collection methods with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed. Robson (2002) regards the pilots as case studies in their own right, with an essentially exploratory function, where some of the research questions are methodological.

Prior to piloting the interviews, an interview schedule was developed to serve as a guide during the interviews and to ensure a measure of consistency between them. In its draft form, this initially consisted of the same list of questions to be put to all the participants, namely the head teachers, the geography coordinators and Ofsted inspectors. However, experience of the pilot showed that the use of different, but overlapping, questions for each of the three categories of interviewees would be a more effective way of collecting the required data. This was because the particular knowledge and perspectives which the head teachers, geography coordinators and Ofsted inspectors brought to the interviews was often different, except in the few instances where an individual interviewee had experience of more than one of these roles. Revised interview schedules were therefore compiled for each category of interviewee (see Appendices H, I and J).

As a consequence, there was only one core question which was posed to all the participants. This was the generic question concerned with the relationship between Ofsted inspections and improvement in primary school geography, which underpins the whole study. The questions which related to this in the three interview schedules are to be found in Appendix H, Question 2 in the third paragraph; Appendix I, Question 6; and Appendix J, Question 10. However, there were many themes common to questions in the interview schedules for the head teachers and those for the geography coordinators, because of their shared experience of being at the receiving end of the inspections (in contrast to the inspectors). For example, Questions 1 and 2 in the first paragraph of the interview schedule for the head teachers (Appendix H) correspond to Questions 12 and 5 respectively of the schedule for the geography coordinators (Appendix I), whilst

Questions 2, 4, 5 and 6 in the third paragraph of the interview schedule for the head teachers (Appendix H) correspond to Questions 8, 6, 9 and 8 of the interview schedule for the geography coordinators (Appendix I).

Many of the questions included on the interview schedules were developed from my own knowledge of issues which had arisen during my work of inspecting schools and of examining a wide cross-section of inspection reports in my role as a quality assurance reader for an Ofsted contractor. The interview schedule for the telephone interviews with the Ofsted inspectors (Appendix J) contained many detailed questions which served as prompts in the absence of a face-to-face scenario. The questions addressed in these interviews varied from those on the interviews with the head teachers and the geography coordinators because different contributions were sought from them by virtue of their differing experiences of inspections. For instance, the inspectors were able to contribute a wider perspective on inspections as they had experience of inspections in many more schools than the head teachers and the geography coordinators.

In the pilot interviews, the interviewees were not given prior notice of the questions to be discussed, other than a broad outline of the subject of the research which was provided on the letter or e-mail message seeking their participation. However, as a result of the pilot interviews, it was decided to provide detailed information about the questions by e-mail in advance of subsequent interviews. This enabled the interviewees to give some thought to the questions prior to the interviews, and so be better prepared.

The interview schedules

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the interviews were semi-structured to enable the interviewees to elaborate on particular areas of knowledge and experience relevant to the study. The direction of the interviews was guided by the interview schedules (see Appendices H, I and J) which, as the interviewer, I was able to use

as a checklist to ensure that all areas of importance had been addressed during the interviews. The questions to be addressed were based upon the two research questions listed in Chapter 1 (page 10).

Although the interviews with the head teachers, geography coordinators and Ofsted inspectors had a common focus, which was based upon Research Question 2 of this study, there were differences in the questions on the interview schedules for each category of interviewee to allow for their different perspectives and experiences of primary school geography and Ofsted inspections.

Interview schedule for the head teachers (Appendix H)

The questions in the head teacher's interview schedule were concerned with the effects of Ofsted inspections on the school, and whole school issues affecting the curriculum, with particular reference to geography as a foundation subject. The main areas addressed were concerned with the factors which affect the quality of geography in the school; the influences on the curriculum and on curriculum balance in the school; the impact of an Ofsted inspection on the school and proposals by Ofsted for future patterns of inspections. Inevitably, there were areas of overlap between the interview schedules for use with the head teachers and the geography coordinators.

Interview schedule for the geography coordinators (Appendix I)

The interview schedule for the interviews with the geography coordinators focused specifically on the place of geography in the school and the influence of Ofsted inspections on improvement. The main areas addressed were concerned with factors which affect the quality of geography in the school; influences on the curriculum, with particular reference to the core subjects, curriculum balance and its effects on geography; the impact of Ofsted inspections and inspection reports

on improvement in geography in the school and proposals by Ofsted for future patterns of inspections.

Interview schedule for the Ofsted inspectors (Appendix J)

As telephone interviews were employed with the Ofsted inspectors, the interview schedule was used more as a script than was possible in the face-to-face interviews. Because of this, it included details of associated prompts to be used as appropriate. In view of the breadth of experience of the inspectors, the questions were focused differently to those in the interviews with the head teachers and the geography coordinators. The main areas addressed were concerned with the inspectors' experience of inspecting geography; changes in the ways inspections have been conducted and reported; the effects of changes in the inspection framework since September 2003; the impact of inspections on the school curriculum, particularly in relation to geography; changes in inspecting and reporting on geography; provision for geography in primary schools; the influence of HMCI Annual Reports on improvement in primary school geography; and the proposals by Ofsted for future patterns of inspections.

Interviews with the head teachers and the geography coordinators

Several days after writing to the schools about the interviews, contact was made by telephone. This proved to be a time-consuming process as many schools were unwilling to participate in the interviews and so a large number of unproductive telephone calls were made. In many instances the head teachers were unwilling to speak to me personally, and conveyed their unwillingness to agree to the interviews via the school secretary. On some occasions a reason was given, but in many there was just a point-blank refusal. The schools that agreed to participate normally did so after I was allowed to speak to the head teacher in person about the research. Eventually, after several weeks of telephoning, sufficient schools agreed to participate.

Edwards and Talbot (1999, page 101) caution against lengthy interviews. At the beginning of each interview, therefore, the interviewees, who were busy teachers and inspectors, were advised that it would not last for more than 30 minutes, unless they wished to extend it. In most cases the interviews lasted for almost an hour and, when the head teacher and the geography coordinator were interviewed together, this was always the case. For ethical reasons I ensured that the participants were fully agreeable to the interviews lasting for more than 30 minutes, as they had been previously been informed that they would not be required for longer than this (see Appendix B). As the interviews were focused, with questions closely tailored to the needs of the study, my view was they could be completed in this time. Furthermore, the interviews were audio-recorded which meant that the pace was brisker than if I had had to spend time taking notes. In the event, some interviewees were slow in their responses or keen to dwell on peripheral matters, and so it was agreed that more time could be taken.

As reference was made during the interviews to the geography paragraph of the school's previous Ofsted inspection report, I took copies to the interviews. This was because, in some schools, the geography coordinators did not have access to one as it had been mislaid, or was still in the possession of a former coordinator who was no longer contactable. The consent form previously referred to (see Appendix F), was also handed to participants for signature. On this, among the conditions to which the participants were asked to agree was one that the interview should be audio-recorded. Robson (2002) recommends that audio recordings should be carried out wherever feasible, to reduce threats to the validity of the study due to inaccuracy or incompleteness of the data. The recording of the interviews was also important as it enabled me, as the interviewer, to be free to focus on the questions without the distraction of being the scribe for the interview. In addition, it enabled me to explore certain responses in greater depth when the need arose. As such recordings also portrayed every aural dimension of the interviews, including significant pauses and interviewees' hesitance in answering

some of the questions, they provided a valuable holistic portrayal of the interviews. They also enabled me to be able to select subsequently the significant parts of the interviews in the later transcription stages.

The interviews with the head teachers took place on a one-to-one basis in the head teacher's studies. On most occasions, this was also the case with the interviews with the geography coordinators. This was partly for logistical reasons in that, when the interviews took place during school hours, the head teacher would take the coordinator's class whilst the coordinator was being interviewed. On some occasions when the interviews took place after school, the head teacher and the coordinator were interviewed together. This usually proved to be productive, as comments made by one of them could serve to stimulate responses from the other and, on these occasions, the interviews developed into a relaxed but informative three way discussion. It could be argued that the presence of the head teacher in the interview with the geography coordinator could serve to inhibit the latter (or even the former) from being as forthright or as honest as they might have been had they been interviewed on their own. In such a situation, the validity of the interview data could be questioned. However, the responses from the head teachers and the coordinators in these interviews showed that they did not inhibit one another, and that both appeared to be able to defend their responses independently of each other.

In the course of the Interviews with the head teachers, some were prone to stray from the questions or to move ahead to topics which were planned to be addressed at a later stage in the interview. However, in every interview all the questions on the interview schedule were addressed, even if in a different order to that intended.

At the start of the interviews with the geography coordinators, some appeared rather shy - possibly due to the presence of the cassette recorder. However, this situation was usually short-lived, and they appeared to enjoy responding to the

questions and sharing their experiences with an outsider who was interested in their work. It could be claimed that this initial shyness was because they were being interviewed by an Ofsted inspector, and so they would be guarded in their responses, which could lead to bias in the data from their interviews. To counter this, I made a point of reassuring them prior to the interviews that I had not inspected schools in their LA, and had no intention of doing so in the future. I also explained that I was a geographer and so shared their interest in the subject. In the schools where geography was clearly not a priority - or where it seemed that the coordinator had done little to improve the subject - the coordinators' negative responses to the questions, and the apologetic or defensive stance they adopted, made me feel accusatory and I felt obliged to move on to the next question. In such situations it was necessary to balance ethical concerns of not upsetting the interviewees against the need to pursue important issues with integrity and in greater depth – to the discomfiture of the interviewees.

At the end of the interviews the interviewees were offered the opportunity to read and comment upon the transcriptions when they became available, and they were also offered a copy of the abstract of the study when it was completed.

In the first few interviews that were conducted with the geography coordinators, it was decided to employ a rating scale to serve as a measure of their views of the importance of the various influences on geography. This could have provided useful quantifiable data on the subject. However, after trialling it in several interviews it was discontinued because:

- when it was handed out during the interview, the coordinators said that they needed more time to think about their responses;
- when it was sent out in advance, it pre-empted their responses to key questions in the interviews.

Interviews with the Ofsted inspectors

Whilst relevant and informative data were generated through the interviews with the head teachers and the geography coordinators, further valuable insights were gained through the telephone interviews with Ofsted inspectors. An advantage of interviewing the inspectors was that they were able to offer a different perspective from those of the head teachers and the geography coordinators, as well as a wider viewpoint by virtue of their breadth of experience of inspecting and reporting on geography in a wide range of primary schools. Many of the inspectors had led inspection teams in their roles as registered inspectors or lead inspectors, and others had previously been head teachers whose schools had been inspected by Ofsted.

Once the inspectors had agreed to participate, arrangements were made for the interviews, and the inspectors were reminded that participation was voluntary. Each interview was audio-recorded, and the inspectors were asked to respond to questions from the interview schedule which had already been sent to them, along with an information sheet and a consent form (see Appendices D, F and J). An effective system for recording the interviews on a standard domestic telephone system was devised by using a speaker phone placed adjacent to a cassette recorder, and an independent telephone handset. Transcriptions of the interviews were produced as the initial stage of the data analysis.

PART 3. METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Although this study was not explicitly a grounded theory study, analysis techniques drawn from grounded theory were used to analyse the data from both the documentary evidence and from the interview transcriptions. The categories and codes at this stage of the study were data driven and, as such, are a form of grounded theory (Edwards and Talbot, 1994, page 104). The qualitative analysis in this study can thus be regarded as being developed from the approach of

grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Creswell (2003, page 14) explains this approach as one in which '... the researcher attempts to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study.'

The purpose of the analysis in this study was to identify themes and patterns from the data, and so to generate a theory which related to the two research questions. Using an inductive approach, the study progressively examined, compared and re-examined the texts of the interview transcripts and the inspection reports, identifying and drawing out emerging categories, themes, issues and patterns. These were then encoded in relation to addressing the requirements of the research questions. In so doing, sense was made of the data by the tentative application of theoretical frameworks to them.

In discussing the use of qualitative techniques for data analysis, Robson (2002) cautions that there is no clear and accepted single set of conventions for analysis, such as can be employed when analysing quantitative data. The sequence of approaches adopted for analysing the qualitative data from both the interviews and the analysis of the reports was adapted from a list compiled by Miles and Huberman (1994). This involved:

- giving codes to the initial set of data obtained from the interviews and documentary analysis
- adding comments and annotations to the text
- going through the data trying to identify similar phrases, patterns, themes, relationships, sequences and differences between sub-groups
- gradually elaborating a small set of generalisations that covered the consistencies observed in the data
- linking these generalisations to a formalised body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories.

An intermediate stage in the analysis of the inspection reports and the transcriptions of the interviews – i.e. the stage before the development of themes and generalisations – involved the development of 'sensitizing concepts' (van den Hoonaard, 1997):

> *The sensitizing concept is a construct that is derived from the research participants' perspective, uses their language or expression, and sensitizes the researcher to possible lines of enquiry* (van den Hoonaard, 1997, page1).

Van den Hoonaard also explains how the sensitising concept, a fore-runner of Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory approach, is a 'second-order' concept that is 'one step removed from the data, but using, as much as warranted, the perspectives of the research participants'(1997, page 3). It is an inductive approach to the study of micro-phenomena that allows generic statements to be derived.

This provided guidance for this stage of the study, and facilitated the retention of the essential meanings conveyed by the head teachers, geography coordinators and Ofsted inspectors through the interviews, as well as those in the inspection reports. At the same time, the investigation was moving away from the raw data towards the construction of knowledge associated with the inductive approach for generating theory.

It could be argued that, in my role as a researcher who is also an Ofsted inspector, there would be a possibility of bias in the analysis of the data in this study. For instance, the researcher might seek to defend the role of Ofsted inspections, and so to select mainly evidence which supported a positive role for them in guiding and informing improvement in geography in the schools. However, the risk of this was minimised in the study as the researcher was also a geographer who, at the outset (see Chapter 1), had expressed concern about the state of primary school geography and sought to discover the contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in the subject. In the event of this turning out to be limited, or even negative, there would be a challenge for Ofsted to address – to focus the energy of the inspections on geography, as had been the case with efforts to raise standards in the core subjects.

ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM THE INTERVIEWS

The initial stage in analysing the data from the interviews involved transcribing the tape recordings. At first they were transcribed verbatim (Appendix G). Although this produced all the data required from the interviews, some generated peripheral material which was not relevant to the study. The recordings were therefore transcribed selectively. The resulting transcriptions included the full responses of the interviewees, but omitted the questions which had been put to them, and my comments and prompts as the interviewer. This approach was justified because there was a written record of the interview schedule and tape recordings of the full interviews – including the questions – to which reference could be made, if so required. Appendix Q shows an example of a selectively transcribed interview with an Ofsted inspector.

The next stage in the process was concerned with coding the transcribed responses. Burns (2000, page 432) regards coding as 'part and parcel of the analytic induction method, where the general statement about the topic is constantly refined, expanded and modified as further data are obtained'. The initial phase involved grouping together the responses to each question/topic in the interviews. Appendix R shows an example of how this was done for an interview question/topic from the interview data resulting from the interviews with the Ofsted inspectors. A similar process was followed with all the interviews. The next phase of the coding process involved identifying sensitising concepts, and so classifying the responses from the interviews into themes, issues, topics, concepts and propositions. This was done by means of highlighting them in colour and assigning numbers to them as they occurred within the text. They were then regrouped under these headings, accompanied by key quotations and relevant annotations, and so formed the basis for constructing the text of the qualitative analysis. Appendix S gives examples of this coding. The sensitising concepts are derived from Appendix R, in which they are underlined and numbered. This process was repeated with the data from the interviews with the head teachers and the

geography coordinators. By this means, a grounded approach was used to identify and develop themes from the interview data. Literal codes were allocated to the schools of the interviewees for reference purposes and to ensure anonymity.

ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM THE SAMPLE OF OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS

An important component of the study was the analysis of the geography paragraphs in the inspection reports to discover how useful they could be in guiding and informing improvement in geography in the schools. This involved both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Quantitative analysis of the reports

The original intention in this part of the study had been to grade the reports on a four point scale, according to their usefulness for supporting improvement in geography in the schools. This grading process would have used a 'best-fit' model to group the reports into the grade categories. However, this approach proved to be too subjective, and so it was replaced by an enumeration method.

The enumeration method that was adopted involved counting the judgements recorded in the geography paragraphs of each of the reports. This method was devised to provide a quantifiable means of portraying the amount of information contained in the paragraphs which would be useful for guiding and informing improvement in geography in the schools. The approach was based upon the premise that the potential of a report to influence improvement in geography was related to the number of judgements that it contained. Feedback in the Ofsted report to the school by means of these judgements would thus form the basis for improvement. To facilitate the analysis, and for reasons of confidentiality, each school was allocated a reference number from 1 to 100.

The judgements recorded in the reports by the inspection teams were based upon the factors that the Ofsted framework required inspectors to address when inspecting a subject of the curriculum. These are set out in the Ofsted framework document (Ofsted 2003a) and the accompanying inspection handbook (Ofsted 2003b). Among them were the overall quality of provision; standards achieved by pupils; quality of teaching and learning; quality of curriculum leadership and management and changes since the previous inspection (Ofsted, 2003a). As these factors are expressed in generic terms, references in the reports to more specific factors were taken into account. These included pupils' attainment; achievement; progress; knowledge; skills; understanding and learning, and teachers' classroom skills; subject knowledge; planning and leadership and management of geography. Other important factors included the quality of the geography curriculum; resources and fieldwork, and the use made in geography of ICT and links with numeracy and literacy.

The inspection reports were downloaded from the Ofsted web-site, using the mode of selection explained earlier in this chapter. The geography sections of these reports were then printed out and the judgements in each were highlighted in colour. The number of judgements in each report was then counted and recorded on the report, together with the anonymised reference number for the school (numbered from 1 to 100), the date of the inspection and the number of pupils on roll in the school. This information was then loaded into a computer generated spreadsheet, using the Microsoft Excel computer program (See Appendix K). Additional categories were introduced, that designated whether the inspections were conducted prior to September 2003 (shown as Framework A) or between September 2003 and July 2005 (shown as Framework B). The September 2003 demarcation point was selected as it corresponded with the introduction of a revised Ofsted inspection framework (Ofsted, 2003a), that resulted in significant changes to the ways in which inspections were conducted and reported. These changes were discussed in Chapter 2 of this study.

Complementary to the foregoing analysis, statistical tests were employed. The Chi-square test was used to examine, in relation to the total number of judgements in the geography paragraphs of the reports, the significance of:

a) the revision of the Ofsted inspection framework in 2003, and
b) the number of pupils on roll in the schools.

These will be examined in Chapter 4.

Qualitative analysis of the reports

The methods used in the qualitative analysis of the inspection reports were the same as those for the analysis of the interview transcriptions. A central part of the grounded approach to the analysis involved a process referred to as 'hermeneutical interpretation' (Kvale, 1996 page 46). This involved developing understanding of the text by repeatedly examining the meaning of the separate parts, and then the text as a whole, so deepening understanding of its meaning. The use of this approach was underpinned by an inductive approach to the data analysis, and drew on Blumer's approach of using sensitising concepts, as mediated by van den Hoonaard (1997). As a result, it was possible to determine the potential usefulness of each report in terms of how it provided the school with guidance for improvement in geography.

HOW THE DATA ARE PRESENTED

The quantitative data obtained in response to Research Question 1 were presented in the form of frequency tables to show the overall distribution of the judgements in the reports (Table 4.1 and 4.2), and the distribution of judgements within defined categories (Tables 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6). The latter were supplemented by a compound bar graph (Fig 4.1), which illustrated the comparisons between the number of judgements in each category of judgement, as well as the comparisons

between the number of judgements within different categories of judgements. The results of the Chi-square tests and additional discussion on the quantitative data were also included in the accompanying text.

The qualitative data obtained in response to Research Questions 1 and 2 were presented in the form of text. This comprised illustrative examples of inspection reports, and verbatim extracts of judgements from selected reports in response to Research Question 1 (see Chapter 4). It also included quotations from the interviews with head teachers, geography coordinators and Ofsted inspectors to support the grounded theory approach to the analysis of the interview transcripts in response to Research Question 2 (see Chapter 5). As in the case of the quantitative data, these were accompanied by discussion and comment within the text.

CONCLUSION

This study has drawn on a wide range of approaches to data generation, collection and analysis, and has employed both qualitative and quantitative methods as part of the mixed methods approach. The next chapter, Chapter 4, comprises an analysis of the data generated from the examination and coding of the geography paragraphs in the sample of 100 Ofsted reports, and the results of the statistical analysis carried out on them.

Chapter 4

ONE HUNDRED OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS

'The written Ofsted report is the most enduring outcome of a school inspection' (Field *et al*, 1998, page 125)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with examining the potential of a sample of 100 Ofsted school inspection reports to provide feedback to primary schools about their performance in geography, and so to guide and inform improvement in the subject. The focus of this part of the study is on how the paragraphs in the geography subject sections of the reports can provide schools with feedback on their strengths and weaknesses in geography, and so offer them an agenda and guidance for improvement. The extent to which such improvement occurs will, of course, depend upon whether or not the schools take account of what is published in their reports. Furthermore, as will be seen in Chapter 5, many reports contained insufficient guidance to inform improvement in geography.

The chapter also examines how the significance of the inspection reports to improvement in geography has changed as revisions have been made to the Ofsted inspection framework, particularly in relation to the introduction of the 2003 framework. A mixed methods approach was employed, which consisted partly of qualitative and partly of quantitative methods. Both methods involved the identification of judgements that could form the basis for improvement of geography in the schools. The qualitative methods were concerned particularly with the ways in which the reports could influence improvement in geography in the schools. The quantitative methods were concerned with providing a measure of the extent to which this could occur and examining the influence of contextual factors on improvement.

Central to the examination of the reports is the analysis of the judgements contained within them. For the purpose of this study, a judgement is defined as the considered opinion of a trained Ofsted inspector about the state of geography in a school, based upon secure evidence and informed by published guidance from Ofsted.

A judgement is therefore based upon evaluation of evidence, in contrast to mere description of it. This definition was derived from my interpretation of references to judgements in the Ofsted Handbook (Ofsted, 2003b), informed by my professional experience of making judgements as an inspector and of scrutinising the judgements of other inspectors in my role as an Ofsted report quality assurance reader. Judgements can convey positive or negative messages, as in the following examples from reports in the sample:

> *The weakness in the teaching is that not enough is expected from the higher attaining pupils.* (School 10, February 1999)

> *Standards of pupils' work are above average by Year 2 and Year 6. There is good progress in developing key geography skills throughout the school.* (School 57, March 2003)

The qualitative methods employed involved the identification and recording of inspectors' judgements in the geography paragraphs of the reports, and grouping these judgements into categories. Selection was made in terms of their usefulness as a basis for improvement in geography in the schools.

The quantitative methods comprised the processes by which the sample of reports was selected (see Chapter 3), and the generation and analysis of numeric data about the judgements in the reports. This latter process involved examining both the total number of judgements in each of the geography paragraphs as well as those which occurred within selected categories in these paragraphs. Statistical analysis was employed to supplement the findings of the analysis by examining the relationships between the contexts within which the reports were produced, and key characteristics of the reports.

The material in this chapter is arranged in three parts. The first part is an explanation of the importance of the inspection report within the Ofsted inspection process, and a justification of the focus placed on it in the study. The second part is concerned with the processes by which data from the reports were generated and analysed. The third part, which has two sub-divisions, comprises the analysis of the data and the examination of the results of this analysis. Within these sub-divisions, the first addresses all the judgements in each report, whilst the second addresses them within the named categories listed in Table 4.3 and the impact of the 2003 inspection framework.

PART 1. INSPECTION REPORTS AND THE OFSTED INSPECTION PROCESS

The impetus for school improvement as a result of an Ofsted inspection can occur in the periods before, during or after the inspection. It will be seen in Chapter 5 that head teachers reported that, prior to the inspection, schools were often pre-occupied with 'putting their house in order' and giving additional attention to initiatives arising from the previous inspection. This activity tended to gain pace once the school was notified of the date of the inspection which, for the period of time with which this study is concerned, was normally some six to ten weeks prior to its commencement (Ofsted, 2003b, page10). In the same chapter, inspectors reported that, during the inspection, there is normally on-going dialogue between individual staff within the school and the inspectors. Official guidance (Ofsted, 2000) advises inspectors to ensure that this takes place, and the detailed feedback and guidance that the dialogue provides can serve the school well as a basis for improvement. However, it can be argued that the greatest impetus for improvement occurs in the post-inspection phase, when the official inspection report on the school is published.

It was noted in Chapter 2 that schools place a high premium on the Ofsted inspection report (Centre for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Practice and Helix Consulting Group, 1999). The following reasons can be cited for this:

- It is an official document which contains a full and permanent record of the inspection team's considered judgements about the school as a whole, as well as on specific aspects of its performance
- It is a public document which is distributed by the school to its parents and is subsequently published on the Ofsted website
- It contains recommendations for improvement in the school and issues for it to address. By law, the school was required to respond to them in writing within 40 working days of receiving it (Ofsted, 2003a, page 25)

As a source of influence for improvement in geography in a primary school, the Ofsted inspection report therefore merits investigation.

REQUIREMENTS FOR INSPECTING AND REPORTING

For the period of the study, the Ofsted guidelines for inspecting schools and writing inspection reports were published in the *Handbook for Inspecting Nursery and Primary Schools* (Ofsted, 2003b) and the *Guidance for Inspectors and Schools on Inspecting Subjects 3-11* (Ofsted, 2000). These provided information to enable inspection teams to write to an approved, defined and standardised Ofsted format.

The handbook stipulated that inspectors should evaluate and report on each subject of the curriculum in terms of the following factors, listed in Box 4.1. As a result, there were similarities in the overall structure of most of the reports.

Box 4.1 Factors to be addressed when inspecting a subject

- the overall quality of provision, based on its effectiveness, and any strengths or weaknesses
- the standards achieved by pupils
- the quality of teaching and learning
- the quality of curriculum leadership
- other factors that explain pupils' achievement
- how quality and standards have changed since the previous inspection

(Ofsted, 2003b, page 128)

These factors were used in the study as a basis for identifying the judgements in the reports, and for grouping them into categories of usefulness, as part of the analysis procedures described later in this chapter (see Table 4.2).

The Ofsted guidance on inspecting subjects (Ofsted, 2000) counselled that inspectors should evaluate standards in primary school subjects with reference to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Key Stages 1 and 2. The evidence to be used for evaluating standards in geography was listed in Box 2.3 in Chapter 2 (page 31). Additional guidance on writing the inspection report on each subject was set out in the same publication:

> *The subject section of an inspection or evaluation report needs to be a coherent and convincing evaluation of the subject and explain why standards are as they are... give a clear indication of the action needed to improve it further* (Ofsted, 2000, page 76).

Taken together, the Ofsted handbook and the guidance booklet prescribed both the requirements for an inspection and the criteria to be applied by inspection teams when compiling the reports on the subjects of the school curriculum.

PART 2. PROCESSES BY WHICH DATA WERE GENERATED AND ANALYSED

The intention of this part of the study was to investigate how useful the inspection reports could be as a basis for improvement in geography in the schools. To this end, after the sample of inspection reports had been selected (see Chapter 3),

data were generated from the information recorded in the geography paragraphs. This was done by identifying and counting the number of judgements in the geography paragraphs of each report.

The purpose of the analysis was to:

- determine the amount of feedback provided in terms of the number of judgements made in the geography paragraphs in each report;
- identify the key factors which affected the number of judgements in these paragraphs;
- investigate what information the paragraphs conveyed about inspectors' judgements on geography in a school;
- establish how clearly the paragraphs provided schools with guidance for improvement in geography;
- ascertain whether the quantity and quality of feedback given to schools in these paragraphs had improved or deteriorated with changes in the Ofsted inspection framework.

Before proceeding with the analysis, an examination of the different types of judgements should serve to show how they might be used to guide and inform improvement in geography.

TYPES OF JUDGEMENTS AND THEIR USEFULNESS

The most useful messages contained in a geography paragraph of an inspection report were *explicit and clearly worded recommendations* that the school should take certain steps in order to bring about improvement in the subject. Such messages, as in the following example, would draw the school's attention to the need for action in response to them:

> *Clear expectations about the teaching of geography now need to be firmly established and monitored to ensure that:*
> - *provision for geography is broad, balanced and relevant; and*
> - *pupils are able to develop both their geographical knowledge and enquiry skills through meaningful activities* (School 7, Mar 2003).

A recommendation such as this would leave the school in no doubt about how to proceed, provide an impetus for action and be helpful in setting the agenda for improvement.

However, instances of such explicit recommendations in the 100 reports in the sample were few. As a consequence, the method involving the identification and analysis of judgements was employed, to determine the usefulness of a report as a basis for improvement in geography. The range of topics covered by the judgements was drawn from those identified in the Ofsted handbook (Ofsted, 2003b), and is shown in Box 4.1.

Examination of the geography paragraphs of the reports in the sample showed that the significant 'other factors that explain pupils' achievement' referred to in Box 4.1 included:

- the curriculum of the school, including links with other subjects
- the provision of resources for teaching geography, including ICT
- opportunities for pupils to undertake fieldwork, both in the locality of the school and on residential visits to a contrasting locality.

These, and the factors itemised in Box 4.1 form the basis for Table 4.3.

The judgements occurred in many forms, and ranged from negative statements which identified weaknesses and criticised the state of geography in a school, to positive statements which identified strengths and commended it. The rationale for using them in the analysis was as follows:

- If the judgement was *positive,* and stated that a particular aspect of geography in the school was good - or commended a specific area of practice or provision in geography in the school - this would enable the school to respond and make improvement by continuing this practice, or building upon it. By inference the school should continue to develop this practice. Such a judgement would be particularly helpful if the reason for making it was also given, and an example was quoted. An example of a positive judgement was:

  > *The quality of teaching seen was good. Teachers were constantly asking pupils probing questions in order to increase their understanding* (School 21, March 2004).

- If the judgement was *negative,* and stated that a particular aspect of geography in the school was weak or unsatisfactory - or was critical of a

specific area of practice or provision in geography in the school - this would enable the school to make improvement by changing its practice and addressing the deficiency which was identified. Again, the judgement would be particularly helpful if a reason was given or an example was quoted, as in the following:

> *The weakness in teaching is that not enough is expected from the higher attaining pupils, nor is work geared at the most appropriate levels for the lower attaining pupils. The reason for this weakness is that teachers do not assess pupils' learning enough during lessons in order to plan further work for them next time, dependent on the progress they have made* (School 10, February 1999).

- If the judgement merely stated that a particular aspect of geography in the school was *'satisfactory,'* without further guidance or comment, such a judgement would normally be unhelpful to the school in terms of providing an agenda for improvement. An example of a satisfactory statement was:

> *In geography, pupils' work indicates that standards are at least at the levels expected by the National Curriculum in both key stages.* (School 51, January 2004).

- If, instead of a clear judgement on a particular aspect of geography in the school, there was merely a *description of practice,* the report would normally be of limited value to the school in terms of providing an agenda for improvement, except in describing the extent of curriculum coverage. An example of description of practice was:

> *In Year 2 pupils study aspects of the area around the school and look closely at different types of home* (School 7, March 2003).

- If the geography section of the report stated that *'no judgements could be made',* this was usually due to one or more of the following reasons:

  a) Geography was not inspected
  b) Geography was not the focus of the inspection
  c) Geography was subject to sampling
  d) No lessons were seen in geography

  In such cases, the report would be unhelpful in terms of offering schools guidance for improvement. The use of such statements could also be interpreted as giving schools a message that geography was relatively unimportant.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The approach used to generate data for the analysis of the geography paragraphs in the reports is referred to in this study as the 'enumeration method'. This involved *identifying, marking and counting the number of judgements* in each of the paragraphs.

Rationale for using the enumeration method

The rationale for using the enumeration of judgements method is based on the premise that the impetus for improvement in a subject such as geography in a school – as a result of an Ofsted inspection – is related to the number of judgements in the subject paragraphs of the report. Admittedly, it could be argued that the nature of the judgements is more important than the quantity of them: hence, a single strongly worded judgement on an aspect of geography that the inspector regarded as important would be more effective than a number of less strongly worded judgements on aspects of geography of lesser concern to the inspector. However, this is unlikely to be the case because, when writing the report, inspectors are required to comply with Ofsted requirements that:

> *Key judgements must be absolutely clear ... It is not necessary to allude to each and every criterion ... The report must reflect what is important in the school* (Ofsted, 2003b, page 143).

Hence, it is possible to justify the use of the enumeration method, in the knowledge that the judgements selected by the inspectors to be included in the report reflect what they regard as important and so could normally be regarded as having equivalent status.

The enumeration method was employed at two different levels, one of which examined all the judgements in the paragraphs – irrespective of their content – and the other of which examined them within specific categories.

i) Analysis of all the judgements

The intention here was to make a survey of all the feedback provided to the schools in the geography paragraphs across the whole sample of reports. It consisted of enumerating all the judgements recorded in the geography paragraphs of each of the reports in the sample. This produced an overview of the feedback available to support improvement in geography across the 100 schools in the sample. Examination of these reports suggested that the number of judgements in a report could be affected by a) the inspection framework current at the time the report was produced and b) the number of pupils on the roll of the school. A Chi-square test was used to check these possibilities statistically: this will be discussed later in the chapter.

ii) Analysis of the judgements grouped into categories

This method also analysed the amount of feedback by enumerating judgements, but did so within the specific named categories listed in Table 4.3. These were based upon the inspection requirements set out in the Ofsted Handbook (Ofsted, 2003b) and the Ofsted Subject Guidance (Ofsted, 2000).

PART 3. EXAMINATION OF THE DATA AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of the analysis was to determine the amount of feedback provided to the 100 schools in the sample through the geography paragraphs of their reports. As explained, this was done by counting the number of judgements in each paragraph. The data were then entered on to a computer spreadsheet, using the Microsoft Excel computer program software (See Appendix K). In addition, the following information was included in the spreadsheet for each report in the sample:

- whether the school was inspected prior to or after the implementation of the 2003 inspection framework (Framework A, or B)

- the number of pupils on roll in the school
- the number of judgements which fell into each of the categories for standards; teaching and learning; curriculum; resources; fieldwork; and leadership and management. (See Table 4.3 and Appendix N)

The data from the spreadsheets were then used to generate:

i) An overview of all the judgements in the reports in the sample (Table 4.1), as a means of determining how useful they could be in influencing improvement in geography in the schools;

ii) Specific information about the judgements in the reports (Table 4.4) when grouped into categories, to ascertain how useful they could be in influencing improvement in geography in the schools.

In both instances, the effects of the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework were investigated (Table 4.5 and 4.6; Fig 4.1).

3.1 ANALYSIS OF ALL THE JUDGEMENTS

The analysis of all the judgements was concerned with portraying the characteristics of the whole sample of 100 reports, to determine how useful they could be in influencing improvement in geography in the schools. From information in the spreadsheet in Appendix K, a summary of the distribution of judgements in the reports was made, and a table was constructed to show how many reports contained each number of judgements (See Table 4.1). For reference purposes, the range of judgements was subdivided into three groups:

Group 1. Reports in this group contained 0 – 5 judgements, and can be regarded as the *least useful* in guiding and informing improvement in geography.

Group 2. Reports in this group contained 6 – 12 judgements, and can be regarded as *moderately useful* in guiding and informing improvement in geography.

Group 3. Reports in this group contained 13 – 18 judgements, and can be regarded as the *most useful* in guiding and informing improvement in geography.

It is recognised that, in subdividing the whole sample of reports into the three groups, the choice of where the boundaries of each of the groups were to be placed was, to some extent, subjective. This was minimised by ensuring that the range of judgements in the reports allocated to each group was approximately the same, so that each group could be regarded, to some extent, as having a similar level of usefulness for guiding and informing improvement in geography in the schools. Furthermore, as the characteristics of reports allocated to Groups 1 and 3 were quite distinctive, it was possible to judge those to be allocated to Group 2 with some confidence.

It is also accepted that the groups are not homogeneous in their composition, and the reports within each of them comprise a range of judgements. However, it can be seen from the examples of reports from each of the groups (shown in Boxes 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4) that they differ qualitatively from each other in terms of their levels of usefulness for guiding and informing improvement.

An intrinsic limitation of the enumeration method is that it assumes that each judgement has the same weighting, and so does not take account of the fact that a single judgement in a particular report could be of great importance. However, the mixed method approach employed in this study enables data from the enumeration methods to be supplemented by data from the qualitative analysis of the reports. This ensures that a more accurate picture is portrayed of the reports.

Table 4.1 Distribution of judgements in the reports

Group	Number of judgements in a report	Number of reports	Cumulative % of reports
1	0	2	2
1	1	2	4
1	2	6	10
1	3	5	15
1	4	3	18
1	5	7	**25**
2	6	11	36
2	7	7	43
2	8	7	50
2	9	7	57
2	10	6	63
2	11	9	72
2	12	5	**77**
3	13	9	86
3	14	4	90
3	15	2	92
3	16	5	97
3	17	1	98
3	18	2	**100**

Totals of reports for each group of judgements

Table 4.1 shows that, for the sample of reports as a whole, 23% of them could be placed in Group 3 (useful), 52% in Group 2 (moderately useful) and 25% in Group 1 (least useful) in terms of guiding and informing improvement in geography. It also shows that the number of judgements occurring in the reports ranged from a minimum of zero (in the case of two reports in Group 1) to a maximum of 18 (for two reports in Group 3). For the whole sample of 100 reports, the mean number of judgements per report was calculated to be 8.6, with a median value of the range of judgements as 9. Overall, therefore, the vast majority of the reports could not be regarded as useful in providing feedback and guidance to inform improvement in the subject.

Group 3 - The useful reports

The reports allocated to Group 3 were those that contained the most judgements, and had the greatest potential to guide and inform improvement in geography. They are illustrated by the example in Box 4.2. These reports comprised 23% of the sample, and each contained between 13 and 18 judgements. In all these reports the information conveyed by the judgements in the geography paragraphs was comprehensive and would provide a sound basis for improvement in geography in the schools. The judgements in these reports addressed those aspects of the subject in the school that the inspectors regarded as important – whether they were weaknesses or strengths – taking full account of the inspection requirements in the Ofsted Handbook (Ofsted, 2003b) and the Ofsted subject guidance (Ofsted, 2000). Useful feedback was therefore given to the schools to help them in bringing about improvement in geography.

Box 4.2 Example of a geography report from Group 3

By the end of Year 2 attainment in geography is similar to that found in most schools but skills are less well developed than knowledge. Pupils gain appropriate knowledge about their own locality when they are also introduced to early skills of mapping. Progress is satisfactory. Pupils are introduced to the idea of geographic enquiry by making simple comparisons between their own and other areas of Britain. Through the 'Katie Morag' stories they succeed in gaining knowledge about the impact of physical landscape on the life-style of an island community, for example, how this affects the means of transport in use. Similarly the adventures of 'Barnaby Bear' or 'Maisie Mouse' give them some understanding of how places are linked to others worldwide.
Attainment by the end of Year 6 is in line with national expectation. The majority of pupils have gained appropriate subject knowledge and have acquired satisfactory geographical skills, although more emphasis could be placed on first-hand learning experiences as pupils progress through the key stage. For example, the investigative project carried out by Year 3 pupils about the local area and the enquiry into environmental improvement by Year 4 pupils provide good examples of how geographical skills can be developed effectively through fieldwork. Secondary sources are well used in Years 5 and 6, and there is evidence that data is collected and recorded. However, there are missed opportunities for the development of fieldwork skills in these older age groups.

By the time they leave the school pupils have satisfactory knowledge of their own locality and there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. These findings are broadly similar to those made at the time of the last inspection. The pupils have made comparisons with a contrasting area of the United Kingdom and have some insight into village life in India. They have in depth knowledge of the effects of water on the landscape and have been involved in environmental issues.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The lessons observed were consistently good in

both key stages and conversations with pupils and examination of their workbooks indicate that this standard of teaching has been sustained over the year. Lessons are well prepared and the clear learning objectives are usually shared with pupils. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge, which is manifest in their good questioning techniques. They emphasise geographical vocabulary appropriately. Expectations are high and pupils are frequently asked to work in co-operative situations, for example in pairs. Teachers value pupils' work and classroom displays promote and reflect pupils' learning. Available resources, such as maps, videos, photographs and overhead projections, are well used, for example to give insight into village life in India.

Information and communication technology is used extensively and very effectively in both key stages. Pupils have frequent opportunities to practise their literacy skills and, to a lesser extent, their numeracy skills in the course of studying geography. Year 6 pupils in particular enjoy the challenge of researching their own topics. Tasks for pupils take good account of the varying levels of attainment in each class. Consequently, most pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. This includes pupils with special educational needs, who are very well supported and provided for, and those few pupils whose home language is not English. The subject successfully promotes empathy in the understanding of other cultures and makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Teachers' excellent skills in class management are reflected in pupils' very good attitudes which, together with excellent behaviour in lessons, contribute very positively to the quality of learning. Pupils generally present work well. They work amicably in pairs or small groups when required to do so. Most concentrate well, maintain interest and show enthusiasm for the topics studied.

The subject is well led. A new policy and scheme of work have been introduced since the previous inspection. The co-ordinator has recognised the importance of continuity in the development of skills throughout each year group. This has resulted in re-scheduling the timetable of geographical topics. Furthermore, a hierarchy of mapping skills has been developed with this in mind. It now needs to incorporate the other fieldwork skills. The collation of work to ascertain pupils' attainment is at a very early stage. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning of geography has not yet been carried out. More use could be made of assessment information to improve standards. Curriculum resources are satisfactory.

School 97, June 2002
(18 judgements)

Group 2 - The moderately useful reports

The majority of the reports (some 52%) contained between 6 and 12 judgements and so could be regarded as only moderately useful as an influence on improvement in geography. An example of a geography report from Group 2 is shown in Box 4.3.

Box 4.3 Example of a geography report from Group 2

Standards achieved are good throughout the school. Teaching is good; lessons seen were well planned with clear objectives that were shared with the pupils, ensuring that they understood the focus of the lesson. The planning and delivery of the lessons reflected a secure grasp of the subject, and the linkage between subjects, strengthened and enriched the learning. This was exemplified in the work undertaken by the younger pupils who had been studying Australia. They gained knowledge and understanding of a different environment, and this was supported by work in English where they used reference books and dictionaries to find relevant information.

As part of their studies of a contrasting locality, older pupils had learned about the different foods produced in different regions of the world. Through mature discussion, they gained an understanding of different cultures and were able to demonstrate an understanding of how climate is linked to economy.

European studies effectively develop pupils' geographical skills and enrich their knowledge and experience of other cultures through art, literature and music. Pupils studying Italy have a good understanding of maps and were able to identify different countries in Europe, both on a globe and in atlases. They have a secure knowledge of appropriate terminology and an awareness of key physical features and how they are represented on maps. They worked confidently with a variety of maps of differing complexity (some of which had been obtained from the Internet) in order to complete the task set. They were mutually supportive and confidently explained their work. They were also able to relate their current study of modern Italy to the study they had undertaken recently of the Romans.

The subject is well managed. The co-ordinator has ensured appropriate coverage of the subject throughout the school with an appropriate emphasis on the development of geographical skills. Links between subjects provide rich learning opportunities. Planning is monitored and the co-ordinator has been able to visit all classes and give feedback to teachers. Resources to support the teaching of geography are sufficient and of good quality.

School 5, March 2001
(11 judgements)

Group 1 - The least useful reports

By way of contrast with the reports in Groups 2 and 3, the reports in Group 1 would be least likely to be an influence for improvement because they contained the least number of judgements. They comprised 25% of the total in the sample and each of them contained five or fewer judgements, therefore offering minimal feedback to the schools. As all but two of these were in reports on schools inspected since September 2003, the significance of this fact was tested statistically, and is reported later in this chapter. Within this group were reports which stated that 'no geography lessons were inspected during the inspection', 'there was little or no

work available to be scrutinised' or that 'geography was not the focus of the inspection'. Analysis of inspectors' comments in the reports shows that the main reason for these reports containing few, if any, judgements was lack of evidence – usually observations of lessons. Where teaching was not seen, Ofsted instructions to inspectors were that 'You need to see teaching in order to judge it' (Ofsted, 2003b, page 128).

Box 4.4 Examples of geography reports from Group 1

No geography lessons were taking place during the inspection and there was no work available for analysis, so no judgements can be made.

School 63, December 2003
(No judgements)

Due to the nature of the timetable no geography lessons were seen, so no judgement can be made on teaching or learning. From the little evidence of previous work seen from last year, it is evident that there is satisfactory coverage of the curriculum.

School 74, November 2003
(1 judgement)

It was noted in Chapter 2 that one of the main reasons why geography lessons were not inspected during an inspection was because the Ofsted inspection team had prioritised the inspection of other subjects, especially English and mathematics. The timetabling of foundation subjects, such as geography, was another important reason why geography lessons were not inspected during an inspection. For instance, many inspections fell on the days of the week when geography was not normally taught. A similar situation arose when the geography timetable was taught in blocks, often of half a term in length, which did not coincide with the timing of the inspection. The issue of lack of evidence of geography during inspections, and the consequent reasons for lack of judgements in the reports is further examined in Chapter 5.

The least useful reports in the sample were the two which contained no judgements at all for geography, and so were of no value in terms of providing the

schools with feedback to support improvement in the subject. One of these reports simply stated:

> *No report is made in geography* (School 46, May 2004).

The inspection of geography and history combined as humanities

On some inspection reports, as in the case of Schools 11 and 39, the paragraphs on geography were combined with those for history and were published as a humanities report. This could be advantageous in demonstrating the links between the subjects and in addressing generic teaching skills common to both subjects. However, a major drawback as far as providing feedback for improvement in geography was that the judgements did not relate specifically to the subject:

> *Topic work produced by pupils based on both history and geography is of very good quality. It shows clearly how other subjects such as art and design, ICT, mathematics and music are used to enhance and develop the work, and make it individual to each pupil* (School 11, Sept 2003).

It was noted that the virtual absence of judgements in a number of geography reports also applied to those in history, and it seems that many of the reasons for this, such as insufficient evidence, were the same for both subjects:

> *There was insufficient evidence to make secure judgements on provision in geography and history as no lessons were seen during the week of the inspection* (School 6, Mar 2004).

IMPACT OF THE 2003 INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

The revised inspection framework of September 2003 (Ofsted, 2003a) introduced a number of important changes to the Ofsted system of inspections. Among these were a reduction in the size of inspections for most schools, and the introduction of differentiated inspections, with the purpose of tailoring the inspection to the school:

The reduction in the number of inspection days allocated to schools resulted in inspection teams spending less time in the schools, and so the opportunities for them to inspect subjects such as geography were frequently reduced.

The distinctive intentions of differentiated inspections were explained in the 2003 inspection framework as follows:

> *Where standards in core subjects are high ... inspection will be able to give more time to the rest of the curriculum. In a school where standards are low, particularly in core subjects, inspectors will focus more on these subjects to diagnose weaknesses* (Ofsted, 2003a, page 8).

The implications of this statement for the inspection of geography were considerable. It meant that in schools where standards in the core subjects (as measured by scores in the SATs) were low, inspectors would focus less on the non-core subjects, such as geography. As a consequence, the impact of inspection as a means to informing improvement in geography would be reduced.

Impact of the 2003 inspection framework on the number of judgements

Analysis of the data from the inspection reports shows that, following the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework, there was a *marked reduction* in the number of judgements in the geography paragraphs. The figures in the spreadsheet (See Appendix K) and in Tables 4.5 and 4.6 show that, for the whole sample of reports, 564 judgements (65.2% of the sample) were made in those published prior to September 2003, but only 301 (34.8% of the sample) in those published after this date. This represents a substantial reduction of almost one half, as the sample contained an equal number of reports published prior to, and after, September 2003.

The Chi-square test (see Appendix L) was used to investigate whether or not there was a significant difference between the number of judgements on geography made in reports published prior to September 2003 and those published after this

date. For the purpose of the analysis, the reports were divided into two categories, one corresponding to those produced prior to September 2003 (Framework A) and the other to those produced after this date (Framework B) (See Appendix L, Table L1). Likewise, the figures for the number of judgements on geography in each report (which ranged from 0 to 18) were also divided into two categories, one for those with 0 to 9 judgements and the other for those with 10 to 18 judgements.

The null hypothesis for this test was:

> *There is no significant difference between the number of judgements of 9 and less and those of 10 and more in terms of whether or not they occurred in reports of inspections prior to September 2003 or after that date (The null hypothesis is to be rejected at $p \leq 0.01$).*

The value of Chi-square was calculated to be 25.49, which was more than the critical value for one degree of freedom at the 0.01 level of significance. In fact it reached the 0.001 level. *This was highly significant and so the null hypothesis was rejected.* The Chi-square test therefore shows that the difference between the number of judgements on geography in the reports of inspections conducted prior to September 2003, and those conducted after this date, is statistically highly significant.

The investigation therefore indicates that the introduction of the 2003 Ofsted inspection framework resulted in a significant reduction in the number of judgements recorded in the geography paragraphs of the reports in the sample. Inspection of the reports published after September 2003 also showed a marked increase in those which conceded that either few or no judgements could be made about geography. As a consequence, when using the number of judgements as an indicator, the study shows that the potential of the reports to influence improvement in geography decreased significantly with the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework. This conclusion is further validated by evidence from the interviews discussed in Chapter 5.

The impact of the 2003 inspection framework on the proportion of Group 1, 2 and 3 reports in the sample

Earlier in this chapter, the inspection reports were divided into three groups, Groups 1, 2 and 3, according to how useful they could be to guide and inform improvement in geography (See Table 4.1). A more detailed picture emerges of how the usefulness of the reports changes with the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework if the proportion of each of these groups in the sample is examined within the periods prior to, and following, the introduction of this framework. This is shown in Table 4.2. The figures for the number of reports within each category of usefulness were computed from the spreadsheet in Appendix K, which shows the analysis of inspection reports for Framework A (prior to introduction of 2003 framework) and Framework B (after introduction of 2003 framework).

Table 4.2 Number of reports within each category of usefulness prior to and after the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework

	Prior to introduction of 2003 framework	After introduction of 2003 framework	Totals %
Useful (13-18 judgements) Group 3	20 (40%)	3 (6%)	23
Moderately useful (6-12 judgements) Group 2	27 (54%)	25 (50%)	52
Least useful (0-5 judgements) Group 1	3 (6%)	22 (44%)	25

Note: The sample contained 50 reports of inspections conducted prior to the introduction of the 2003 framework and 50 from the period after its introduction

Table 4.2 shows that, from evidence of the number of judgements contained in the reports:

a) In the inspection period prior to the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework, 40% of the reports could be classified as being *useful* for guiding and

informing improvement in geography (Group 3). However, with the introduction of the 2003 framework, this proportion was reduced to 6%, with the potential of these reports to guide and inform improvement greatly reduced.

b) Over the same period of time, the proportion of reports classified as *least useful* for improvement in geography (Group 1) increased from 6% to 44%, whilst there was only a slight reduction in the *moderately useful* reports (Group 2) from 54% to 50%.

INFLUENCE OF THE SIZE OF THE SCHOOL ON THE NUMBER OF JUDGEMENTS

The size of the schools in the sample, in terms of the number of pupils on roll, ranged from 746 (School 37) to 23 (School 63) (see Appendix K). The mean roll was calculated to be 220, which is slightly lower than the published figure of 239 for schools nationally.

One of the Ofsted criteria for the number of days to be allocated to each school inspection (Ofsted, 2003a) was the number of pupils on roll. It was therefore possible that the number of judgements in a report would also be related to the size of the school, because the greater the number of inspection days the more opportunities there would be for time to be spent inspecting and reporting on geography. This in turn could mean that the usefulness of a report to guide and inform improvement in geography would be related to the size of the school being inspected. In order to test this hypothesis statistically, the Chi-square test was employed to determine whether there was a significant difference between the number of judgements in the geography paragraphs of a report and the number of pupils on roll in the school (see calculations in Appendix M).

Two tests were conducted using, respectively, the national figure and the figure computed in this study for the mean roll of the schools. In Test 1, the range of figures for the number of pupils on roll in the schools was divided into two, one part

corresponding to those which were equal to or less than the published national mean roll of 239 for primary schools, and the other to those which exceeded this number. By way of comparison, the test was then repeated (Test 2), this time using the figure of 220 as the dividing point, which was the calculated mean for the roll of the schools in the sample. This was done to check the validity of the test in case the figures for the sample were atypical of primary school rolls nationally. As in the Chi- square test used earlier in this chapter, the figures for the number of judgements in the reports were divided into two categories, one for those with 0 to 9 judgements, and the other for those with 10 to 18 judgements.

Test 1:

The null hypothesis for this test was:

> *There is no significant difference between the number of judgements of 9 and less, and those of 10 and more, in terms of whether the number of pupils on roll in the school was less than 239, or 239 and over (The null hypothesis is to be rejected at $p \leq 0.01$).*

The value of Chi-square was calculated to be 0.25 (see Appendix M), which is less than the critical value of 6.6 for one degree of freedom at the 0.01 level of significance. *This is not significant, and so the null hypothesis could not be rejected.* The Chi-square test therefore shows that there is no significant difference between the number of judgements of 9 and less, and those of 10 and more, in terms of whether the number of pupils on roll in the school was less than 239, or 239 and over.

Test 2:

The null hypothesis for this test was:

> *There is no significant difference between the number of judgements of 9 and less and those of 10 and more in terms of whether the number of pupils*

on roll in the school was less than 220, or 220 and over (The null hypothesis is to be rejected at p≤0.01).

The value of Chi-square was calculated to be 0.04, which is less than the critical value of 6.6 for one degree of freedom at the 0.01 level of significance. *As in the case of Test 1, this was also not significant and so the null hypothesis could not be rejected.* The Chi-square test therefore shows that there is no significant difference between the number of judgements of 9 and less, and those of 10 and more, in terms of whether the number of pupils on roll in the school was less than 220 or 220 and over.

Summary

The above tests show that, on the basis of statistical testing, the size of a school, in terms of the number of pupils on roll, was not a factor in determining the number of judgements in a report. As a consequence, it can be inferred that the influence of Ofsted reports on improvement in geography would not be affected by the number of pupils on roll in the schools in the sample.

3.2 ANALYSIS OF JUDGEMENTS GROUPED INTO CATEGORIES

The analysis of the judgements grouped into categories focused upon the feedback provided within specific categories of judgements in the inspection reports (see Table 4.3) to ascertain how they could guide and inform improvement in geography in the schools in the sample. These categories were devised with reference to the factors for evaluating and reporting on the subjects of the curriculum stipulated in the evaluation schedule of the Ofsted handbook (Ofsted, 2003b), as shown in Box 4.1, and in the Ofsted guidance for inspecting subjects (Ofsted, 2000).

Table 4.3 Grouping of judgements into categories

Category of judgement	Source of evidence
Standards	Whether what is seen is what would be expected for pupils' ages, better than this, or worse
Teaching and learning	Teachers' subject expertise; planning; methods of teaching; expectations; marking and assessment; Pupils' achievement; knowledge; skills; understanding; use of geographical vocabulary
Curriculum	Curriculum policy; planning; coverage; balance; differentiated provision for pupils' abilities; Links with literacy and numeracy; connections with other subjects such as history, science and ICT
Resources	Quality and quantity of resources for teaching geography; quality of library and ICT provision
Fieldwork	Studies out of the classroom in the school grounds and in the locality of the school; day and residential visits to contrasting localities
Leadership and management	Effectiveness of the geography coordinator in leading, managing and monitoring geography across the school and in providing staff development for colleagues

When the sum total of the judgements is sub-divided into these categories, a clearer picture emerges of the relative importance of each category in terms of feedback on geography provided in the reports. This was accomplished by identifying and counting the judgements in each category to be found in each of the reports and entering these data into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (see Appendix N and Figure 4.1). The totals for the number of judgements for each category, and their percentages of the total number of judgements, were then computed from the spreadsheet and recorded in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Judgements within each category – all reports

Category of judgements	No. of judgements	% of all judgements
Standards	385	44.5
Teaching and Learning	263	30.4
Curriculum	92	10.6
Resources	37	4.3
Fieldwork	47	5.4
Leadership and Management	41	4.7
Total	865	

It can be seen from Table 4.4 that a total of almost 75% of the judgements were concerned with standards and teaching and learning, those for standards contributing almost 45% and those for teaching and learning just over 30%. By way of contrast, the proportion of the judgements on each of the categories concerned with resources, fieldwork and leadership and management of geography, was much lower, and only scored 4.3%, 5.4% and 4.7% respectively. The significance of these figures will be discussed later in the chapter.

However, the imbalance of these figures between the different categories of judgement may not be as significant as they seem, because of the scoring system that was used. This scored the number of judgements, and weighted them all equally, but did not take account of the relative importance of individual judgements. The data has therefore to be interpreted with care. Nonetheless, the inclusion of any judgement in a report is subjective, and is dependent on the selection made by the reporting inspector. There is, therefore, justification in expecting that the numerical balance of the judgements in the report would present a representative picture of the state of geography in the school, and would satisfy the Ofsted requirement that 'The report must reflect what is important in the school' (Ofsted, 2003b, page 143).

Effects of the 2003 inspection framework on the balance of judgements

Earlier in this chapter it was noted that the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework was accompanied by a substantial reduction in the overall number of judgements made in the inspection reports. To determine how this had occurred, the data were further examined to discover whether the balance of judgements across the six categories had also changed. This was also done with the aid of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. The process involved separating the figures for the number of judgements in each category into those from reports published prior to the introduction of the 2003 framework, and those published after this date (See spreadsheets in Appendices O and P). The results of this analysis are shown in Tables 4.5 and 4.6, and are displayed graphically in Figure 4.1.

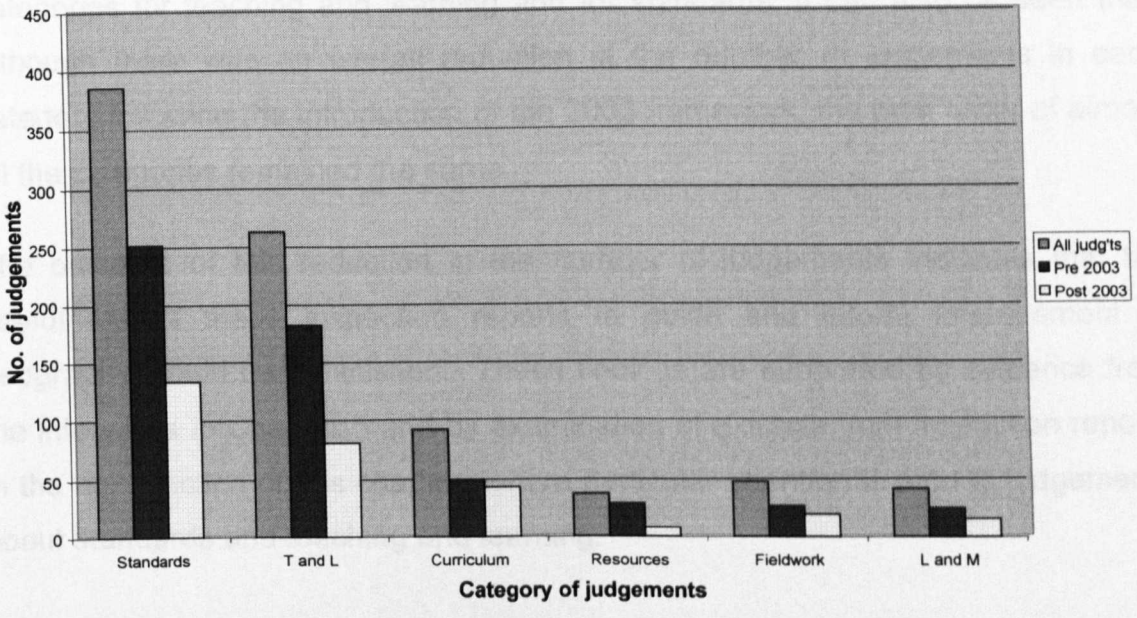
Table 4.5 Judgements within each category – pre-September 2003

Category of judgements	No. of judgements	% of all judgements
Standards	252	44.7
Teaching and learning	182	32.3
Curriculum	49	8.7
Resources	29	5.1
Fieldwork	27	4.8
Leadership and management	25	4.4
Total	564	

Table 4.6 Judgements within each category – post-September 2003

Category of judgements	No. of judgements	% of all judgements
Standards	133	44.2
Teaching and learning	81	26.9
Curriculum	43	14.3
Resources	8	2.7
Fieldwork	20	6.6
Leadership and management	16	5.3
Total	301	

Fig 4.1 Analysis of categories of judgements – all judgements, pre-September 2003, post September 2003



Comparison of the data shown in Table 4.5 with those in Table 4.6 (and illustrated in Figure 4.1), reveals the changes in the number of judgements on geography in each of the judgement categories between the two inspection periods. Whilst it can be seen that there was an overall reduction in the number of judgements within all

of the categories, the reductions within each category varied considerably, as shown by the following figures:

- Judgements on standards decreased by 47%
- Judgements on teaching and learning decreased by 55%
- Judgements on the curriculum decreased by 12%
- Judgements on resources decreased by 72%
- Judgements on fieldwork decreased by 26%
- Judgements on leadership and management decreased by 36%

The substantial reduction in the number of judgements in these categories - especially those for teaching and learning, resources, standards and leadership and management of geography - reflects the reduced time and attention devoted to the inspection of primary school geography following the introduction of the 2003 framework. This applied particularly to observations of teaching and learning, and to the examination of pupils' work, which accounts for the decrease in the categories for teaching and learning and for standards. It can also be seen that, although there was an overall reduction in the number of judgements in each category following the introduction of the 2003 framework, the rank order of almost all the categories remained the same.

The outcome of this reduction in the number of judgements indicates that the usefulness of these inspection reports to guide and inform improvement in geography would be diminished. These findings are supported by evidence from the interviews in Chapter 5 and by examination of extracts from inspection reports in the next section of this chapter, where particular attention is paid to judgements about standards and teaching and learning.

Judgements on standards

It can be seen from Table 4.4 that by far the greatest number of judgements on geography (almost 45%) occurred in the category concerned with standards. As a consequence, the greatest amount of feedback to the schools in the geography paragraphs of the reports was in relation to standards. This is important, because

well informed and detailed knowledge of standards is an essential prerequisite for improvement.

In common with the other foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, geography has not benefited from having data from national tests (SATs) to provide schools with information about their performance in the subject. The reports of an Ofsted inspection of a school have therefore provided the only significant external source of feedback on standards in geography.

Ofsted's guidance for the inspection of geography states that inspectors should 'evaluate standards in geography by forming a view of whether what you see is as you would expect for pupils' age, better than this, or worse' (Ofsted, 2000, page 72). It also states that this is to be informed by the level descriptions of the National Curriculum and non-statutory DfEE/QCA guidance (QCA, 1998a). The Ofsted Handbook (Ofsted, 2003b) further requires that attainment in the primary phase must be referenced to the expected levels for the oldest pupils at each stage in the year when they become 7 or 11 years.

Examination of the messages conveyed to the schools by the judgements in the reports on standards shows that they varied considerably. At their most basic level, they consisted merely of a brief statement, such as:

> *At the present time, overall standards in geography are unsatisfactory* (School 7, March 2003).

The implication of such a negative judgement about standards across a whole school is that the school should take positive steps to address the weaknesses, usually through the school's action plan and the geography coordinator. However, on its own this statement fails to offer guidance to the school to inform improvement.

Better guidance was provided in the next example, where improvement in standards was needed in a specific age phase, and in a particular aspect of geography – namely in the development of pupils' geographical skills:

> *By the end of Year 2, attainment in geography is similar to that found in most schools, but skills are less well developed than knowledge* (School 97, June 2002).

Action by the school to address such a judgement would need to focus upon improvements in the teaching of geographical skills in Key Stage 1, and could lead to a reappraisal of the curriculum in this phase of education, as well as in-service support for the teachers involved.

On occasions, reports gave specific guidance about how to make improvements, as in the following extract where the judgements on standards and progress were unsatisfactory:

> *Standards are not high enough and progress is unsatisfactory because geography has been under-represented in time allowance on the curriculum and work has not been undertaken in depth* (School 90, June 1998).

When a report stated that standards in geography had improved since a previous inspection, a school could conclude that it had successfully addressed past weaknesses, and was proceeding in an acceptable manner. The corollary to this is that the school should continue to build upon its provision in geography

> *Standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with those expected nationally. Progress since the last inspection is good.* (School 4, March 2002)

In some of the reports it was noted that, although standards were average in geography, pupils achieved well. In such cases it could be concluded that there were no grounds for concern about the provision for geography in the schools as the pupils were working well for their abilities, despite having only average standards of attainment. The following extract also offered helpful examples of good practice to the school:

> *Standards are average in Years 2 and 6, and all pupils make sound progress and often achieve well. For example, they learn to use atlases sensibly to locate different places and use this information to increase their knowledge and understanding of the world* (School 7, March 2003).

Where the judgements in a report stated that standards were of a high order, or that pupils made good progress through the school, the report could serve as an endorsement of the school's provision and lead to consolidation of practice in the subject:

> *In geography, the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 is higher than that found nationally, and it is very high by the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 2* (School 47, October 1998).

The analysis of the judgements on standards in geography in the sample of inspection reports indicates that they had the potential to enable schools to improve in a number of ways, including:

- reporting on weak standards;
- identifying areas which need to be addressed;
- confirming good progress throughout a school, or within a key stage;
- highlighting good or very good attainment as pupils move through the school;
- commenting on good achievement;
- remarking on improvement since a previous inspection.

Judgements on teaching and learning

Intrinsic to the achievement of high standards in a school is the quality of teaching and learning. It was, therefore, not unexpected that judgements on teaching and learning geography comprised a high proportion of the overall judgements in the reports in the sample – at just over 30%. The criteria by which Ofsted requires inspectors to judge teaching and learning are listed in the Evaluation Schedule of the Ofsted Handbook (Ofsted, 2003b), an extract from which is shown in Box 4.5. The judgements in the geography paragraphs of the reports therefore tended to focus on these criteria. However, as was noted earlier in this chapter, there was

considerable variability in the degree to which these criteria were addressed. In some reports they were not addressed at all, which was unhelpful to the schools.

Box 4.5 Ofsted criteria for inspecting teaching and learning

Inspectors must assess the extent to which teachers:

- show good command of areas of learning and subjects;
- plan effectively, with clear learning objectives and suitable teaching strategies;
- interest, encourage and engage pupils;
- challenge pupils, expecting the most of them;
- use methods and resources that enable all pupils to learn effectively;
- make effective use of time and insist on high standards of behaviour;
- make effective use of teaching assistants and other support;
- where appropriate, use homework effectively to reinforce and extend what is learnt in school;
- promote equality of opportunity;
- assess pupils' work thoroughly and constructively;
- use assessment to inform their planning and target-setting to meet the needs of individual pupils and groups;

and pupils:

- acquire new knowledge or skills in their work, develop ideas and increase their understanding;
- show engagement, application and concentration, and are productive;
- develop the skills and capacity to work independently and collaboratively;
- understand how well they are doing and how they can improve.

(Ofsted, 2003b, page 60)

Judgements on teaching

Judgements on the teaching of geography in the reports in the sample included those concerned with:

- teachers' subject knowledge;
- the quality of teachers' planning;
- the effectiveness of teachers' use of resources;
- teachers' skills of interaction with pupils in the classroom;
- the quality and use of marking and assessment.

The positive effects of teachers' subject knowledge on their skills in the classroom were affirmed in the following extract from a report:

Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge, which is manifest in their good questioning techniques (School 97, June 2002).

Many of the reports commended teaching when it was underpinned by effective planning of lessons that took account of assessments of the varied learning needs of the pupils: they also criticised instances where planning was weak. In the next extract, there was specific guidance on how teachers could improve their planning:

Termly planning details the learning objectives, activities and resources for each aspect of the teaching in a very clear way. A weakness in this planning is that not enough opportunities are included for teachers to assess pupils' attainment during and at the end of topics (School 10, February 1999).

In some reports, there was praise for lessons where teachers had high expectations of their pupils, and where they defined clear objectives for learning which they shared with their classes. They also commended the differentiation of tasks to meet the pupils' differing needs. In so doing, the reports conveyed clear messages to the schools about what was considered to be good practice – an essential prerequisite for improvement:

Lessons and pupils' work indicate that the quality of teaching and learning is good in geography. The high expectations of the teacher result in Year 2 pupils working above the expected level, for instance, in interpreting maps at different scales and starting to communicate using geographical terms (School 35, May 2004).

The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 3 to 6. The good teaching is characterised by thorough planning with clear objectives reflected in the wide range of modified tasks to meet the needs of pupils of different year groups (School 19, January 2004).

Teaching is good; lessons seen were well planned with clear learning objectives that were shared with the pupils, ensuring that they understood the focus of the lesson (School 5, March 2001).

In other reports, as in the following, weaknesses were identified in teaching. This information would be particularly useful to a school when accompanied by clear explanations for the weaknesses, illustrative examples and guidance as to how to improve:

Findings also show that geography study units are sometimes misinterpreted, that ICT is underused as a resource and that, overall, there is an over-reliance on photocopied worksheets which are the same for all pupils (School 7, March 2003).

Pupils enjoy using maps in their studies of rivers, but the scale and content of the maps was not best matched to the purpose (School 85, January 2004).

Although many reports stated that geography teaching was not observed by an inspector during an inspection, on the occasions when lessons were observed the reports normally showed that useful feedback on teaching was given. This often addressed both the pedagogical skills demonstrated by the teachers and the effectiveness of the teachers' use of resources to support pupils' learning. The more helpful reports, such as in the next three extracts, gave examples of teaching which had been observed and was considered to be most successful.

The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and very good in Key Stage 2. There are excellent features where teachers demonstrate very thorough subject knowledge and introduce ideas in innovative ways. Particularly successful teaching occurs when the planning of work is geared to the needs of different pupils and there is a good balance between teachers' explanations and pupils' involvement in practical tasks. These expectations are well conveyed to pupils and a range of motivating resources is used to challenge their skills and allow the teachers to check on progress (School 47, October 1998).

Introductions to lessons are brisk and questions are searching while encouraging those lacking in confidence to try. The pace in the lessons is good and pupils remain on task. As a result, their learning is good and most pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress (School 19, January 2004).

Available resources, such as maps, videos, photographs and overhead projections, are well used, for example, to give insight into village life in India (School 97, June 2002).

The weakness of the feedback on teaching in the reports was that, on occasions, it was too general and not always sufficiently targeted at the teachers to which it

applied. In the next two extracts it is not clear to which classes the comments referred:

> *The quality of teaching seen was good. Teachers were constantly asking pupils probing questions in order to increase their understanding* (School 21, March 2004).

> *A particular feature of geography teaching that contributes significantly to pupils' learning is the good use made of information and communication technology. Pupils use the Internet link in the classroom as an established research tool* (School 19, January 2004).

Even when geography teaching was not observed during an inspection, the inspectors explained that the inspection team often made judgements about the subject by scrutinising samples of pupils' work. It was thus possible to be able to make judgements about standards in the subject, curriculum coverage and the quality of marking and written feedback to pupils about their work. In addition, it enabled the inspectors to discover how effectively teachers used assessment to inform subsequent planning – an essential for effective teaching. The following extracts should provide the schools with valuable agendas to inform and guide improvement:

> *Work is marked regularly and comments are nearly always supportive* (School 2, June 1999).

> *Marking is just ticks, with the occasional 'Well done'. There are no constructive comments to show pupils how to improve or extend their work* (School 16, September 2003).

> *Insufficient use is made of formal assessment to inform planning to raise standards further at both key stages* (School 15, February 1999).

Whilst the reports in the sample recorded many examples of strengths in teaching geography, they contained fewer examples of weaknesses. This suggests that standards of teaching tended to be, on the whole, at least satisfactory. Alternatively, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, it could indicate that the inspectors were not always sufficiently confident in inspecting geography to make critical judgements which could be substantiated. Such a situation, whereby inspectors

were considered to be rather generous in their judgements, could be said to undermine the credibility of primary school inspections.

Most of the inspectors who were interviewed described how the allocation of inspectors to specific subjects within an inspection team did not always take into account the subject specialisms of the inspectors. This situation arose because of the need to ensure a fair distribution of inspectors' work across the core and the foundation subjects, and was particularly acute when the inspection teams were small. It was exacerbated in the case of primary school inspectors because they could be endorsed by Ofsted to inspect subjects on the basis of their prior teaching experience alone, without them being specialists in the subjects.

Judgements on learning

Although most judgements on learning geography in the reports comprised overall statements on pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding of geography, many of them were also more specific, and addressed pupils':

- mapping skills;
- knowledge and use of geographical vocabulary;
- knowledge of places within the locality of the school and those in contrasting localities;
- knowledge of geographical themes such as water, coasts, settlements and environmental change;
- use of ICT and reference books to support geographical enquiry.

The key geographical skills of mapwork have a central place in the curriculum of the primary school (DfEE/QCA, 1999b), and are relatively straightforward for inspection teams to assess. Principally, for this reason, when geography was inspected judgements on mapwork skills occurred widely in the reports in the sample:

> *Year 4 pupils make good progress with their mapping skills, learning to use simple coordinates and how to measure distances on maps using scales* (School 32, February 1999).

> *The map reading skills of the older pupils are well developed and they are able to locate places on an Ordnance Survey map using six figure grid references* (School 15, February 1999)

Fundamental to pupils' understanding of geography is their ability to learn and use key geographical vocabulary (DfEE/QCA, 1999b). Consequently, the reports frequently addressed this as an important prerequisite for improvement:

> *The pupils' knowledge and use of geographical vocabulary concerning the topics they have studied is generally good, but they are unskilled in posing their own geographical questions for study* (School 18, March 1999).

> *Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were unable to discuss with any clarity the work they have covered and have only a limited knowledge and understanding of geographical vocabulary* (School 23, February 2004).

A distinctive feature of geography as a subject of the curriculum is its focus on the study of places (Catling, 2004a). As a result, many of the geography paragraphs in the reports contained judgements on pupils' learning about places. Some of these related to studies in the locality of the school, and had been the subject of field studies by the pupils. Some related to a contrasting locality in the United Kingdom that may, or may not, have been visited by pupils for field studies. Others were in contrasting localities overseas, and had mainly been studied with the aid of secondary sources:

> *Overall, pupils' knowledge of their own locality is more developed than their understanding of geographical features, the wider world and the effect of nature and man on the environment* (School 95, January 2004).

> *By Year 6, pupils show their very good knowledge and understanding in their studies of a range of places and themes. They describe, and begin to offer explanations for, geographical patterns, for example, by considering physical features in their fieldwork study* (School 47, October 1998).

> *By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a good knowledge of St Lucia and Pakistan and how these far-away places are different from the British Isles* (School 15, February 1999).

The increasing accessibility of the Internet and the improving availability of maps, geography text books and other secondary sources have required schools to teach

pupils research skills to enable them to access geographical data from these sources. The reports in the sample contained frequent references to pupils' competence in these skills, which can also facilitate the development of pupils' capability in geographical enquiry:

> *Good use is made of the Internet for research, and pupils used to good effect a range of secondary sources to develop their research skills and deepen their knowledge and understanding* (School 31, February 2004).
>
> *An identified area for development is to encourage greater use of research skills through more extended use of the library* (School 44, November 2003).

Comment

The sample of inspection reports had, therefore, the potential to contribute to improvement in teaching and learning of geography in the schools by providing feedback through judgements in the reports. Significant among these judgements were those on:

- teachers' subject knowledge and management of activities within lessons;
- the planning of lessons and sharing objectives with pupils;
- assessment procedures and their use in informing planning;
- the deployment of resources, including the use of ICT during lessons;
- expectations of higher and lower attaining pupils and provision of work which matched their particular needs;
- the effectiveness of the use of questions to increase pupils' understanding;
- the development of pupils' geographical skills, knowledge and understanding.

Judgements on the curriculum

The judgements on the geography curriculum ranked next in terms of their frequency of occurrence in the reports in the sample, and amounted to just over 10% of the total. Official guidance from Ofsted for inspecting and reporting on the subjects of the curriculum (Ofsted, 2003b) is shown in Box 4.6.

Box 4.6 Guidance from Ofsted on inspecting and reporting on the curriculum

Guidance on inspecting the subjects of the curriculum

Concentrate on:

- the extent to which the National Curriculum Programmes of Study ...are organised to provide a broad, balanced curriculum, continuity in teaching and progression in pupils' learning
- whether statutory requirements for the National Curriculum ...are met
- how far the teaching and organisation of the curriculum motivate pupils to learn, develop personally ...
- inclusivity
- how well pupils are enabled to see connections across subjects

(Ofsted 2003b, page 77)

Guidance for reporting on the subjects of the curriculum

For each curriculum area, open the report with clearly stated, unequivocal judgements on the quality of provision where this is possible, followed by the key strengths and weaknesses ... In each subject reported, you should evaluate standards, the quality of teaching and learning, and the leadership of the subject, together with other significant contributory factors.... the improvement made since the last inspection.

(Ofsted 2003b, page 129)

The Ofsted inspection guidance states that 'Judgements about the curriculum must be based on an evaluation of its effect on learning' (Ofsted, 2003b, page 78). These judgements are important in providing feedback to schools on the framework within which geography is taught and learned. In reports in the sample where only few judgements were made - often arising when inspectors had not observed the teaching of geography - judgements were usually based upon what documentary evidence was made available to the inspecting team. This included the school geography policy, schemes of work and other planning documents. The areas most frequently addressed by the judgements included:

- the coverage of the curriculum - whether or not the curriculum met statutory requirements;
- the extent to which the curriculum was broad and balanced;
- planning for progression in the teaching of geographical skills;
- links between geography and other subjects, especially history, English, mathematics and ICT;
- areas of particular strength in geography.

Many of the geography paragraphs of the inspection reports contained broad statements on curriculum coverage, breadth and balance – often with few other judgements – implying that geography teaching had not been observed, and the judgements had been based on documentary evidence. In such cases, it could be inferred that the inspection team endorsed the state of geography in the school, unless specific weaknesses or strengths in the curriculum had been identified:

> *Planning indicates full coverage of National Curriculum requirements and that skills and knowledge are built upon year on year* (School 82, February 2004).

> *The curriculum is broad and varied, offering pupils good insights into life in other countries and developing their geographical skills* (School 86, February 2004).

> *A scrutiny of a limited sample of pupils' work shows that there is adequate coverage of the programmes of study ... there are good links developing between geography and history and other subjects, especially English, mathematics and art and design* (School 6, March 2004).

Where there were judgements on continuity and progression in the curriculum, the reports could provide the schools with useful feedback on how effectively they had addressed the requirements of the National Curriculum, and had enabled pupils to progressively develop their learning in geography throughout the school:

> *The coordinator has recognised the importance of continuity in the development of skills throughout each year group. This has resulted in re-scheduling the timetable of geographical topics. Furthermore, a hierarchy of mapping skills has been developed with this in mind. It now needs to incorporate the other fieldwork skills.*
> (School 97, June 2002)

> *Teachers' long-term planning does not sufficiently identify the systematic teaching of geographical skills* (School 2, June 1999).

Some of the more detailed reports made reference to cross-curricular links (Kelly, 2004). Where effective, these could ensure that pupils had a coherent learning experience, and that the timetable made efficient use of their time in the classroom.

This has become increasingly important as the focus on numeracy and literacy has progressively dominated the primary school curriculum (see Chapter 5):

> *Geography has good cross-curricular links with other subjects, such as history, and this helps pupils to consolidate their learning* (School 58, December 2004).
>
> *Useful links with literacy work allowed Year 4 pupils to use non-fiction texts about rivers to develop research skills and to prepare for writing explanations of how and why a river travels from its source to the sea* (School 28, February 2004).

Judgements on strengths or weaknesses in the curriculum, as in the following examples, could enable schools to consolidate good practice or to take steps to remediate areas needing attention:

> *Mapwork and environmental studies based on first-hand experience is a strong curriculum element.*
> (School 81, January 2004)
>
> *Visits enhance the curriculum very well for older pupils.*
> (School 81, January 2004)

The judgements on the geography curriculum in the reports varied considerably in terms of the information they provided. Where they were detailed and informative, they had the potential to inform improvement in terms of:

- the extent to which the curriculum fulfilled statutory requirements for the National Curriculum;
- the quality of links with other subjects;
- provision for continuity and progression in pupils' geographical skills;
- provision for breadth and variety in geographical learning.

Judgements on resources

Only just over 4% of the judgements in the whole sample of reports were concerned with resources, and so the impact of these judgements would be limited overall. This became increasingly the case after the introduction of the 2003 framework when, as reported earlier in this chapter, judgements on resources

decreased by 72% - undoubtedly due to the reduced time made available for the inspections.

The provision of adequate resources for the teaching of geography is an essential requirement if improvements are to be made in the subject, especially as the teaching of some aspects, such as world geography, are highly dependent on the use of secondary sources. Ofsted requirements stipulate that 'Inspectors must evaluate and report on the extent to which ... the quantity and quality of resources meet the needs of the curriculum' (Ofsted, 2003b, page 76), and that inspectors should 'Consider the quality and appropriateness of the resources in use' (Ofsted, 2003b, page 87).

Judgements on resources in the reports in the sample were concerned mainly with the adequacy of provision, especially of maps, atlases, information books, globes, aerial photographs and ICT software:

> *Resources are satisfactory overall, but there are inadequate supplies of modern atlases which are suitable for Key Stage 1 pupils* (School 47, October 1998).
>
> *Resources are adequate for curriculum coverage, although there is a limited range of software for use with information technology. Resources are in good condition and are well used* (School 26, March 2000).
>
> *Resources in terms of information technology and books are adequate, but there is a lack of aerial photographs, good quality globes, maps and materials to develop pupils' mapping skills* (School 65, November 1998).
>
> *There are insufficient good quality resources for the study of contrasting localities overseas to promote the development of geographical enquiry and skills* (School 94, January 2004).

The reports made frequent use of descriptors such as 'adequate' or 'satisfactory', which could be regarded as dismissive. The most useful judgements, in terms of supporting improvement in geography, were those that identified deficiencies in provision, especially when they were made explicit. Such deficiencies were also

fairly straightforward to address, subject to the schools' willingness to provide the necessary budget.

Judgements on resource provision in the geography paragraphs of the reports can therefore contribute to improvement in geography when they identify deficiencies in suitable resources to support the teaching of the geography curriculum, suggest how these may be remedied and commend good quality provision.

Judgements on fieldwork

The analysis of the reports showed that, although just over 5% of the judgements were concerned with fieldwork, these could be important as a means to improving geography. An Ofsted report on *The Curriculum in Successful Primary Schools* (Ofsted, 2002a) affirmed that fieldwork in geography can enrich the curriculum, whether it occurs within the school grounds, the locality of the school or in a contrasting locality. The reports in the sample included judgements on local fieldwork conducted for part of a day in the area near the school, and full day and residential visits to places which contrasted to the locality of the school. As in the case of most judgements in the reports, they often made reference to provision for specific age groups of pupils. Almost without exception, the judgements on fieldwork were positive and it was regarded as a worthwhile aspect of the curriculum:

> *Excellent use is made of the local area for fieldwork* (School 15, February 1999).

> *Very good use is made of the school grounds and the local environment as well as places further afield, including residential visits, to make lessons interesting and relevant to the pupils* (School 10, February 1999).

Many of the reports on fieldwork explained why it was rated positively, citing reasons such as providing opportunities to develop pupils' geographical skills, or to help their understanding of key parts of the geography curriculum:

Teachers use the locality well to teach geography. This brings relevance to pupils' work; it helps them to see how features of their own environment compare and contrast with those in other parts of Britain and abroad (School 53, September 2003).

The investigative project carried out by Year 3 pupils about the local area and the enquiry into environmental improvement by Year 4 pupils provide good examples of how geographical skills can be developed effectively through fieldwork (School 97, June 2002).

In Year 6, pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical and environmental geography are further enhanced through a residential visit to Devon, which enables them to compare and contrast this area with their own (School 21, March 2004).

The curriculum is enhanced ... by day trips to field study centres and by a residential visit to the Isle of Wight for older pupils in Years 5 and 6 (School 18, March 1999).

It can be seen, therefore, that the judgements on fieldwork in the reports could contribute to improvement in geography by encouraging:

- the provision of residential field visits which focus on key areas of the geography curriculum;
- the effective use of the school grounds and the locality of the school for the teaching of key geographical skills and areas of knowledge;
- the enriching role of fieldwork in the curriculum.

Judgements on leadership and management of geography

The importance of an effective geography coordinator to successful geography teaching in primary schools was noted in Chapter 2. Furthermore, one of the requirements introduced in the 2003 inspection framework (Ofsted, 2003a) was that inspectors should evaluate leadership and management at all levels in the school, which included the leadership and management of subjects by the subject coordinator. It was therefore surprising to discover that only 4.7% of the judgements in the sample addressed the leadership and management of geography. One of the reasons for this, as will be explained in Chapter 5, was that interviews with geography coordinators virtually ceased following the introduction

of the 2003 inspection framework. A summary of the expectations for leadership and management in a primary school is given in Box 4.7, and this would inform the judgements made during an inspection.

Box 4.7 The role of leadership and management in a primary school

> Leadership should provide the drive and direction for raising achievement, whilst management should make best use of the resources and processes to make this happen. Management includes effective evaluation, planning, performance management and staff development.
>
> (Ofsted, 2003b, page 109)

The aspects of leadership and management of the geography coordinator given most attention in the reports in the sample were those pertaining to:

- the subject policy, scheme of work and curriculum coverage;
- coordination of the subject and the monitoring of standards, planning, teaching and learning;
- provision of support and in-service training for teachers.

In those reports where leadership and management were judged to be effective, and the reasons for this were given, coordinators could feel empowered in the knowledge that they were working effectively:

> *The management and leadership of the subject are satisfactory, with a clear policy and sensible scheme of work* (School 19, January 2004).
>
> *Coordination of the subject is good. Teachers receive good support and in-service training from the coordinator. This has been successful in improving teachers' confidence in teaching the subject, and has given further insights into coverage of the National Curriculum* (School 2, June 1999).
>
> *Leadership and management are good. Leadership has a clear view of the main priorities for improvement based on the careful monitoring of planning and learning* (School 37, June 2004).
>
> *The subject is well managed. The coordinator has ensured appropriate coverage of the subject throughout the school with an appropriate emphasis on the development of geographical skills. Planning is monitored and the*

coordinator has been able to visit all classes and give feedback to teachers (School 5, March 2001).

In a sizeable number of the reports, the inspectors stated that coordinators were not being allowed sufficient time to fulfil their role effectively, particularly with respect to checking on the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. This situation is supported by evidence from the interviews reported in Chapter 5. In such instances, the reports give clear messages to the senior management teams of the schools that, in order to improve standards in geography, appropriate timetabled time should be allocated to the geography coordinator for monitoring in the classroom:

> *The coordinator has already monitored teachers' planning and talked to pupils to gain an overview of the subject, but has not had time to develop the monitoring of teaching and learning in lessons* (School 9, March 2004).
>
> *Not enough is done to check on the quality of teaching or pupils' work and deal with weaknesses in order to improve learning and pupils' achievement* (School 6, March 2004).
>
> *Leadership and management are satisfactory but the manager has too little time to monitor standards in lessons, give advice to rectify weaknesses and share good ideas* (School 3, March 2004).
>
> *Management is unsatisfactory. As yet there are no formal systems in place to check the quality of teaching and learning and standards in the subject* (School 68, April 2005).
>
> *Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has not yet been carried out* (School 97, June 2002).

In Chapter 5, it will be seen that there was unanimous agreement among those interviewed that provision of high quality in-service training for teachers and for geography coordinators was essential for improvement in geography. However, there were few references in the reports to this being provided, and none in the sample of reports published after the introduction of the 2003 framework. In many of the reports in the sample, it was stated that the coordinator had been in post for only a short time and so had been unable to address many aspects of the role, such as monitoring standards and teaching.

This state of affairs was confirmed in the interviews reported in Chapters 5, and it can be concluded that this was proving to be a significant barrier to improvement in geography in the schools.

The judgements in those reports where leadership and management by the geography coordinator were addressed provide a helpful agenda to guide and inform improvement in geography, with the support of the school's senior management team. The reports showed that there were strengths in leadership and management of geography when:

- schools provided sufficient opportunities for the coordinator to monitor standards by observing teaching and learning in all classes, scrutinizing pupils' work and examining teachers' planning;
- the coordinator checked the coverage of the curriculum by examining teachers' planning and ensuring that pupils completed the work which was planned for them;
- the coordinator ensured that teaching colleagues were given suitable professional development and training in geography through the provision of appropriate courses, sharing of good ideas and offering constructive and timely advice;
- the coordinator had a clear vision for the improvement of the subject and well defined priorities to implement it;
- the school had a clear and up to date policy and scheme of work for geography.

However, the study has shown that there were relatively few instances in the sample when the reports addressed leadership and management by the geography coordinator. Consequently, the overall impact of the reports on improvement in this important area is likely to be low.

CONCLUSION

Overall amount of feedback provided to inform improvement

The analysis of the geography sections of the Ofsted inspection reports in this chapter has shown that less than one quarter of them (23%) can be grouped within

the *useful* category. These each contained between 13 and 18 judgements, and have the potential to provide their schools with a noteworthy amount of feedback and guidance to inform and facilitate improvement in geography. However, this means that over three quarters of the reports could not be regarded as useful for this purpose. These comprised 52% that could be regarded as *moderately useful,* and 25% *least useful.*

Impact of the 2003 inspection framework on the overall pattern of feedback

The 2003 inspection framework had an adverse effect upon the inspection of primary school geography, as a result of the overall reduction in the size of the inspections and the introduction of differentiated inspections. These led to a marked reduction in the number of judgements about geography in the inspection reports, with an accompanying reduction in the usefulness of the reports for improvement in geography. The introduction of the 2003 framework resulted in an overall decrease of almost one half in the number of judgements in the reports. This was most notable in the *useful* category where, from a total of 23 reports, only three occurred after the revised framework was introduced, representing a reduction of almost 87%. However, of the 25 in the *least useful* category, 22 occurred after the revised framework was introduced, representing a reduction of only 12%. These reductions in emphasis in reporting on geography not only provide schools with less feedback to inform improvement but could also diminish the status of geography in the eyes of the schools. Ultimately, this could seriously undermine efforts to realise a broad and balanced curriculum.

Feedback provided within individual categories of judgements

In Table 4.4, the weightings for the enumeration of judgements within the categories shows a heavy emphasis towards those concerned with standards (almost 45%) and teaching and learning (over 30%), but a lighter emphasis towards the others. This could be because the focus of the reports was too narrow,

or because the other categories were not areas of real concern to the inspection teams. However, it is more probably due to the requirements for inspecting these categories, as set out in the Ofsted handbook (Ofsted, 2003b) and also that, in any case, information on them is an essential precursor for improvement.

Among these other categories, although the enumeration process shows the weighting for leadership and management to be only 4.7%, it is unlikely not to be an area for concern. This is because, as explained in Chapter 2, the leadership and management of the geography coordinator are considered to be a major influence for improvement in primary schools. Furthermore, the 2005 summary HMCI report for geography (Ofsted, 2005a) also has leadership and management as a strong issue.

Impact of the 2003 framework on individual categories of judgements

Following the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework, the substantial reduction in the number of judgements within most of the categories in the study, already discussed, reflects the reduced amount of time devoted to the inspection of geography. This could, in turn, result in a drastic reduction in the usefulness of the reports for improvement in geography.

Other factors

During the course of the data collection and analysis phases of this study, Ofsted inspections of schools normally occurred only once in every six years, and so their overall impact as agents of improvement could be questioned. It is therefore likely that influences other than those arising from inspection reports are more important in affecting improvement in geography in the schools. These could include influences which impinge on the schools on a more regular basis, such as the contribution of the geography coordinator, support from the head teacher and the

senior management of the school or the impact of central government initiatives on the school curriculum.

In the next chapter, Chapter 5, the focus is on the effects of central government policy on the requirements, procedures and outcomes of the Ofsted inspections, and on the impact of central government initiatives such as the national literacy and numeracy strategies and SATs. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with Ofsted inspectors, head teachers and geography coordinators, all of whom were professionals with extensive first-hand experience of Ofsted inspections in primary schools.

Chapter 5

INSPECTIONS AND OTHER INFLUENCES ON PRIMARY SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY

'Inspection by itself cannot raise standards; only those who work in schools can do that. But inspection is a potent catalyst for improvement' (Ofsted, 2000, page 1).

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the role of Ofsted inspection reports was examined in relation to the feedback they offered primary schools to guide and inform improvement in geography. This chapter addresses the experiences and perceptions of Ofsted inspectors, primary school head teachers and geography coordinators of the part played by Ofsted inspections, among other key factors, in influencing improvement in primary school geography. In particular it is concerned with how national policy on education has affected the quality of geography in the schools through the requirements, procedures and outcomes of Ofsted school inspections and the central government's drive to raise standards in literacy and numeracy. The data that form the basis of the chapter were generated by means of telephone interviews with Ofsted inspectors and face-to-face interviews with primary school head teachers and geography coordinators in their schools.

The chapter is subdivided into four main sections. The first three address influences on primary school geography due to (i) the changing Ofsted inspection framework (ii) the inspection process and changes in Ofsted inspection procedures and reporting and (iii) changes in the context of Ofsted inspections. The fourth section is concerned with the impact of central government initiatives to raise standards in the core subjects, in particular the National Literacy Strategy, the National Numeracy Strategy and Standardised Attainment Tests (SATs), and it

also considers the influence of the annual reports of HMCI. Inevitably there is some overlap between the sections, as their content is interlinked.

THE CHANGING OFSTED INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

Ofsted teams began inspecting primary schools in England in September 1994, and their activities were governed by inspection policy published in a succession of inspection framework documents (Ofsted, 1994a, 1996a, 1999a, 2003a, 2005e). The first edition of the Ofsted framework that related to the inspection of primary schools (Ofsted, 1994a) required that 'Lessons must be seen in all National Curriculum subjects...', although, where this was not possible, it conceded that 'Where a subject is not being taught at the time of the inspection, the report should state this fact clearly' (Ofsted, 1994a, page 11). Inspector C explained that the second edition of the framework allowed inspection teams to focus less on the curriculum and curriculum coverage and schemes of work, provided the schools could show they were actually teaching some of the foundation subjects. Thus began a trend that saw the gradual reduction in the amount of inspection time spent on these subjects. Subsequently, changes to the framework were made to reflect the increased emphasis on literacy and numeracy required by government policy (Ofsted, 1999a, 2003a). As a consequence, the requirement for Ofsted inspection teams to inspect and report on each of the foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, such as geography, was superseded by a concession to enable them to sample them instead (Ofsted, 2003a). The result, as described by Inspector D, was that geography was frequently:

> *lumped together with history and religious education under the humanities heading, and often got missed out altogether.*

Although, to some extent, other foundation subjects were affected in similar ways, the effects on geography were more serious, as was seen in the references to HMCI reports in Chapter 2 (Ofsted, 2004b, 2005d, 2005a).

The inspection framework of September 2003 (Ofsted, 2003a) resulted in sweeping changes to the way in which inspections were conducted in the schools. Although schools were still to be inspected once every six years – as required by section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 (Great Britain, 1996) – the number of days allowed for each inspection was reduced and the most effective schools were to be inspected less frequently than others. The Ofsted handbook (Ofsted, 2003b), which accompanied the framework, made provision for inspection teams to identify an 'inspection trail' at the beginning of the inspection, that would guide its direction and focus. In my experience as an inspector and quality assurance reader, the majority of these trails included the inspection of English and mathematics, but only rarely did they include geography. Inspectors D and E reported that they had not come across any instance of geography being the focus of an inspection trail.

Some of the inspectors felt that the successive changes in the framework had been dramatic. In comparing inspections conducted under the first framework with later ones, Inspector D commented that:

> *the very early inspections were, in a way, more rigorous.*

Most of the inspectors observed that these changes had a serious impact on the inspection of the foundation subjects and, especially, they noted that they:

> *had a major negative impact on geography* (Inspector B)

Inspector A concluded that:

> *geography, like some of the other foundation subjects, has been a bit marginalised.*

whilst Inspector E observed that a significant outcome of the 2003 framework was:

more slimmed down and focused inspections ...where the foundation subjects were a bit of an optional extra.

THE INSPECTION PROCESS AND CHANGES IN INSPECTION PROCEDURES AND REPORTING

The overall responses of the head teachers and the geography coordinators in the schools, and of the Ofsted inspectors, showed that the changes in the inspection framework had been accompanied by significant changes in both the way in which inspections were conducted, and also in the reports which were produced. Inspector C noted that, following from changes in the 2003 framework, reporting of inspections *"became a lighter touch".* The head teacher and geography coordinator from School F agreed that, compared to a more recent inspection (May 2004), earlier inspections had placed more emphasis on the whole curriculum, and that the more recent inspection had paid less attention to geography. This head teacher commented that:

Inspections are now very different from what they were. This time they inspected a sample of geography work and the geography coordinator's file, but they didn't talk to the coordinator.

PREPARATION FOR THE INSPECTION

The majority of the head teachers reported that they used the Ofsted handbook (Ofsted, 2003b) extensively as a guide to self-evaluation and in preparation for an inspection. Those who used it less extensively thought it lacked precision. Some recounted that their schools placed greater emphasis on studying and responding to the findings from the previous inspection than they did to examining the Ofsted handbook, although this occurred to a lesser extent with the foundation subjects.

When asked whether the school made any changes to the curriculum in preparation for an inspection, the head teacher of School E replied that:

> *The school does not particularly change the curriculum in preparation for an Ofsted inspection. However, it may do if a report criticised a particular aspect of the school's work.*

Some schools (for example, School L) had been helped to prepare for an Ofsted inspection by being given a prior inspection by the advisory team of the LA, an experience which the coordinator described as *"very useful"*.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

a) Inspections of lessons

In Chapter 4, it was noted that the size of a school, in terms of the number of pupils on roll, was not significant in relation to the number of judgements in an inspection report. However, size was a key factor with respect to the number of geography lessons which could be observed, as it determined the number of inspection days allotted to a school. Inspector B recalled how, in a large primary school which merited a relatively large inspection team of ten inspectors, the one inspector inspecting geography:

> *actually saw seven geography lessons ... and was able to focus mainly on that subject.*

Such an inspection would have considerable potential to offer feedback to the school to inform and guide improvement in geography. This was not typical of the experiences of the inspectors, however, who reported that there had been an overall reduction in the number of geography lessons they observed during their time as inspectors. For instance, Inspector D (who was also a LA adviser and

former head teacher) recalled seeing only a limited amount of geography timetabled to be inspected, adding that the advisory service encouraged schools to prioritise numeracy and literacy:

> *In my role as an LA adviser I haven't seen much geography taught. More usually it's numeracy and literacy, because they are what Ofsted will focus on, and so when we are preparing schools for inspection they are what we focus on* (Inspector D).

b) Interviews with the geography coordinator

Most of the inspectors interviewed recalled that, until September 2003, it had been normal practice on primary school inspections to interview every subject coordinator, including the geography coordinator. This was also the recollection of those geography coordinators who had been in post at that time. The inspectors explained that interviews with subject coordinators during an inspection were normally of two types. One usually took place early in the inspection, its chief function being to provide the inspector with contextual information about the subject in the school, and how it was led and managed. The other took place at the end of the inspection and was intended to give the coordinator feedback on strengths and weaknesses in the subject, as seen during the inspection. The inspectors regarded the feedback role of this second interview to be important as an influence on improvement in the subject.

In relation to this, Inspector B observed that:

> *In the early days of Ofsted, we ... gave feedback to the geography coordinators because that was a requirement.*

In a similar vein, Inspector A recalled:

In my first inspections everyone [all the coordinators] *was interviewed and given one-to-one feedback. But in the early days inspectors were told not to give advice – this has mellowed over the years and inspectors latterly had a long conversation on issues.*

Unfortunately for geography, the 'long conversations' occurred at a time when feedback to the geography coordinators was being cut back, and so the subject rarely benefited from them.

Several inspectors explained that, in the earlier inspections (before January 2000, and often before September 2003) meetings with foundation subject coordinators were sometimes conducted together as a group. Inspector D pointed out that these enabled inspectors to pick out common threads running through the subjects, but that there were limitations when this occurred, because:

> *inspections didn't pick out specific things happening in specific subjects. So, feedback to the geography coordinator was limited, and did not have a big effect on improving standards and provision in geography.*

Feedback to geography coordinators suffered a major setback with the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework, as explained by two of the inspectors:

> *After September 2003 we did not meet the coordinators in that capacity – so no feedback was given to the geography coordinator. In any case, if not much geography was seen there was not much to feed back. Under the rubric of this framework it was acceptable to say, 'I didn't have enough evidence to make a judgement about this because I didn't see enough.' Prior to that, you felt under strong pressure to produce a full paragraph, whether or not there was evidence to support it* (Inspector C).

> *Since September 2003 you may have talked to the geography coordinator along with the history and religious education coordinators to save time. Sometimes you may not talk to the geography coordinator at all. When talking to them as a group, you can't pursue the subject-related issues in the same depth as in the old days when you spoke to them on their own* (Inspector E).

The same inspectors also explained that, following the implementation of the 2003 inspection framework, it had been standard practice only to give feedback to core subject coordinators at the end of the inspection, and that feedback was not normally given to the foundation subject coordinators.

Another factor determining whether or not inspectors gave feedback to the geography coordinator was the size of the school. Inspector A acknowledged that, in small schools, whilst inspection teams always fed back to the coordinators of English, mathematics, science and ICT, they rarely did to the geography coordinator. He added that, where it did occur it was normally in the form of a group meeting with the coordinators of all the foundation subjects together. Inspector D pointed out that:

> *In small schools, the coordinator may be responsible for several subjects - such as English, history and geography - and so geography would be way down the list in terms of importance.*

He noted, by way of contrast, that in large schools it was sometimes possible for an inspector to have a separate interview with the geography coordinator.

There was consensus among the school geography coordinators that end of inspection feedback from the geography inspector was considered to be important to them. The geography coordinator in School L, a large primary school, felt that such dialogue with the coordinator could point the way forward for geography in their schools, and to deny coordinators this opportunity was to give a negative message about the importance of the subject.

> *If they want to raise the profile of geography they should provide feedback. I would have loved to have had a conversation with the inspector at the end of the inspection. I had the first interview, and that was it* (Geography coordinator, School L).

c) Interviews with pupils

All the inspectors regarded interviews with groups of pupils about a subject to be useful sources of evidence during an inspection. These were used normally to supplement information gained from the observation of lessons, but they were also used as a substitute for them. Inspector A explained that:

> *When no lessons were seen, we'd try to arrange geography interviews with Year 2 and Year 6 pupils – these might cover history and DT as well.*

Ofsted guidance (Ofsted, 2000) recommended that Year 2 and Year 6 pupils should be chosen because they represented, respectively, pupils in the final year of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 of the National Curriculum. Inspector E explained why these interviews were important:

> *You can tease out children's level of knowledge and understanding much better by talking to them than by just looking at an exercise book when you don't know the context in which the work has been done. The smaller the school, the more important it is to talk to the children as a source of evidence, because there may not be much else. It ends up more to do with the accountability function of the inspection – to check that statutory requirements have been met.* (Inspector E)

However, the majority of the inspectors reported that, as in the case of the interviews with the geography coordinators, the frequency of the interviews with groups of pupils to discuss geography had declined as successive Ofsted inspection frameworks were implemented. The availability of this source of evidence for the inspection team was therefore considerably diminished, and a potentially valuable source of influence on improvement in geography in the school was therefore impoverished. A further indirect effect of this would be on the validity of the data supplied to inform the annual HMCI reports.

d) Scrutiny of work

All the inspectors agreed that work scrutiny is an important part of an Ofsted inspection. In terms of curriculum coverage, Inspector E explained that it was a necessary check to ensure that work planned in the school's geography schemes of work had been addressed. Inspector A described how, in addition to looking at pupils' books within lessons, inspection teams would ask schools to provide them with books in subjects which were not taught during an inspection so that some evidence could be made available for those subjects. Most of the inspectors regarded work scrutiny to be an essential way to glean information on standards in geography, but one inspector was not convinced:

> *I've never found the scrutiny of work in geography particularly instructive about standards because, quite often, the amount of recording was limited and it had been done in an often teacher-led way. This may in turn reflect the lack of time given to the subject – that's why talking to the pupils is the most valuable source of evidence of the standards they are achieving* (Inspector E).

e) Other evidence

As a means of checking that statutory requirements for the curriculum had been met, most of the inspectors outlined how they would examine the school's geography policy and schemes of work. This would also enable them to examine whether the curriculum was balanced, and that it provided for continuity and progression in the subject.

f) Lack of evidence

Whilst most of the inspectors agreed that there was usually some work in geography available for scrutiny during an inspection, they reported that on some inspections – especially in small schools – there was little or no evidence about geography on which the inspection team could draw. In such cases, the inspection

report merely stated that there was no geography observed being taught. Inspector B recounted his extensive experience of this when inspecting two or three teacher schools:

> *On a number of inspections of small schools I've ended up with no evidence at all in geography – no work to scrutinise and no displays of pupils' work. I've looked at teachers' planning, and that was about it, and so I could say really nothing at all about the subject. ... All I could say in the report was that 'From the limited evidence available during the inspection, the school is meeting its statutory requirements'.*

In such situations, an inspection would have nothing to contribute to the school in terms of influencing improvement in geography.

THE INSPECTION REPORTS

The Evaluation Schedule of the Ofsted framework (for example, Ofsted, 2003a, page 28) lists the judgements to be made by inspectors during an inspection. Significant among these are judgements on areas identified as in need of improvement. These were described in earlier editions of the framework as 'Key Issues for Action', (for example, Ofsted, 1994a, page 48; Ofsted, 2000, page 108) and, as such, are a major influence on the schools. All the inspectors reported that it was rare for geography to figure as a key issue to be addressed in a report, and this was borne out by the analysis of the sample of reports in Chapter 4. Inspector D observed that:

> *Very rarely was geography a key issue and, when it was, it was very vague – such as 'raise standards in geography' – without saying how to do it.*

Such a statement is clearly unhelpful, although it does at least identify an area of concern. Inspector A felt that the reason for the absence of geography among key issues in the reports was because it was:

not seen necessarily as important as the raising of issues in the core subjects.

The impact of the core subjects as an influence on improvement in geography is addressed later in this chapter. Inspector E recollected that the few occasions when geography did feature among the key issues for action were in the early days of Ofsted inspections. This was when the curriculum was not broad enough, and schools needed to produce schemes of work for subjects such as geography and history. The same inspector continued:

Whilst geography would not have been identified as a key issue by itself, it might have been included in a broader issue about curriculum balance, for example, and the time given to the foundation subjects.

The majority of the head teachers and geography coordinators – despite much prompting in the interviews – had very little to say about the role of the inspection reports in guiding and informing improvement geography in their schools. In many cases, this was because the reports had not offered noteworthy guidance for improvement. However, many of the coordinators who were interviewed had been in post for a relatively short period of time, and were unaware of the contents of the geography report from the previous inspection – or could not relate to it.

a) Length of the reports

The analysis of the sample of inspection reports in Chapter 4 showed that the shortening of inspections as a result of the 2003 inspection framework led to a notable reduction in the length of the reports. Evidence from the interviews showed that the inspectors agreed unanimously that the reduction in the amount of time spent inspecting geography in the schools was accompanied by a decrease in the amount written about the subject in the Ofsted reports. For instance, the reports

produced during the early phase of Ofsted, under the first framework for primary inspections (Ofsted, 1994a), were described as follows:

> *At first geography was inspected fully and a full paragraph was written – up to a full page. It was quite detailed and included a lot of information, but tended to be rather descriptive than evaluative and not to concentrate on how to improve the provision and standards in the subject – even at that stage* (Inspector D).

A similar picture to this was painted by the other inspectors, who added that the geography paragraphs would often contain examples of good practice, although they tended to be descriptive and lack specific recommendations for improvement.

The inspectors recounted that the reduction in the length of the geography paragraphs in the reports continued – and sometimes accelerated – until the summer of 2005, which marked the end of the influence of the 2003 framework. By that time, the geography paragraphs in many reports had been reduced to little more than a brief statement, or even a single line. This scenario was described by Inspector A:

> *Geography rarely had its own separate paragraph, and was often linked to history under the heading of 'Humanities', so that the report might read 'Only two lessons were seen in the humanities - one in history and one in geography.' Sometimes there was an even briefer statement which reported merely that 'resources were adequate'.*

Another experienced inspector (Inspector B) admitted to having not written a full paragraph on geography in the previous three years, having always written the geography comments as part of a paragraph on the humanities, with no detail in any of them.

A further account of the progressive demise of the geography paragraphs in the reports was given by Inspector C, who was the most experienced of all the inspectors interviewed:

In all the inspections I have led prior to December 1999, a full paragraph was written for geography. However, after that the proportion declined, so that between January 2000 and September 2003 in only about 80% of the inspections was geography inspected, whilst between September 2003 and July 2005 no full paragraphs were written for geography.

Inspector D summarised the overall trend in the decline of the geography reports which, he observed:

> *... have gone from fairly lengthy reports (although there was not always a lot of useful detail in them) to, quite often, just a sentence which might say 'There was not enough evidence to make a judgement about geography.'*

From the interviews with the inspectors, it can therefore be concluded that if the length of the reports was an indication of the strength of their influence on informing and guiding improvement in geography, this has steadily declined, particularly since the introduction of the 2003 framework.

b) Quality of the reports

The style and quality of the inspection reports in the early days of Ofsted were aptly described by Inspector A as:

> *...very formal, 'civil service type' reports which were thorough and 'got under the skin of the subjects'. Every subject of the National Curriculum was reported on, including geography, and this had the effect of informing the schools that the inspectors would be looking at every subject. There was a good page of reasonable in-depth analysis of each subject ...*

The analysis of the inspection reports in Chapter 4 showed that, when geography paragraphs existed at all, they were sometimes descriptive and frequently commended good practice when it was seen. However, they rarely identified problems or shortcomings in geography in the schools, which was necessary if they were to inform improvement.

Inspector C explained that it was often difficult for inspectors to report that a school was *not* doing something because, especially at an early stage in the school

year, the teachers might not have got round to doing it. Another reason – put forward by Inspector E – was that inspectors assigned to inspect geography may not have been specialists in the subject and so, whilst able to commend examples of good practice, lacked the confidence to be critical about that which was less than good. The problem of non-specialist inspectors being assigned to inspect a subject is not confined to geography. For example, Cross (2006) expressed concern about this with respect to the award of grades by non-specialist inspectors in design and technology – also a foundation subject. Inspector E also pointed out that, when there was only limited evidence of geography during an inspection:

> *It was easier for an inspector to write about a few positive features – but you're on shaky ground to find fault when the evidence base is so thin.*

There is clearly a major problem in such situations. It is that the less attention that is given to a subject such as geography during an inspection, the more likely it is that weaknesses will not feature in the report, and therefore the report will not provide an agenda for improvement.

There was a major revision of the National Curriculum in 2000 (DfEE/QCA, 1999) and the resultant changes impacted upon the Ofsted inspection process and the reports which arose from it. One head teacher (School G) commented upon the link between the early Ofsted reports and the National Curriculum of the time, and was critical about subsequent developments:

> *In the early days the National Curriculum was much more detailed, and expectations for geography were more explicit. Ofsted reports of the time were then more detailed and children used to learn a lot more geography than they do at present. Now, the National Curriculum has been watered down, and if it's not written down it doesn't get done. Even by the time children reach Years 5 and 6 they still know nothing about geography – their knowledge is wishy-washy.*

Inspector C was highly critical of geography reports which were purely descriptive of what the inspectors had seen, or contained bland statements such as 'standards

and achievement are satisfactory', or 'standards are in line with national expectations', with no evidence to support them. These he regarded as unhelpful to the schools in terms of informing improvement.

Highly critical comments on Ofsted inspection reports were also made by the head teacher of School G:

> *Ofsted inspections only have impact if they resonate with the school. Some of the comments in the last report did not lead us anywhere and were a waste of ink. In terms of helping the school they did very little – the whole report was pretty bland, and almost no use at all.*

The geography coordinator in school L, a large urban school, expressed disappointment with the guidance for improvement offered in the paragraph on geography in the school's Ofsted report of 2004:

> *The paragraph in the Ofsted report did not give adequate guidance as to how to improve. It was a very small paragraph which gave examples of things the inspectors particularly liked, but didn't really suggest anything as a development. There were no specific actions for geography.*

In contrast – with reference to inspection reports as a whole – Inspector E asserted that the quality of the reports had improved, but that this was not to the benefit of geography:

> *Over the past 11 years, reports have become less descriptive and more analytical in terms of cause and effect, and therefore more able to point the school the way forward – but, the irony is that there has been the trend of slimming down inspection and reporting so that geography has got squeezed out, with the loss of the potential benefits of better inspection and better reporting taking place, especially since September 2003. The revisions to the framework are thus very significant in relation to provision and standards in geography.*

Views on the contrast between earlier and more recent Ofsted inspections were particularly marked in the interviews in School B. Here, the head teacher reported that in the previous inspection report there had been six paragraphs devoted to geography. However, in the 2004 report this had been reduced to only four and a

half lines for geography and history together, which included a statement that 'these subjects were sampled'. The head teacher further explained that, in the most recent inspection of this school, which had lasted for three days, the inspectors had only observed lessons in English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education. Her description of the fate of geography on this inspection – compared with that of the core subjects – summarises a trend common in many other primary school Ofsted inspections:

> *All they were looking at was English, mathematics, science, religious education and, occasionally, information and communication technology. I was a bit shocked at this. They inspected pupils' books in other subjects and, although geography was being taught during the inspection, the inspectors didn't have time to see it.*

The experience of there frequently being a lack of time in inspections to inspect geography was confirmed by Inspector A, who explained:

> *In some inspections there is simply not time to inspect geography, even though the school may ask for it to be seen.*

Inspector D concurred and explained that, with a small inspection team in a small school:

> *...it was impossible to report on all the subjects, including geography, because there was not enough time – and as you have to report back on the core subjects, geography just got left.*

The head teacher and the humanities coordinator of School I were dismissive of the value of their school's last Ofsted report on geography, which they described as having *"only two paragraphs, and nothing much came out of it"*. In another school where geography was described as being 'a strength' (School J), the head teacher and deputy head remarked that:

> *"the influence of the last Ofsted report is not a significant factor in what we do with the children",*

although they acknowledged that it would have been if critical issues had been highlighted.

CHANGES IN THE CONTEXT OF INSPECTIONS

REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF INSPECTION DAYS

In Chapter 4 it was seen that lack of time for Ofsted inspection teams to inspect foundation subjects, such as geography, became increasingly acute as Ofsted reduced the number of days allocated for each inspection. This was particularly noticeable with the implementation of the 2003 inspection framework, and it meant that the potential for improvement arising from an inspection was considerably compromised. In comparing a report produced under this framework with an earlier report from 1998 the geography coordinator in School C observed that:

> *In the past, Ofsted reports have to some extent provided an agenda for improvement, but the latest report is not so detailed, as the inspection was shorter and so there was less time to inspect geography.*

The head teachers in Schools C and E also felt there was a problem with shortage of days for inspections, as teams found it difficult to inspect all the dimensions of the curriculum they should in the time allocated for an inspection.

TIMING OF INSPECTIONS

In a number of the schools, the head teachers and geography coordinators pointed out that the timing of an inspection would influence whether or not the teaching of geography was inspected. The reason for this, as explained by Inspector C, the head teacher of School J and the geography coordinators in Schools E, J and L, was because the majority of primary schools planned their geography curriculum in blocks, usually of half a school term, which alternated with another subject – often history. The result was that no geography would be seen should an inspection occur when history was being taught instead of geography. The geography

coordinator in School L explained that this situation occurred in the most recent inspection of her school, and that the resulting geography paragraph in the school's inspection report read 'Only two lessons were observed, both in Year 5. As a result, it is not possible to make a judgement about the overall provision in this subject'. The geography coordinator ruefully commented:

> *The inspection was in the summer term when not much geography was being taught. It's a lottery, and if you sadly are one of the coordinators whose subject is not being taught that week, you are going to get comments like that in the report. It upset me a bit.*

In a similar vein, Inspectors A, B and C explained that the same difficulty in inspecting geography applied to the timetabling of geography within the week of the inspection. This was because the majority of inspections tended to fall on the first two or three days of a week, and so the teaching of geography would not be seen if it was timetabled for the latter part of the week. This state of affairs also applies to other foundation subjects of the curriculum. For example, Cross (2006) noted that many inspectors were unable to judge the teaching of design and technology during an inspection because it was not being taught.

The inspectors who were interviewed added that, when geography teaching was not inspected, other sources of evidence would normally be used instead. These sources included scrutiny of pupils' work, examination of displays around the school and interviews with groups of pupils. Inspector A estimated that geography was on the school timetable and available to be seen in about 50% of the schools he had inspected.

Another reason for geography lessons not being seen was that, in some schools, although geography was being taught during an inspection, the lessons would not be seen by the inspectors if the teachers involved had already been observed teaching core subjects on the same day:

> *If you see people teach English in the morning you can't overload them by seeing them teach something else in the afternoon.* (Inspector A)

The reason for this was because the Code of Conduct for inspectors published in the Ofsted framework requires that inspectors will 'not normally observe teachers or teaching assistants for more than about half of the teaching day' (Ofsted, 2003a, page 45). This situation further demonstrates how prioritisation of the core subjects for inspection affects opportunities for geography to be inspected. The impact of the teaching of the core subjects of the curriculum on foundation subjects such as geography will be addressed later in this chapter.

ACTION OF SCHOOLS FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF AN INSPECTION REPORT

The Ofsted framework (Ofsted, 2003a) requires that, on receipt of the inspection report, a school has 40 working days to prepare an action plan in response to the report. The procedure commonly adopted by a school following an inspection was explained by the head teacher of School C:

> *Following the inspection, we went through the inspection report and highlighted areas needing improvement. These would be incorporated into the school development plan, and then subject coordinators would take appropriate action.*

In the same school, the coordinator reported that internal monitoring of geography had begun as a result of the report from the previous inspection.

The head teacher of School D, who was familiar with the requirements of Ofsted inspections by virtue of completing training as an Ofsted inspector, further explained:

> *We would study the paragraphs for each subject and draw out the strengths and weaknesses, noting what had not been said, as well as what had been said. We would then develop our action plans.*

However, there was limited evidence overall that the schools in the interview sample used their reports on geography as a basis for improvement. This was partly because many reports contained insufficient guidance to inform

improvement. It was also because, as noted earlier in this chapter, many of the coordinators who were interviewed were not in post at the time of the previous inspection, and so had no recollection as to what happened at the time.

THE IMPACT OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO RAISE STANDARDS IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM CORE SUBJECTS

CURRICULUM BALANCE AND BREADTH

The 2003 Ofsted inspection framework required inspectors to evaluate and report on the extent to which the curriculum provided a broad range of worthwhile curricular activities (Ofsted, 2003a). The accompanying Ofsted handbook advised inspectors to 'consider the breadth, balance and coherence of the curriculum...' and to concentrate on 'the extent to which the National Curriculum programmes of study ...are organised to provide a broad, balanced curriculum ...' (Ofsted, 2003b, page 77).

In the analysis of Ofsted inspection reports in Chapter 4 it was noted that the majority of the reports stated that the schools offered a broad and balanced curriculum for their pupils. This statement was often made despite the fact that, in the geography paragraph, there was little or no evidence about provision and standards in geography throughout the school. It seems, therefore, that to write such statements is unjustified. The response of Inspector D to this was:

> *This is because Ofsted teams have bigger fish to fry and so they don't make an issue about it. There is a requirement to say whether a school is meeting statutory requirements, and to say that they do is easier than spending time looking for evidence that they do not.*

The 'bigger fish' referred to by Inspector D are the core subjects of the National Curriculum, especially English and mathematics. In relation to these, Inspector E noted that there was a shift in balance of the curriculum to the core subjects and

away from the foundation subjects, with a consequent impact on geography. He described this as:

> *the 'hidden curriculum' of national development, which suggested to teachers that we expect you to teach geography, but we're not too bothered about the standards you are achieving.*

Inspector D explained why schools place such emphasis on the core subjects to the detriment of a balanced curriculum and the marginalising of subjects such as geography:

> *Although many teachers like teaching geography, and children enjoy it, especially if it is taught well... it is the pressure from head teachers, governors, local education authorities and Ofsted for them to raise standards in reading and writing that requires them to spend more time on these subjects.*
>
> *One of the main factors which influence the quality of standards and provision in geography is the emphasis the government places on numeracy and literacy. If they have a high priority, then other subjects, such as geography, tend to move lower down the list.*

Several of the inspectors commented that the schools' perceptions of what Ofsted rated as good practice affected the balance of their curricula, to the disadvantage of geography. For example, Inspector B commented:

> *One of the reasons geography seemed to dip was because there was so much pressure on league tables and things like that – so the perception of schools was that all we were interested in was English, mathematics and science. Last year, two schools changed their timetables so we saw more English, mathematics and science than we would have done if we had kept to their original timetable. They changed the afternoon so we could see science and ICT because their perception was that was what the inspection was about.*

This viewpoint was echoed by Inspector A:

> *Over the years the foundation subjects have been marginalised. If schools think a subject is not being inspected, then they don't have to worry about it as much as the core subjects, which become very high profile.*

In terms of what I've seen in inspections, standards in geography in primary schools have fallen because primary schools have been pushed into thinking that all they have to do is teach English and mathematics, and a bit of science. In the majority of cases the mornings are nothing but English and mathematics – and geography comes in occasionally in the afternoons, sometimes when it's balanced against history.

There is some justification for the schools' impressions about what subjects Ofsted considers to be important, as successive revisions of the inspection framework have led to what has been described as a 'lighter touch' treatment of the foundation subjects. Inspector A considered that this:

...reinforces the notion that the core subjects are the ones to look at and to value most highly.

From the school's point of view he felt it would be hard for them to give the level of commitment to a subject, when an inspection was imminent, in the knowledge that it was only going to be inspected superficially, with only two or three lines in the report.

Inspector B speculated as to whether today's teachers have the necessary skills to develop a balanced and integrated curriculum, and lamented the lack of teachers with a specialism in geography:

In the 1970s teachers could plan a curriculum that was integrated. I'm not sure teachers know how to do that any more – you do need someone with geography skills. My worry is that we're putting people through schools now who genuinely believe that the curriculum should be English and mathematics, and a bit of science – and other subjects.

The head teacher of School E expressed concern over the apparent fixation of some Ofsted teams with the need to follow an inspection agenda focused principally on the core subjects of the curriculum:

In the last inspection [2001], even though standards were very high in English and mathematics, the inspection team still spent most of their time observing them – even though they already had hard data on these subjects prior to the inspection. They don't have this information on history and geography and music.

There was general agreement among all the interviewees that the amount of time allocated to geography in most schools has been reduced considerably since the early days of Ofsted inspections. They felt that a major factor in this reduction had been the introduction of the national numeracy and literacy strategies, and that changes in the Ofsted framework had been introduced to reflect the changes in emphasis on numeracy and literacy. In addition, the inspectors reported that, as there was no longer a requirement for Ofsted teams to report on geography specifically, decisions were frequently made to sample it, or to link it with history and religious education under the humanities heading. On some occasions, they admitted that it was missed out altogether.

Inspector D reflected the views of the majority of those interviewed:

> *In a sense, Ofsted has abdicated responsibility for inspecting geography and other foundation subjects because there was pressure on it to inspect the core subjects.*
>
> *Children's work in their geography books was more often looked at to see what the links were with literacy and numeracy, rather than to find out about standards in geography.*

THE IMPACT OF THE LITERACY AND NUMERACY STRATEGIES

The National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) was launched in 1998 with the purpose of improving children's ability to read, write and communicate. Central to this was the introduction on school timetables of a daily 'literacy hour', with a tightly structured format. This was followed in September 1999 by the National Numeracy Strategy (DfEE, 1999), with the objective of raising standards in mathematics in schools in England and Wales.

Many of the inspectors and teachers interviewed considered that successive changes in the Ofsted inspection framework had not directly affected the balance of the curriculum. However, all the interviewees were of the opinion that the

introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies had affected the balance of the curriculum to a large extent.

In terms of the effect of these strategies on provision for geography, Inspector D commented:

> *When schools had to do one hour literacy and one hour numeracy, it pinched the curriculum, and so there was not enough time to fully address the other subjects – and geography suffered alongside others.*

The implications of this for the timetable, the balance of the curriculum and its impact on geography, were described by the interviewees as follows:

> *The foundation subjects have been almost totally side-lined. The balance in the curriculum has switched to being English and mathematics in the morning, and the other subjects squeezed into the afternoon, with geography and history balanced against each other – half a term of geography and half a term of history. This has meant that children have not developed geographical skills* (Inspector B).

> *Geography has been squeezed – there's no doubt about it. Our school runs one hour literacy and one hour numeracy, with other activities to fill up the gaps. This takes up the whole morning, and leaves the afternoon to fit in all the other subjects. Science is still a priority, with ICT and RE. This leaves 10 hours a week, of which there are 2 hours science and 2 hours PE. The curriculum is unbalanced because of government decree* (Head teacher and geography coordinator of School G).

From the schools' point of view, the pressure exerted on them by the literacy and numeracy strategies was considerable. The resulting prioritisation of these areas of the curriculum had, in many schools, a deleterious effect on geography and other foundation subjects:

> *The curriculum is heavily influenced by national strategy, which has taken over the key times. The balance of the curriculum is affected by the demands of the core subjects* (Head teacher and the geography coordinator, School F).

> *The school had a zero budget for geography this year because the school was very short of funds. Only numeracy and literacy got any funding this*

year .... the emphasis on the core subjects is having an impact on standards in geography (Geography coordinator School A).

THE IMPACT OF THE STANDARDISED ATTAINMENTS TESTS (SATS)

In 1996, SATs were introduced for primary school children at the ages of seven and 11. Their purpose was to assess children's attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of National Curriculum Key Stage 1 and in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2. These were followed in 1997 with the introduction of school performance tables (league tables) based on the results of these tests at the end of Key Stage 2. The combined effects of SATs and league tables placed considerable strain upon schools, as the results of both were published and parents took them into account when selecting schools for their children. The impact of these initiatives on the primary school curriculum was severe, as described by Inspector B:

> *The introduction of SATs has skewed the curriculum. School governors are very concerned that English and mathematics are given priority – the assumption being that if English and mathematics are OK then everything else is all right.*
>
> *Everything is driving primary schools to ensure their SATs results are OK.*

The head teachers who were interviewed unanimously referred to the pressure their schools were under to narrow the curriculum, and to focus on the core subjects. This was supposedly to direct the schools' efforts on ensuring high attainment in English, mathematics, science and ICT, and to prepare their pupils for the SATs.

The geography coordinator in School A said that there had been a negative impact on the foundation subjects due to the unhealthy concentration on improving government targets in English and mathematics. The fate of geography in this scenario was summarised by Inspector E:

National priorities, and the pressure put on schools to meet them, are significant factors in determining the quality of provision and standards in geography. Despite the commitment and enthusiasm of schools for geography – with the pressure of league tables and inspections – the schools will inevitably be influenced by that. To improve standards in geography, there would have to be a national quest, accompanied by professional development and training to show schools how to improve.

Inspector A reflected on the dilemma facing head teachers with regard to determining the fate of geography in the curriculum of their schools, whilst addressing the demands for high standards in English and mathematics:

You don't measure standards in geography in a school nationally, but you do in English and mathematics. Even if a head teacher valued geography and wanted to promote it, you don't get judged on standards in geography; you get judged on standards in English and mathematics. The testing regime has pushed the foundation subjects to one side, which has been compounded by the fact that inspections seem to have got lighter.

Similarly, Inspector C reviewed the effects on geography of the focus on the core subjects of the curriculum:

The huge focus lately on the core skills in English, mathematics and science, and the numeracy and literacy strategies and ICT, have had a negative impact on the standing of geography and also the teaching of it.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ANNUAL REPORTS OF HMCI

The annual reports of HMCI, (Ofsted, 2001, 2002b, 2003c, 2004b, 2005a, 2005d) were examined in Chapter 2. They were compiled by Ofsted from data derived from nationwide inspections of individual schools, and provided a means of both giving account for the standards achieved in the nation's schools, and of providing guidance in aspects of educational provision found to be lacking. A section of the report is devoted to each subject and stage of the curriculum, and so geography is fully represented in them.

When asked about the value of these reports to schools, almost all the respondents in the interviews were doubtful as to whether reports at this level of

generality were of interest to teachers in the classroom. For example, Inspector A declared that:

> *I don't think HMCI reports hold much of value for the teacher on the sharp end of things. They have too much to do to have time to sit and pore over the latest findings of a subject. Perhaps they are looked at by LA advisers and inspectors, who could then form some sort of strategic overview of where policy is going.*
>
> *I don't know if they have much impact on standards in geography.*

Similar views were expressed by Inspectors D and E:

> *Their purpose is to report on geography as a whole throughout the country, and to pull out common threads that schools could pick up in their own schools. They are not read greatly in schools. Perhaps the numeracy and literacy parts might be. So, they have limited impact, partly because they are too long. People don't have time to read full reports* (Inspector D).
>
> *I doubt if they have any impact on provision and standards in schools. I don't think those sort of documents get read in primary schools, and so any potential in them for raising standards is lost* (Inspector E).

Inspector B commented perceptively, but with irony:

> *It must be difficult for HMCI to put together the report for geography, given the recent limited evidence from school reports.*

In the opinions of the interviewees, therefore, HMCI annual reports are considered to be of negligible value in terms of their contribution to guiding and informing improvement in geography.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis of the interview data in this chapter it can be concluded that the influences on geography in primary schools originate largely as a result of political initiatives by central government. Despite the stated objective of Ofsted to achieve improvement through inspection, there was only limited evidence to show that it was being realised in primary school geography. Indeed, the inspections of the

schools could, in many cases, be considered to have had the opposite effect. The main issues arising from this analysis can be grouped into two interrelated categories. One is concerned with the changes in Ofsted inspections – and the resultant reports – especially those that accompanied the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework. The other is concerned with the impact of the prioritisation of English and mathematics through the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

The evidence from this study indicates that national priorities to raise standards in literacy and numeracy, and national testing in the core subjects, have often had a negative impact on improvement in primary school geography. Many schools have responded to central government pressure to prioritise the core subjects by shifting the balance of the curriculum away from foundation subjects – such as geography. As a result, timetabling and resourcing of geography have often been adversely affected.

The changes in the requirements for the Ofsted inspections have reflected this emphasis on the core subjects, with a resultant reduction in the inspection of geography. The overall decrease in length of the inspections, and the 2003 Ofsted framework requirement for inspection teams to differentiate their inspections through 'inspection trails', has resulted in fewer geography lessons being observed. In addition, less time is now spent gathering evidence on geography during the inspections through interviews and work scrutiny. As a consequence, as noted in Chapter 4, the geography inspection reports have become shorter and of less use in guiding and informing improvement.

In Chapter 6, conclusions are drawn from the study with respect to how it has addressed the two research questions. The implications of these conclusions for improvement in primary school geography are also examined, particularly with respect to Ofsted and to schools, and areas for further research arising from the study are identified.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to investigate the contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in primary school geography. This entailed collecting and analysing data on inspections to determine their role in facilitating improvement in primary school geography. In so doing, the study subjected to scrutiny the importance of the inspections as agents for improving primary school geography. Although a key stated aim of Ofsted was to bring about improvement through inspection, a succession of the Annual Reports of HMCI have raised considerable doubts about the extent to which this aim has been achieved in primary school geography. In Chapter 2 it was noted that the 2004/05 report (Ofsted, 2005a) stated that only one third of schools had improved their provision in the subject since the previous inspection, whilst the 2003/04 report (Ofsted, 2005d) concluded that there was weaker provision in geography than in any other National Curriculum subject. Furthermore, HMCI reported that improvement in geography had lagged behind that of other subjects in the primary curriculum, with the gap continuing to widen (Ofsted, 2004b) – even after more than a decade of Ofsted inspections.

The study was approached through the two inter-related research questions that were set out in Chapter 1. These examined the importance and role of Ofsted inspection reports on primary schools in guiding and informing improvement in geography, and how these reports had changed, especially as a result of the 2003 inspection framework. They also explored the role of the Ofsted inspection process in relation to improvement in primary school geography, within the context of other key influences, such as central government initiatives to raise standards in literacy and numeracy.

The chapter is organised around the main findings arising from the research questions. These are concerned with:

- the usefulness of the Ofsted inspection reports;
- the impact of the 2003 inspection framework;
- the influences of the Ofsted inspection process on improvement, and
- the effects on geography of the prioritization of the core subjects.

The implications of the study for national policy and for Ofsted are also considered, as well as ways in which the study could be developed. Areas for further research are identified, and the changes introduced in the 2005 Ofsted inspection framework are reviewed.

THE USEFULNESS OF THE OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS

The analysis of the sample of 100 Ofsted inspection reports in Chapter 4 shows that only a minority of them (23%) could be regarded as useful for guiding and informing improvement in primary school geography. The majority did not fall into this category because, in many cases, geography was not inspected, and so there was a lack of data for the reports. There were also occasions when the subject was inspected that the reports lacked judgements that would guide and inform improvement – such as when they were non-specific and over-generalized. It was noted in Chapter 2 that Field *et al* (1998) regarded the written inspection report to be ineffective in informing and directing future action in a school – especially in providing suggestions or advice as to how the school might make the required improvements identified in the report. The present study goes further than this and shows that – specifically in relation to the sample of inspection reports on primary school geography – a high proportion lacked suggestions and advice that could guide and inform improvement in geography. This is particularly problematic for geography, given the concerns expressed in the

HMCI reports (Ofsted, 2004b, 2005a, 2005d) cited at the beginning of this chapter.

However, the documentary analysis in Chapter 4 of this study also shows that – albeit in a minority of the inspection reports in the sample – there was indeed detailed, critical and relevant feedback offered to the schools, especially when geography had been subject to a full inspection. Some of the reports in the Group 3 category, for example, could provide a sound basis for a constructive, helpful and clear agenda to guide and inform improvement in the subject, and provide a valuable input for school development plans. Such reports contained judgements that addressed the aspects of geography highlighted by the reporting inspector and regarded as of importance for the development of the subject – whether strengths or weaknesses – taking into account criteria outlined in the Ofsted handbook and subject guidance.

The two categories in which the inspection reports in the sample provided the most feedback were those concerned with *standards* (almost 45%) and with *teaching and learning* (over 30%). Judgements on both of these categories – whether positive or negative, or whether linked to a specific age group or aspect of the subject – can offer essential information to schools to enable them to bring about improvement. This information was normally made available in the reports on those inspections when geography lessons had been inspected, samples of pupils' work had been scrutinised and, in a few cases, where discussion had taken place between an inspector and the geography coordinator.

To a lesser extent, valuable information was also provided in some of the reports on the other categories, such as those on *the curriculum, resources, fieldwork* and *leadership and management*. The fact that there was less information provided in these categories reflects the limited time and

opportunities for them to be inspected, as a result of other priorities in the inspection agenda. A serious consequence of this would be that weaknesses in these categories would not be identified and so school development plans would be unlikely to incorporate strategies to address them. For instance, in the case of the category of *leadership and management* of geography, it was noted in Chapter 2 that the role of the geography coordinator was regarded as crucial to the success of geography teaching in a school (Krause and Millward, 2004). If an inspection report failed to identify weaknesses in this role, an essential ingredient for improvement in a school may not be addressed, undermining opportunities for improvement. Moreover, unlike the core subjects of the primary school curriculum, the absence of national test data on foundation subjects such as geography has meant that data from Ofsted inspections (when available) provided the only external source of information about standards in the subject available to the schools. Where the inspections failed to provide this, there would be no source of external moderation of standards to inform improvement.

The data in Chapter 4 also showed that there were an increasing number of instances when the reports on geography were combined with those for history, and subsumed under a humanities heading. In such cases, it was noted that the judgements lacked focus on distinctive strengths or weaknesses in the individual subjects, and so failed to provide specific guidance to inform improvement.

As well as the reports of Ofsted inspections on individual schools, it was noted in Chapter 2 that the annual reports of HMCI are potentially a further source to guide and inform improvement. However, the responses from the interviews showed considerable scepticism as to whether reports on geography at this level of generality could be of interest or value to teachers in the classroom. The overall view was that they were not generally read by

teachers in primary schools, who rarely had time to seek them out. Additionally, the study has shown that only a minority of primary schools have been subject to a full inspection of geography. Serious questions can therefore be raised about the validity of the HMCI reports, as they are based upon inspection evidence from reports on individual schools. At best, the interviewees thought that HMCI reports could be of value to inform policy at the level of LA advisers or inspectors. However, the effect of this on improvement is likely to be minimal, as it was noted in Chapter 2 that many LAs have made substantial cuts in the staffing of their subject advisers, particularly in the foundation subjects such as geography. Even when subject advisers exist, as in the two LAs examined in this study, it is highly likely that they will focus for a limited time on their subject advisory role because of a commitment to the full context of a group of schools. Largely, their subject link will be to secondary schools rather than primary schools.

THE IMPACT OF THE 2003 INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

The study shows that the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework was accompanied by a substantial reduction in the proportion of the reports in the 'useful' category. The data reveal that, prior to the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework, 40% of the judgements in the reports could be described as 'useful' (Table 4.2). However, this figure fell to only 6% in reports produced after the introduction of this framework, and the difference was shown to be statistically highly significant. The potential of the reports to influence improvement had therefore decreased significantly. This reduction reflects the sharp decline in the frequency with which geography in the schools was subject to a full inspection – and sometimes to any inspection at all – largely as a result of the Ofsted requirements introduced in the 2003 inspection framework. This in turn reflects the effects of the prioritizing of the core subjects, frequently at the expense of the foundation subjects, such as geography. The frequent absence of focus on geography

in the inspection trails introduced by the 2003 inspection framework, and the option to sample foundation subjects for inspection, provided further evidence of the major negative impact that the revised framework was having on the subject.

The 2003 Ofsted inspection framework introduced differentiated inspections, together with a reduction in the length of the inspections and the option for inspection teams to sample the foundation subjects of the curriculum. The inspectors interviewed in this study reported that this resulted in geography being subject to either a cursory inspection, or none at all. The impact of these changes on improvement in geography was felt in two ways. First, it meant that many of the resulting reports failed to fall into the 'useful' category for guiding and informing improvement and second, that schools were being given a subliminal message by the inspection teams that geography was considered to be unimportant. It is therefore not surprising that the 2004/05 HMCI Annual Report (Ofsted 2005d) stated that geography had a marginal status in many schools, compared with the core subjects.

In terms of the role of Ofsted inspections in guiding and informing improvement in geography, the study has shown that the 2003 inspection framework was accompanied by a reduction in the feedback provided to the schools to guide and inform improvement in the subject. A likely consequence of this lack of useful feedback would be no improvement in the quality of geography teaching, since there was a lack of direction and guidance for improvement. This could then lead to a worsening of standards and provision in the subject, and its further marginalisation.

THE INFLUENCES OF THE OFSTED INSPECTION PROCESS ON IMPROVEMENT

The analysis of the interview responses in Chapter 5 indicates that, in the Ofsted inspections of the majority of the schools in the sample, geography was either not inspected or was subject to a 'light touch'. This reinforces the notion that the core subjects are the ones to be looked at and to be valued most highly. Examination of inspection reports over the period of time since the late 1990s in the early days of Ofsted inspections has shown a progressive reduction in the amount of feedback they provided to the schools. Most of the interviewees felt that, over time, the Ofsted inspection framework requirements had increasingly undermined the importance of foundation subjects such as geography – especially since the introduction of the 2003 framework. They commented that the influence of the inspections on primary geography had been negative because the inspection teams had placed a reduced emphasis on the subject, and it was becoming overshadowed by the requirement to inspect the core subjects. This, they concluded, was largely due to the changing emphasis of the inspection frameworks.

Most of the respondents were of the opinion that the prioritisation of the core subjects by the inspection teams over other subjects of the curriculum had led schools to believe that their curriculum priorities should reflect these perceptions of the inspection priorities. As a consequence, the schools had come to regard geography as less of a priority, because they were being judged on their strengths in the core subjects, and not in geography. The outcome of this was invariably reflected in the timetabling and resourcing of foundation subjects such as geography. These views reinforce Alexander's notion of duality in the primary school curriculum, discussed in Chapter 2, in which one part (the 'basics') had high status and was protected and heavily assessed, whilst the other (the arts and the humanities) was considered to

be of 'low priority, unassessed, vulnerable and even dispensable' (Alexander, 2004, page 23). In relation to the concerns of this study, it means that geography was the subject relegated to the low status role.

This state of affairs highlights the contradictions in the realisation of Ofsted's mission statement of *improvement through inspection* as applied to foundation subjects such as geography. If there is validity in the principles underpinning central government policy to raise standards in the core subjects by means of regular testing and inspections, it could well be argued that such testing and inspections should also be applied to raise standards in all subjects of the school curriculum, including geography. Otherwise, as the Annual Reports of HMCI have shown (Ofsted, 2004c; Ofsted 2005c; Ofsted 2005d), the subject becomes marginalised and provision for it deteriorates. Moreover, other foundation subjects, such as history, would be similarly affected to varying degrees, and children's entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum would be jeopardized. Ironically, such a situation is at variance with Ofsted's own arguments that a broad and rich curriculum offers children a meaningful context in which to apply, reinforce and extend their learning in the 'basics' (Ofsted, 2002c). It also frustrates Marsden's argument (2005) that improvement in geographical education must stem from the re-establishment of a broad and balanced curriculum.

Although one of the key objectives of Ofsted inspections is to bring about improvement in schools, the present study indicates that, in many instances, the influence of the inspections on improvement in geography – instead of being one of support and guidance – was often counter-productive, negative and inhibiting. In Chapter 2, reference was made to the work of Chapman (2001), which concluded that Ofsted inspections had a negligible impact on classroom processes and school improvement. The present study shows that the influence of the Ofsted inspections, particularly with respect to

primary geography in the schools in the sample, has been even more severe, to the extent of undermining the subject.

An additional contributory factor to the effects of the inspection process on improvement in primary geography concerns the impact of the knowledge and expertise of the Ofsted inspectors themselves. There was evidence in Chapter 5 that inspectors who were not specialists in geography were less likely to provide critical feedback on the subject than those who knew the subject well, and were more confident in reporting on it. It was also noted that it was usually easier for inspectors to report that on an aspect of geography that was being done than on one which was not being done. For both these reasons it was likely that, overall, the resulting inspection reports would tend to be more positive – or at least descriptive – than negative, failing to identify weaknesses or areas requiring attention. Examination of the reports showed this to be the case.

Overall, this study shows that there is limited evidence of the realisation of Ofsted's objective of *improvement through inspection* when applied to the inspection process of primary school geography. However, it has revealed a considerable body of evidence to the contrary. It seems that rarely is geography improved through inspection in primary schools.

THE EFFECTS ON PRIMARY GEOGRAPHY OF THE PRIORITIZATION OF THE CORE SUBJECTS

In addition to the prioritization of the core subjects for inspection by Ofsted inspection teams, the interview responses reported in Chapter 5 showed a strongly held view that the prioritization of the teaching of the core subjects, especially English and mathematics, has adversely affected improvement in geography in other ways. The interviewees argued that the *National Literacy Strategy* (DfEE,1998) and the *National Numeracy Strategy* (DfEE,1999) had

seriously impacted upon the timetables of the schools, and so foundation subjects such as geography were confined to the afternoons, and insufficient time was allocated to them. Furthermore, the reorganisation of the geography timetable in blocks – frequently alternating half-termly with history – had also led to discontinuity in the development of pupils' geographical skills. Although Catling *et al* (2002, 2004) had reached a similar conclusion, Ofsted's report on the curriculum in successful primary schools (Ofsted, 2002c) had previously argued that it was still possible to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and maintain an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The evidence from this study indicates that this was rarely the case.

A further negative influence on geography was the preoccupation of the schools with the testing culture. This had resulted in an ongoing obsession with attaining high scores in the SATs in the core subjects, and their attendent concern about the schools' positions in the school league tables – quite understandably from the schools' point of view, as they seek to meet government targets. As a result, the curriculum had become even more unbalanced as the testing regime has pushed geography and the other foundation subjects to one side. It could therefore be argued that the accountability pressures on the schools seemed to far exceed those for improvement in subjects like geography.

The effects of this on the balance of the school curriculum have been considerable, with a shift away from foundation subjects, such as geography, to those of the core. Pressure on schools to raise standards in the core subjects from head teachers, governors, LAs and Ofsted has resulted in increased emphasis and timetabled time on literacy and numeracy, and a reduced priority for other subjects. The perception of schools was invariably that Ofsted's chief interest in the inspections was literacy and numeracy and that, although subjects such as geography were to be taught, there was no

real concern about standards in them other than expressed in the annual primary geography subject reports by HMCI. Such perceptions can understandably result in schools failing to give a high level of commitment to geography if it was only going to be inspected superficially, with a report of only two or three lines.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY FOR NATIONAL POLICY AND OFSTED

It was noted in Chapter 2 that the government's requirements for initial teacher training (DfES/TTA, 2002) during the period of this study required courses to ensure that newly qualified teachers (NQTs) knew and understood the curriculum for each of the National Curriculum core subjects. However, the requirements merely required them to have sufficient understanding of a range of work in the rest, which included subjects such as geography. They further specified, in relation to geography, that either history or geography should be included in the training programme. This state of affairs was reinforced by the Ofsted requirements for the inspection of initial teacher training. Alexander (2004) regarded these requirements for the initial teacher training courses, and the concomitant inspection requirements, as undermining the realisation of a broad and balanced curriculum. At the same time, the actual limited amount of time allocated to courses on geography in programmes of initial teacher training had been gradually eroded and was very limited (Catling, 2006a). As a result, many NQTs lacked a geographical background and were starting their teaching careers in the schools with limited knowledge of how to teach geography.

A proposal to address this deficiency was reported in Chapter 5, namely that the National Curriculum programmes of study for geography could be made more specific and easier to understand. Furthermore, it was suggested that the QCA schemes of work for geography could be broadened, and include more examples of practice in geography to support the requirements of the

programmes of study. Complementary to this could be a national programme of training for subject coordinators, drawing upon the expertise of staff from university departments of education and independent consultants. Similar steps could well be taken to support the teaching of other foundation subjects of the curriculum.

In Chapter 2, reference was made to the debate about the tensions and contradictions between the accountability and the school improvement roles of Ofsted inspections. Earley (1998) had argued that one of the difficulties was that the Ofsted inspection process claimed to do both. This study shows that Ofsted has had limited success in its school improvement role, particularly in facilitating improvement in primary school geography. It is argued that if there is real commitment to bringing about improvement in a subject such as geography, then Ofsted may have to reorder its priorities and give precedence to its improvement role. This would entail the realisation of Brighouse's (2001) aspirations for the Ofsted inspection regime to be moderated and shifted towards a method of school inspection with a more developmental purpose.

It is therefore justifiable to question whether the Ofsted system of school inspections is a legitimate means to bring about improvement in geography in primary schools, or whether it is merely a means of ensuring that the subject is being taught in accordance with statutory requirements.

The study indicates that if Ofsted has a role to play in improving primary school geography there is a strong case for reinstating mandatory inspection of geography in all primary schools, in the spirit of the Ofsted mission statement of *improvement through inspection*. This would require revision of the Ofsted inspection framework and the accompanying inspection handbook, with guidelines for schools and inspectors on how effective oral and written feedback on geography should be delivered and acted upon.

These revisions should be focused on informing and guiding improvement, by reporting on strengths and weaknesses in geography, identifying key issues for improvement and suggesting strategies to address them. This would also address the deficiencies in the inspection reports highlighted by Field *et al* (1998) in the late 1990s and not addressed effectively since, as reported in Chapter 2.

In addition, in response to concerns expressed in Chapter 5 by Inspector E regarding the competence of inspectors to inspect geography, Ofsted should require all inspection teams to include an inspector who is qualified and confident in the inspection of primary school geography. Although this would have logistical and resourcing implications, it would mean that the post-2005 subject surveys could be dispensed with. It would also play a major part in ensuring that school inspections could play a robust and effective role in improving geography in primary schools.

HOW THE STUDY COULD BE DEVELOPED

The qualitative survey employed in this study, using a mixed methods approach, made it possible to gain in-depth views of the head teachers, geography coordinators and Ofsted inspectors about inspections and improvement in geography, whilst gaining a wider perspective through the analysis of the inspection reports. The use of both documentary analysis and interviews as data collection methods also complemented each other, and facilitated triangulation of the results, enhancing the reliability of the study. In addition the interviews from the differing perspectives of the Ofsted inspectors and the head teachers and geography coordinators in the schools provided a comprehensive picture of the topic being studied. However, with the benefit of hindsight, the experience of undertaking the study highlights a number of aspects which could be developed:

a) In order to ensure that issues arising from the analysis of the inspection reports were followed up in the interviews, the analysis should be completed before the interview stage of the study commenced. This would provide a relevant and well informed basis from which to develop the interview questions, for example, by asking about how the schools had responded to judgements in their reports on their strengths and weaknesses in geography.

b) To determine whether the contents of the inspection reports produced prior to the September 2003 inspection framework differed qualitatively from those produced after this date, comparisons could be made of data from each group of reports. For instance, examples of judgements could be compared to determine whether they were more or less useful in guiding and informing improvement in geography, and in what respects.

c) Data could be gathered from a larger sample of schools than those visited for the interviews by the use of questionnaires. The compilation of the questions on the questionnaires could then be informed by the responses from the interviews, with the resulting data processed using statistical analysis. This would ensure greater reliability in interpreting the issues addressed in the interviews, and offer better opportunities to generalise than was possible from qualitative examination of the interview data.

d) The duration of the study could be extended to accommodate inspections over a longer period of time, to include some conducted under the 2005 inspection framework. This would offer opportunities to examine more fully changes in the inspection processes and their impact upon improvement in geography.

e) A further source of data for the study could be in the form of written tests and interviews in the sample schools, to assess changes in pupils' geographical knowledge and understanding over a period of time. This

could be supplemented by the examination of samples of their coursework, offering a further dimension to the study and providing a fuller picture of improvement in geography in the schools. By this means, a valuable longitudinal study could be developed.

f) In Chapter 3, reference was made to the trialling of a rating scale during the interviews with the geography coordinators, and the reasons for dispensing with it were explained. However, such a means of collecting data on the subject of this study merits further investigation. It might, for example, prove to be an effective way of collecting data from a different group of respondents to those who were interviewed, and its content could usefully be informed by the responses from the interviews. Such a quantitative study would lend itself to the use of statistical analysis, and could enrich the range of data available to address the focus of the study.

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Three main areas for further research arising from this study have been identified:

1. A logical development from the present study would be *A study of the impact of the introduction of the 2005 inspection framework on improvement in geography.* This should throw light upon how the focus on self-evaluation by the schools (as required by the 2005 inspection framework) might provide useful data to inform improvement in geography.
2. As this study has highlighted the importance of the geography coordinator for improvement to occur in geography, a useful line of enquiry could build upon this information. Such a study could comprise *an investigation into how the role of the geography coordinator could be made more effective to facilitate improvement in geography in primary schools.*

3. The concerns expressed throughout this study about the impact of the prioritization of the core subjects on geography could form the basis for valuable lines of research. This could, for example, comprise *An examination of the effects of the emphasis on the core subjects of the primary school curriculum on improvement in the foundation subjects, with particular respect to geography.* As the literature review in Chapter 2 has shown a dearth of such studies for other subjects of the curriculum than geography, there is scope for parallel studies with respect to these subjects.

CHANGES INTRODUCED IN THE 2005 INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

The study commenced when the 2003 inspection framework was in place, and data were generated and collected during this period. However, in September 2005, a further revised framework was implemented under the requirements of Section 5 (S5) of the Education Act 2005. This framework, entitled *Every Child Matters*, focused on 'school improvement through the use of the school's own self-evaluation' (Ofsted, 2005f, page 1). The virtues of such an approach had previously been expounded by Earley (1998), as explained in Chapter 2. Prior to an inspection, the schools were required to complete self-evaluation forms (SEFs) which covered all the subjects of the curriculum, including geography. In contrast to previous inspections, those conducted under the 2005 framework were to be conducted at very short notice, usually of a few days, and would last no longer than two days for most primary schools. As a consequence, there would be limited time for inspectors to be able to observe or evaluate individual subjects in detail. Furthermore, in common with other subjects of the curriculum, there would be even fewer opportunities for inspection teams to gather data on the teaching of geography, and to feed back to the schools to guide and inform improvement. It is therefore likely, under the 2005 framework, that the

contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in geography will be further reduced.

In order for Ofsted to be able to continue to provide data on standards in all the subjects of the curriculum nationally, the 2005 framework instituted a programme of subject inspections and surveys (Ofsted, 2005f). These are conducted principally by members of HMI and will take place in a limited number of primary schools, selected on a sampling basis. The intention of the plan is to:

- focus on individual subjects on a rolling programme, with secondary schools having an inspection in one subject every three years and primary schools less frequently
- choose some schools because of their reputation for good practice
- inspect geography in at least 30 primary schools each year
- obtain quality evidence linked to issues in order to inform decisions about how the development of geography could be supported
- publish a full report on each subject every three years, with the first geography report in 2006.

In the 30 or more schools in which geography is inspected it is intended that the inspections will be thorough and will offer feedback to the schools. As in the earlier days of Ofsted inspections, inspectors will conduct lesson observations; scrutinise pupils' work; have discussions with teachers and pupils; examine documentation and discuss the school's self-evaluation reports. It is proposed that primary school subject inspections will last for one day only, and they too will be at short notice. The inspection teams conducting them will be subject experts, and will be led by members of HMI. The first geography report of this type is due to be published in November/December 2007.

However, the problem with surveys of this type is that their impact on improvement in geography in the schools will be limited to those few schools selected for the survey. Whilst it could be argued that the surveys will inform HMCI Annual Reports on geography, responses from the interviews in this study have shown that schools do not normally make reference to them. It should also be noted that some of the schools in the survey will be selected because of their reputation for good practice, and so would be less in need of feedback from an inspection than others whose reputation was less good. These surveys are essentially about the 'national' picture, not a school's situation and need (though Ofsted does inspect particular schools). While they might serve Ofsted's mission nationally, they will not aid development for schools individually and directly.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that Ofsted inspections have the potential to contribute to improvement in primary school geography on the occasions when they provide schools with thorough and relevant feedback in the inspection reports on their work in geography. However, these occasions are infrequent, as many inspections do not address geography, whilst others provide insufficient feedback to be of value for improvement. Furthermore, as the inspections normally occur only once every six years, their ongoing impact would be limited. More often, the study shows that – especially since the introduction of the 2003 inspection framework – primary school inspections have become increasingly counterproductive to improvement in geography, undermining the subject by marginalising it and failing to provide adequate guidance to inform improvement.

The study has also shown that, whilst these inspections have made at best a limited contribution to improvement in primary school geography, they focus upon their accountability role for standards in the core subjects, particularly

numeracy and literacy, with great vigour and commitment. Additionally, the responses of many schools in anticipation of an Ofsted inspection, coupled with central government initiatives for raising standards in numeracy and literacy have resulted in the diversion of effort and resources from subjects such as geography, to the detriment of the balance of the curriculum. In this sense, the role of the inspection process as applied to primary schools can be regarded largely as an agent of central government control of the curriculum, with debilitating consequences for geography.

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APPENDICES

Appendix G: Verbatim transcription of pilot interviews

Ed D PR4 Pilot Interviews
School A

Interview with Head Teacher
(NB Head teacher had been unwell and absent from school on the day of the interview, but came into school specially to be interviewed)

MPB What do you consider is the impact of the 2003 framework inspections on the foundation subjects, and what effect do they have on the balance of the curriculum?

HT The last time we were inspected was just short of two years ago and the preparation we had to do for that was to state roughly what percentage of the curriculum time was spent on each subject. With geography we tend to do it in a box – it's not a weekly lesson – there's a block and there's a study area – it might be at home, it might be abroad, it might be a comparative thing, it might be very local – just doing it on the site. The evidence the inspection saw was work that had been completed as well as ....There has been a huge expectation of improvements in literacy and maths to the detriment of science as well as the foundation subjects. They also, I think, (the government), through the QCA have paid lip service to the other foundation subjects as well, saying that there should be two hours of PE – that there should be a lot more physical activity. We've just started to link geography with science and nature study – walk round the school grounds supported by a former of colleague of your's. So, the geography is done in blocks. The geography coordinator is planning to introduce orienteering next year on Shotover and in the school grounds

MPB Will the orienteering come out of the timetable for geography?

HT That's a very good question that needs to be addressed and to be considered before the start of the next academic year.

MPB So, overall then, would you say that there is an impact on the foundation subjects at the moment?

HT I think so, because of this ...unhealthy concentration on improving government targets ...what nonsense... in English and maths... I was encouraged by the last inspection, talking to the RgI. We changed the school day afterwards. Before they came, we had two sessions in the morning...a longish one and a shorter one...and the longish one tended to be a bit itty bitty plus...either maths or literacy...and so it was felt then that the rest of the time that was left rather squeezed the rest of the timetable...so we have adjusted the school day accordingly ...hopefully it will be better.

With reference to my knowledge of the latest changes in 2003 is fairly academic because I won't be around to see the next inspection

MPB An interesting point which comes out of this is whether there is a relationship between inspecting schools and improvements in standards? Do you think that inspection leads to improvements in standards?

HT A foundation subject, I think, is driven by the efforts of the coordinator...the coordinator is more important than any Ofsted report....the enthusiasm, the time allocation to the coordinator, the resourcing...giving it time at staff meetings and training sessions is far far more important

MPB Thank you for giving up your time to be interviewed.

Interview with the Geography Coordinator

MPB I'm very grateful for you agreeing to be interviewed. The first question I'd like to ask is whether you use national guidelines for geography.

GgC What we use is the QCA scheme of work – most of our units of work are based around those –they are not all exactly the same, but they are based around them – what I've done is to go through the work that we're doing from the QCA schemes to check on progression and coverage – I've used the national curriculum guidelines for that...

MPB I'm also interested in what use is made of ICT –

GgC We will be using interactive whiteboards in Yr 5 from September, but at the moment, when Yr 5 are studying India we do a powerpoint presentation on India – we use things like 'expresso' CD Roms and the internet for research. Key Stage 1 do direction using logo and the floor turtle and in Key Stage 2 we also use logo. .. and the maths/maps side of things

MPB Of course, the internet has got great potential...Which case studies do you use for distant places?

GgC In Yr 2 we use Danicho in Kenya and in Yr 5 we use Chembakolli in India.

MPB Do you build in the requirement to teach numeracy and literacy?

GgC We do. Yr 2 are actually doing one of the more recent QCA units called Geography and Numbers. When we do those lessons we cover coordinates and when we come to do mapwork we apply what we have learnt from maths ... and expand that into six figure coordinates. We use direction, angle of turn and so forth comes into the geography curriculum.

MPB When the school was last inspected some two years ago, (2000), the report gave points of guidance for action ...

GgC Yes. It does say that standards were satisfactory for Years 2 and 6...that only four lessons in the junior classes were seen – probably not enough to get a really clear picture – that there was good provision for pupils with special educational needs...it went into quite a lot of detail about what Year 2 and Year 4 and Year 6 pupils studied, and nothing about Year 3 and Year 5 or Year 1 at all. I don't know why they particularly picked on those years. They thought the quality of teaching was pretty good and it had been improved since the last inspection, but that plenary sessions were frequently omitted. That there were good links with other subjects and they identified two real areas that could be improved on – to fully develop the scheme of work, which is what I've been working on since I took over the job in September, and a more regular pattern of assessment – that's a tricky one for teachers in the foundation subjects.

MPB So there we have quite a full report on the subject. Under the revised inspection framework which came into being in September 2003, it is very likely that the report might only be two lines and that it might just say that standards are satisfactory as far as the inspectors could see...and not say very much more about it.

GgC From now it seems it will be so much more up to the coordinator to identify what needs doing. From my point of view, that's not such a bad thing, because the coordinator should be doing that year in year out anyway. There's nothing in this report which actually tells me anything I didn't already know...

MPB So that's healthy, in a sense...putting the responsibility back onto the school and the coordinator.

GgC And if you're an experienced coordinator, that's just fine. Someone coming new into it might find it more difficult.

MPB Where do you see the accountability, in that case, if the buck stops at the coordinator?

GgC I don't think it does entirely, because a coordinator can only do so much...the staff have to take on board a lot of things and put them into practice, but also the school has to provide sufficient funding for the things that needs to be improved. We had a zero budget this year, so that made my job very difficult, and so I've just been auditing and producing schemes of work and things like that, but I haven't been able to put new things into practice because of no funding...but next year it will be one of the priorities.

MPB Do you monitor teaching?

GgC I haven't been able to so far...because I've just stepped into the job... I needed to audit what we had in stock and to look at the schemes of work.

MPB So, will there be time allocated to you in the future for monitoring standards?

GgC I'm hoping to. It's really up to us how we use our free time each term, and I'd have to prioritise what I felt were the most important things to do...next term, hopefully, I'll be able to do some monitoring.

MPB Do you do a book trawl?

GgC I haven't done a book trawl yet – all I've done is looked at what we've got in boxes for different topics and resources.

MPB That's a good start.

GgC It is, because I've been able to which of the QCA documents – I've looked at the resources needed for each QCA theme, compared with what we've got, so I now know where I want to put money to get us up to scratch.

MPB So, going back to this question of the very light touch of Ofsted inspection which is likely to be the case in the future, do you think it is likely to have an effect on the balance of the curriculum in school?

GGc Yes. That was one of the things the last inspection picked up on – a key thing to improve was to increase the time allocation for the foundation subjects. What I don't know is whether that has been done, because I don't know what the timetable was like before.

MPB That was something I should have asked the head, and didn't.

GgC I'm very keen to try and get geography incorporated into other subjects more – that's a key way to get more time for it.

MPB Will that mean doing topic work? Or will it mean keeping geography distinct, but bringing literacy and numeracy and ICT into it?

GgC Yes. There may be weeks when we'll focus on map skills and we'll do coordinates at the same time – in that way we're getting extra coverage

MPB Does that mean you might get extra time for geography?

GgC Yes... and the ICT as well. We have two hours of ICT which does squeeze the rest of the timetable quite a lot.

MPB Do you take the class to an ICT suite?

GgC Yes

MPB And so can you use geography software when you have ICT lessons?

GgC Yes. The next thing I need to audit is what software we've got which can be used for geography.

MPB You mentioned there was a zero budget this year. Why was that?

GgC It was because the school was very short of funds – only numeracy and literacy got any funding this year. Next year we should have £500.

MPB What about fieldwork?

GgC Year 4 didn't go to the Isle of Wight this year because a lot of their geography work revolved around the visit. It was because of the children's poor behaviour this year – we couldn't take them into that sort of situation. However, Year 5 have just been to Devon – to Dartmoor for five days.

MPB Is it largely geography?

GgC It's largely geography, although it's also very much a social thing because we take the children from the nearby special school with us. We stay at a working farm; we do jobs on the farm and we spend a day on Dartmoor and a day at a historical centre (Welland Quay) – looking at mining and such-like...and a day at Cramhill Fort - this links with work on World War 2 . We do mapwork before the event.

MPB Do you do a river study?

GgC No. Year 6 do rivers.

MPB Do they go on a day visit?

GgC Yes. I'm a bit concerned about Year 6 because they don't do any history or geography in the autumn or spring terms. They are so focused on SATs.

MPB Do you feel that the impact of SATs affects the balance of the curriculum?

GgC It does...and it was lucky that they were inspected in the summer term, because that's when Year 6 were doing their geography...otherwise they wouldn't have seen any.

MPB Do you block the geography timetable?

GgC Yes. They do a lot of art during the autumn term, with literacy and science, and then in the spring term they do DT work. They tend to do this big block on geography, with rivers and water.

MPB Is this done in the afternoons?

GgC Yes.

MPB Is this effective?

GgC Well. They seem to like it. The Year 6 teachers seem to like it, because they finish with science, and all their 2 hours per week of science is taken over with geography.

MPB Year 4 go to the Isle of Wight...?

GgC Yes – as a contrasting locality

MPB What about local work?

GgC Children go out a lot around the school and the village in Key Stage 1. Year 3 look at Wheatley, and how it has changed over the years.

MPB What effects is the emphasis on the core subjects having on the status of geography in the school?

GgC I think it's requiring us to be more inventive in how we get geography into the other areas of the curriculum – for instance, I've put in literacy for the summer term that we're going to look at volcanoes and earthquakes and things like that, and try to focus explanations on to a geographical area. We are trying to incorporate it in different ways...

MPB Do you think that the emphasis on the core subjects is having any impact on standards in geography?

GgC I do think it is having an effect, and in the past teachers had more latitude in terms of when they were studying a topic and pupils were really interested in it, we'd spend another afternoon doing something on it. But, everything is timetabled so strictly, especially in a big school... it's much more restrictive.

MPB The head said that following the last inspection, the length of the morning had been increased...

GgC Yes, we have another half hour. A lot of people use that for handwriting or reading. It means that there can now be two one hour blocks in the afternoon.

MPB What about the role of the coordinator in relation to staff development?

GgC There hasn't been anything at all for geography...not for some time. The coordinator's file showed that the subject had only been 'baby-sat' by someone who was the coordinator for something else which was more important...so, it's really only been ticking over...there hasn't been any staff development for some time. I want to get geography into the PE curriculum – doing orienteering – and working with the PE coordinator in the school grounds which are good for it - and going up to Shotover with Year 5 and 6. They are also missing out on environmental education – it's a shame that Year 6 spend so much time on rivers because it's an ideal topic...

MPB Is there anything else which you'd like to tell me?

GgC I do think that a lot of the progress that's made in the school is really down to the time and effort the coordinator puts into it. For example, they might ask for a staff meeting about something – I haven't been able to get any staff meeting time yet – we've been really focused on assessment – ICT seems to get loads and loads of staff meeting time

MPB Does geography figure on the school development plan?

GgC Yes, it does.

MPB Many thanks for giving me this interview.

Appendix H: Interview schedule for interviews with head teachers

Research project: The contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in primary school geography

Interview schedule - head teacher:

The purpose of this research is to explore the extent to which Ofsted inspections contribute to improvement in primary school geography

Factors affecting quality in geography

1) What are the specific requirements for good teaching and learning in geography?

2) What do you think leads to improvement in standards in geography?

Current influences on the curriculum and curriculum balance

1) What are the main factors which influence the curriculum in this school?

2) What are the main considerations when drawing up the timetable for the subjects of the curriculum? Tell me how you go about planning the curriculum in this school.

3) How do you decide how much time to allocate to each subject, eg geography, and when to timetable it?

4) What do you consider to be a 'balanced' primary school curriculum and what affects its balance? How do you know that you achieve a broad and balanced curriculum in this school?

5) What determines the allocation of budgets for the different subjects taught in this school and the priorities for staff development?

Impact of an Ofsted inspection on the school

1) In what ways are the priorities for your school's curriculum influenced by the report of your last Ofsted inspection and by preparation for the next one?

2) How has the report from the last inspection influenced a) provision and b) standards in geography?

3) When preparing for an inspection, to what extent do you refer to the Ofsted handbooks for inspection and the Ofsted framework for inspecting schools? How does this affect the priorities in the curriculum?

4) How should an Ofsted inspection lead to improvement in a subject such as geography? To what extent did the last report meet these requirements?

5) How did subject coordinators use the last inspection report as a means to raise standards? Following receipt of the inspection report, what steps does the school take, for example, with regard to geography?

6) How do you think the emphasis of reports on Ofsted inspections has changed since the inception of Ofsted?

Proposals for Ofsted inspections in the future

1) How might inspections in the future (from September 2005) affect improvement in subjects such as geography?

2) If greater emphasis is to be placed on a school's self evaluation of its performance, how might this affect improvement in subjects such as geography? Where would the impetus for improvement come from?

Any other comments

Thank you for your responses in this interview

Appendix I: Interview schedule for interviews with geography coordinators

Research project: The contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in primary school geography

Interview schedule - geography coordinator:

The purpose of this research is to explore the contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in primary school geography

1) Tell me about how long you have been geography coordinator, your experience and training/courses attended, and whether you were at the school during the last inspection.

2) Do Ofsted inspections have any impact on improvement in Literacy and Numeracy in this school, or in ICT and science?

3) If so, what is the link between inspections and improvement? How does this come about?

4) Do improvements in standards in Numeracy and Literacy impact on standards in geography? If so, how?

5) What things do you do as geography coordinator to continue improving geography in this school? What else helps improvement in geography in the school?

6) Do you think that Ofsted inspections can help to improve geography in this school? How might this occur?

7) What information should Ofsted reports on primary school geography provide if they are to help with raising standards?

8) How did the school's latest Ofsted inspection report address geography? Did it provide guidance for the improvement of the subject in the school? Can you recall how it compares with the approach of earlier reports to geography?

9) Can you tell me about how you have used Ofsted reports to help you in your role as subject leader? What has the school done so far to respond to the last report?

10) How have the quality and amount of timetabled time and resources, (including ICT and fieldwork), and the budget improved as a result of the last inspection?

11) What effect might current proposals for future Ofsted inspections (from September 2005) have on improvement and provision in geography?

12) What contributes to good teaching and learning in geography?

Any other comments

Thank you for your responses in this interview

Appendix J: Interview schedule for interviews with Ofsted inspectors

Interview schedule for telephone interviews with Ofsted inspectors:

Registered inspector..... Team inspector..... Inspector code .....

1. Introduction:

The purpose of this research is to explore the contribution of Ofsted inspections to improvement in primary school geography.

I am interested in the periods of inspection:-

a) prior to January 2000
b) January 2000 to September 2003
c) September 2003 to August 2005

2. Experience of inspection of geography:

How many years have you been an Ofsted inspector?
On approximately how many inspections have you inspected/led an inspection of primary school geography?
Of these:-
a) *How often was geography inspected fully and a full paragraph written in the report?* (When this happened, how long and detailed was the paragraph, and what did it address? Did it provide an agenda for improvement in geography? If so, how? Please explain what the geography paragraph in the report was like and how it might contribute to improvement in geography).
b) *How often was geography only partly inspected, or subject to sampling?* (Please describe what the geography paragraph in the report was like and how it might contribute to improvement in geography).
c) *How often was geography not inspected at all?*
d) *How often did you conduct interviews with geography subject coordinators and give feedback to them?*
e) How often did inspections include observation of geography lessons?
f) How often did they include work scrutiny of geography, and interviews with pupils about geography?

Have you inspected geography fully since Sept. 2003? If so, how frequently?

Additional comments

3. Changes in inspecting and reporting on primary geography:

Do you consider that geography is now inspected less frequently/more frequently/same amount as in the past? Do you consider that geography is now inspected less thoroughly/more thoroughly/same amount as in the past?

In what ways have inspections of geography, and reporting on geography, changed since you began inspecting? When did these changes occur? How have they been influenced by the implementation of the 2000 and 2003 frameworks?

In your time as an inspector, and with reference to geography:

a) In what ways have changes in the inspection framework affected the rigour of inspection of geography? (eg in addressing standards, teaching and learning, quality and range of pupils' learning experiences, leadership and management and areas for improvement.)
b) Have these changes led to improvement /no change/deterioration in standards and provision in geography in the schools?
c) Do inspections now pay more or less attention to standards and provision in geography? Do they now provide the school with a clear picture of standards in geography? Do they now provide the school with a sufficiently full agenda for improvement? Is the teaching of geography being inspected more, or less, thoroughly than previously?

Additional comments.

4. Effect of changes in the inspection framework since September 2003:

In what ways has the 2003 inspection framework changed the emphasis of the inspection of the subjects of the primary school curriculum? How does it encourage/discourage inspectors to inspect geography? To what extent, and in what ways, do these changes affect the balance of the curriculum provided by the schools? Have they resulted in greater/less/no change in the rigour of the inspection of the foundation subjects? How has the option of following inspection trails and of sampling subjects affected the inspection of the foundation subjects, such as geography? What has been the effect of the reduction in the number of inspection days on opportunities to inspect the foundation subjects, especially geography? How accurately do inspection reports now present a balanced picture of a school's curriculum?

Additional comments.

5. Impact of inspections on the primary school curriculum:

In what ways do the Ofsted inspection framework and the focus of school inspections suggest to schools what Ofsted considers to be important in the curriculum? To what extent can they be considered to provide an agenda for schools to follow when planning the curriculum? How do school inspections affect

the quality of geography taught in the schools and how could it be improved? (eg in terms of the amount of time devoted to it and the quality of teaching and resourcing). What do you consider will be the effects of the proposed 2005 inspection framework on primary school geography?

Additional comments

6. Provision for geography in primary schools:

Do most primary schools have a geography coordinator who is:

a) well qualified?
b) well established?
c) experienced?

How important is the coordinator in improving standards and provision in the subject?
What other factors affect provision and standards in geography in primary schools, and how have they changed since you began inspecting?
(Refer to 2003/04 HMCI subject report concerning low standards in geography):
Why are standards low in geography?
How has provision of resources, timetabling and staff training changed over this period of time?
Has the status of geography in the curriculum changed and if so, how?
Which published curriculum guidelines do schools use to underpin their geography curriculum? How widely used are they?

Additional comments.

7. Influence of HMCI Annual Reports on improvement in geography in primary schools:

What effects do you think the HMCI Annual Reports have on improvement in geography in primary schools?

8. Government proposals for monitoring standards in geography after September 2005:

How might Ofsted proposals for monitoring standards in geography by means of inspecting a sample of schools affect improvement in:
a) the schools in the sample?
b) all schools?

Additional comments

9. Summation:

In what ways, and to what extent, do you think Ofsted inspections of primary schools contribute to improvement in geography?

Additional comments

Thank you for your responses in this interview.

Turn off cassette recorder.

Appendix K: Microsoft Excel spreadsheet

Analysis of inspection reports from schools in Oxon and Bucks

School	LA	Roll	Date	Framework	Number of judgements
1	O	111	11 03	B	2
2	O	122	6 99	A	13
3	O	54	3 04	B	11
4	B	462	3 02	A	14
5	O	505	3 01	A	11
6	O	345	3 04	B	5
7	B	369	3 03	A	15
8	O	289	3 99	A	7
9	O	395	3 04	B	6
10	O	312	2 99	A	13
11	O	274	9 03	B	6
12	O	58	10 03	B	2
13	B	75	2 02	A	4
14	O	60	9 99	A	10
15	O	78	2 99	A	18
16	O	173	2 99	A	5
17	O	104	4 99	A	9
18	O	165	3 99	A	13
19	O	47	1 04	B	11
20	O	137	1 04	B	3
21	O	188	3 04	B	12
22	O	70	4 99	A	8
23	O	245	2 04	B	4
24	O	303	11 98	A	11
25	B	224	11 03	B	6
26	O	401	3 00	A	16
27	O	72	2 99	A	8
28	B	151	2 04	B	4
29	B	120	5 04	B	9
30	O	101	2 99	A	11
31	O	162	2 04	B	3
32	O	525	2 99	A	10
33	O	57	4 99	A	9
34	O	212	1 99	A	11
35	O	90	5 04	B	5
36	B	181	1 04	B	2
37	B	746	6 04	B	7
38	O	280	9 03	B	3
39	O	167	11 03	B	6
40	B	154	11 03	B	5
41	B	264	9 03	B	3
42	B	239	10 01	A	7

43	B	293	5 04	B	16
44	O	136	11 03	B	10
45	B	126	2 01	A	7
46	O	413	5 04	B	0
47	O	203	10 98	A	16
48	O	67	11 03	B	6
49	O	390	12 03	B	1
50	O	74	1 04	B	5
51	B	268	1 04	B	6
52	B	219	9 03	B	8
53	O	56	3 04	B	11
54	B	179	12 03	B	10
55	O	437	3 99	A	14
56	O	111	3 99	A	13
57	B	214	3 03	A	16
58	B	391	11 98	A	9
59	O	296	4 98	A	17
60	O	139	3 98	A	15
61	O	335	7 98	A	10
62	O	204	6 00	A	10
63	O	23	12 03	B	0
64	O	143	6 99	A	11
65	O	119	11 98	A	12
66	O	453	3 04	B	5
67	O	303	3 04	B	9
68	O	102	11 98	A	8
69	B	221	1 99	A	7
70	O	190	5 04	B	13
71	B	234	12 98	A	13
72	B	221	2 99	A	5
73	O	74	5 99	A	9
74	B	163	11 03	B	1
75	O	280	3 04	B	8
76	O	70	1 04	B	2
77	O	98	3 04	B	6
78	O	137	1 04	B	3
79	O	284	12 03	B	2
80	O	166	12 98	A	8
81	B	197	1 04	B	6
82	B	377	2 04	B	7
83	B	195	10 02	A	12
84	O	82	11 98	A	13
85	O	143	1 04	B	2
86	O	322	2 04	B	9
87	B	463	6 03	A	16
88	B	407	5 99	A	14
89	O	304	2 99	A	12
90	O	110	6 98	A	13

91	B	254	6 98	A	11
92	O	63	1 99	A	12
93	B	189	3 04	B	6
94	O	300	1 04	B	13
95	B	187	1 04	B	7
96	O	242	2 04	B	8
97	O	477	6 02	A	18
98	O	96	3 99	A	6
99	O	322	1 04	B	6
100	O	390	6 02	A	14

Appendix L: Statistical Analysis 1

Chi-square test on number of judgements and the 2003 inspection framework

Statistical analysis was employed to determine whether or not reports published prior to the introduction of the September 2003 Ofsted inspection framework differed significantly from those published after that date in terms of the number of judgements they contained. The chi-square test was used to examine whether there was a significant difference between the number of judgements in a geography paragraph of a report and the date of the inspection of the school.

The dates of the inspections were divided into two framework periods, corresponding to those carried out prior to September 2003 (Framework A) and those carried out between September 2003 and July 2005 (Framework B). From inspection of the range of figures for the number of judgements it was seen that the number of judgements ranged from 1 to 18, and that these could be separated into two categories, one comprising 0 and 9 judgements and the other 10 to 18 judgements. A two by two contingency table was then constructed showing the number of judgements within each of the four cells. (See Table L.1)

The null hypothesis for this test was that 'there is no significant difference between the number of judgements of 9 and less, and those of 10 and more, in terms of whether or not they occurred in reports of inspections prior to September 2003 or after that date.'

Table L.1 Contingency table for number of judgements and period of inspection framework

	0 – 9 judgements	10 – 18 judgements	Totals
Prior to Sept 2003 (Framework A)	16	34	50
Sept 2003 - July 2005 (Framework B)	41	9	50
Totals	57	43	100

The value for chi-square (χ^2) was then calculated using the data from this table and the appropriate formula. The result is shown below:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{100\,(16 \times 9 - 34 \times 41)^2}{57 \times 50 \times 43 \times 50} = \frac{100\,(144 - 1394)^2}{6127500} = \frac{100 \times 1562500}{6127500}$$

$$\chi^2 = 25.499796$$

Reference to the tables of the critical values for the chi-square distribution showed that the test statistic at 25.49 is more than the critical value of 6.64 for one degree of freedom at the 0.01 level of significance, and was more than the critical value of 10.83 for one degree of freedom at the 0.001 level of significance. *This is highly significant and so the null hypothesis should be rejected.*

There is therefore a significant difference between the number of judgements of 9 or less and those of 10 and more in terms of whether they were made during the period of Inspection Framework A or B.

Appendix M: Statistical Analysis 2

Chi-square test on number of judgements in a report and the number of pupils on the roll of the school

As the size of the schools in the sample, in terms of the number of pupils on roll, varied considerably, it was reasonable to conclude that the number of judgements on geography in a report could also be related to the size of the school roll. This was because the size of the Ofsted inspection team – and hence the time and opportunities available to inspect geography – depended on the size of the roll of the school. The Chi-square test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the number of judgements in a geography paragraph of a report and the size of the school, as determined by number of pupils on roll in a school. Two tests, Test 1 and Test 2, were conducted, using different figures for the mean roll for the schools. Test 1 used the value of 239 for the *national* mean for pupils on roll in primary schools, and Test 2 used the value of 220 for the study *sample* mean, which was calculated from the school population statistics I had collected.

Test 1

To test whether there was a significant difference between the number of judgements in a report and the number of pupils on the roll of the school. The test was based upon the national mean of 239 for the roll of a primary school.

The statistics for the number of pupils on the roll of the school were divided into two categories representing, respectively, schools where the number on roll was less than the national mean of 239 and those where the number equalled or exceeded it. As in the previous example, the number of judgements was divided into the two categories, one comprising 0 to 9 judgements and the other 10 to 18 judgements. A two by two contingency table was then constructed. (See Table M.1)

The null hypothesis for this test was that 'there is no significant difference between the number of judgements of 9 and less and those of 10 and more in terms of whether or not the number of pupils on the roll of the school was less than 239, or 239 and over.'

Table M.1: Contingency table for number of judgements and number of pupils on the roll of a school

No of pupils on roll	0 to 9 judgements	10 to 18 judgements	Total
Less than 239 -	36	25	61
239 and over	21	18	39
Totals	57	43	100

$$\chi^2 = \frac{100\,(36 \times 18 - 25 \times 21)^2}{57 \times 39 \times 43 \times 61} = \frac{100\,(648 - 525)^2}{5830929} = \frac{1512900}{5830929}$$

$$\chi^2 = 0.2594612$$

The tables for the critical values for the chi-square distribution show that the test statistic of 0.25 is less than the critical value of 6.64 for one degree of freedom at the 0.01 level of significance and less than the critical value of 3.84 for one degree of freedom at the 0.05 level of significance. *The null hypothesis should therefore not be rejected* and there is no significance difference between the number of judgements on geography in a report and the number of pupils in a school.

Test 2

To test whether there was a significant difference between the number of judgements in a report and the number of pupils on the roll of the school. The test is based upon the mean value of 220 pupils for the roll of the pupils in the sample schools.

The statistics for the number of pupils on the roll of the school were divided into two categories, representing respectively whether the school rolls were less than the mean of 220 for the schools in the sample or whether they were equal to or more than it. As in the previous two examples, the numbers of judgements were divided into the two categories of 0 to 9 and 10 to 18 judgements, and a two by two contingency table was constructed. (See Table M.2)

The null hypothesis for this test was that 'there is no significant difference between the number of judgements of 9 and less and those of 10 and more in terms of whether the number of pupils on the roll of the school was less than 220, or 220 and over.'

Table M.2: Contingency table for number of judgements and number of pupils on the roll of a school

No of pupils on roll	0 to 9 judgements	10 to 18 judgements	Total
Less than 220	33	24	57
220 and over	24	19	43
Totals	57	43	100

$$\chi^2 = \frac{100\,(33 \times 19 - 24 \times 24)^2}{57 \times 43 \times 43 \times 57} = \frac{100\,(627 - 576)^2}{6007401} = \frac{260100}{6007401}$$

$$\chi^2 = 0.0432965$$

The tables for the critical values for the chi-square distribution show that the test statistic of 0.04 is less than the critical value of 6.64 for one degree of freedom at the 0.01 level of significance and less than the critical value of 3.84 for one degree of freedom at the 0.05 level of significance. *The null hypothesis should therefore not be rejected* and there is no significant difference between the number of judgements on geography in a report and the number of pupils in a school.

Appendix N: Microsoft Excel spreadsheet

Analysis of judgements within each category – all judgements

School	Framew'k	Judge'ts	Standards	Provision	T and L	Curriculum	Resources	Fieldwork	L and M
1	B	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	1
2	A	13	2	11	5	2	2	1	1
3	B	11	3	8	2	4	1	0	1
4	A	14	6	8	3	2	1	0	2
5	A	11	3	8	3	2	1	0	2
6	B	5	2	3	0	2	0	0	1
7	A	15	7	8	3	2	1	0	2
8	A	7	2	5	2	1	0	0	2
9	B	6	3	3	1	1	0	0	1
10	A	13	3	10	4	3	0	1	2
11	B	6	2	4	1	2	0	1	0
12	B	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
13	A	4	2	2	1	0	1	0	0
14	A	10	5	5	1	2	1	1	0
15	A	18	9	9	4	2	2	1	0
16	A	5	3	2	2	0	0	0	0
17	A	9	4	5	4	0	0	1	0
18	A	13	4	9	3	2	1	2	1
19	B	11	5	6	4	0	1	0	1
20	B	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
21	B	12	5	7	5	1	0	1	0
22	A	8	3	5	3	0	0	2	0
23	B	4	3	1	1	0	0	0	0
24	A	11	5	6	4	1	0	1	0
25	B	6	3	3	2	1	0	0	0
26	A	16	8	8	5	1	0	2	0
27	A	8	2	6	4	1	1	0	0
28	B	4	1	3	1	1	0	1	0
29	B	9	4	5	2	2	0	1	0
30	A	11	5	6	3	2	1	0	0
31	B	3	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
32	A	10	5	5	4	0	1	0	0
33	A	9	5	4	3	0	1	0	0
34	A	11	4	7	4	0	1	1	1
35	B	5	3	2	2	0	0	0	0
36	B	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
37	B	7	3	4	2	1	0	0	1
38	B	3	0	3	2	1	0	0	0
39	B	6	3	3	1	1	0	0	1
40	B	5	3	2	2	0	0	0	0
41	B	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
42	A	7	5	2	1	0	1	0	0

43	B	16	5	11	5	2	1	2	1
44	B	10	5	5	3	1	0	0	1
45	A	7	4	3	2	0	0	1	0
46	B	0	0	0					
47	A	16	7	9	6	1	1	0	1
48	B	6	3	3	1	1	0	1	0
49	B	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
50	B	5	3	2	2	0	0	0	0
51	B	6	1	5	0	2	1	1	1
52	B	8	2	6	3	0	1	1	1
53	B	11	4	7	4	1	1	0	1
54	B	10	6	4	3	1	0	0	0
55	A	14	7	7	6	1	0	0	0
56	A	13	5	8	6	2	0	0	0
57	A	16	7	9	6	1	1	0	1
58	A	9	3	6	3	1	1	0	1
59	A	17	8	9	6	1	1	0	1
60	A	15	7	8	6	0	1	1	0
61	A	10	5	5	5	0	0	0	0
62	A	10	6	4	3	0	1	0	0
63	B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
64	A	11	6	5	4	0	1	0	0
65	A	12	5	7	4	1	1	1	0
66	B	5	4	1	1	0	0	0	0
67	B	9	3	6	3	1	0	1	1
68	A	8	4	4	3	1	0	0	0
69	A	7	4	3	3	0	0	0	0
70	B	13	5	8	4	1	0	2	1
71	A	13	5	8	4	2	0	1	1
72	A	5	3	2	1	1	0	0	0
73	A	9	5	4	3	1	0	0	0
74	B	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
75	B	8	4	4	4	0	0	0	0
76	B	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
77	B	6	5	1	1	0	0	0	0
78	B	3	0	3	1	1	0	1	0
79	B	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	0
80	A	8	5	3	3	0	0	0	0
81	B	6	2	4	2	0	0	2	0
82	B	7	3	4	1	2	0	0	1
83	A	12	4	8	5	1	0	0	2
84	A	13	6	7	3	0	1	2	1
85	B	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
86	B	9	4	5	1	2	0	2	0
87	A	16	9	7	4	2	0	0	1
88	A	14	6	8	4	1	1	1	1
89	A	12	6	6	4	1	0	1	0
90	A	13	6	7	2	3	1	1	0

91	A	11	5	6	3	0	1	1	1
92	A	12	5	7	4	2	0	1	0
93	B	6	3	3	1	1	0	1	0
94	B	13	6	7	4	1	1	0	1
95	B	7	5	2	2	0	0	0	0
96	B	8	4	4	3	1	0	0	0
97	A	18	8	10	6	1	1	1	1
98	A	6	3	3	2	1	0	0	0
99	B	6	2	4	2	1	0	1	0
100	A	14	6	8	5	1	0	2	0

Appendix O: Microsoft Excel spreadsheet

Analysis of judgements within each category – pre September 2003

School	Framew'k	Judge'ts	Standards	Provision	T and L	Curriculum	Resources	Fieldwork	L and M
2	A	13	2	11	5	2	2	1	1
4	A	14	6	8	3	2	1	0	2
5	A	11	3	8	3	2	1	0	2
7	A	15	7	8	3	2	1	0	2
8	A	7	2	5	2	1	0	0	2
10	A	13	3	10	4	3	0	1	2
13	A	4	2	2	1	0	1	0	0
14	A	10	5	5	1	2	1	1	0
15	A	18	9	9	4	2	2	1	0
16	A	5	3	2	2	0	0	0	0
17	A	9	4	5	4	0	0	1	0
18	A	13	4	9	3	2	1	2	1
22	A	8	3	5	3	0	0	2	0
24	A	11	5	6	4	1	0	1	0
26	A	16	8	8	5	1	0	2	0
27	A	8	2	6	4	1	1	0	0
30	A	11	5	6	3	2	1	0	0
32	A	10	5	5	4	0	1	0	0
33	A	9	5	4	3	0	1	0	0
34	A	11	4	7	4	0	1	1	1
42	A	7	5	2	1	0	1	0	0
45	A	7	4	3	2	0	0	1	0
47	A	16	7	9	6	1	1	0	1
55	A	14	7	7	6	1	0	0	0
56	A	13	5	8	6	2	0	0	0
57	A	16	7	9	6	1	1	0	1
58	A	9	3	6	3	1	1	0	1
59	A	17	8	9	6	1	1	0	1
60	A	15	7	8	6	0	1	1	0
61	A	10	5	5	5	0	0	0	0
62	A	10	6	4	3	0	1	0	0
64	A	11	6	5	4	0	1	0	0
65	A	12	5	7	4	1	1	1	0
69	A	8	4	4	3	1	0	0	0
70	A	7	4	3	3	0	0	0	0
72	A	13	5	8	4	2	0	1	1
73	A	5	3	2	1	1	0	0	0
74	A	9	5	4	3	1	0	0	0
81	A	8	5	3	3	0	0	0	0
84	A	12	4	8	5	1	0	0	2
85	A	13	6	7	3	0	1	2	1
88	A	16	9	7	4	2	0	0	1

89	A	14	6	8	4	1	1	1	1
90	A	12	6	6	4	1	0	1	0
91	A	13	6	7	2	3	1	1	0
92	A	11	5	6	3	0	1	1	1
93	A	12	5	7	4	2	0	1	0
98	A	18	8	10	6	1	1	1	1
99	A	6	3	3	2	1	0	0	0
100	A	14	6	8	5	1	0	2	0
Total		564	252	312	182	49	29	27	25

Appendix P: Microsoft Excel spreadsheet

Analysis of judgements within each category – post September 2003

School	Framew'k	Judge'ts	Standards	T and L	Curriculum	Resources	Fieldwork	L and M	Provision
1	B	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
3	B	11	3	2	4	1	0	1	8
6	B	5	2	0	2	0	0	1	3
9	B	6	3	1	1	0	0	1	3
11	B	6	2	1	2	0	1	0	4
12	B	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
19	B	11	5	4	0	1	0	1	6
20	B	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
21	B	12	5	5	1	0	1	0	7
23	B	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	1
25	B	6	3	2	1	0	0	0	3
28	B	4	1	1	1	0	1	0	3
29	B	9	4	2	2	0	1	0	5
31	B	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	1
35	B	5	3	2	0	0	0	0	2
36	B	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
37	B	7	3	2	1	0	0	1	4
38	B	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
39	B	6	3	1	1	0	0	1	3
40	B	5	3	2	0	0	0	0	2
41	B	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	1
43	B	16	5	5	2	1	2	1	11
44	B	10	5	3	1	0	0	1	5
46	B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
48	B	6	3	1	1	0	1	0	3
49	B	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
50	B	5	3	2	0	0	0	0	2
51	B	6	1	0	2	1	1	1	5
52	B	8	2	3	0	1	1	1	6
53	B	11	4	4	1	1	0	1	7
54	B	10	6	3	1	0	0	0	4
63	B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
66	B	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	1
67	B	9	3	3	1	0	1	1	6
70	B	13	5	4	1	0	2	1	8
74	B	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
75	B	8	4	4	0	0	0	0	4
76	B	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
77	B	6	5	1	0	0	0	0	1
78	B	3	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
79	B	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
81	B	6	2	2	0	0	2	0	4

82	B	7	3	1	2	0	0	1	4
85	B	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
86	B	9	4	1	2	0	2	0	5
93	B	6	3	1	1	0	1	0	3
94	B	13	6	4	1	1	0	1	7
95	B	7	5	2	0	0	0	0	2
96	B	8	4	3	1	0	0	0	4
99	B	6	2	2	1	0	1	0	4
Total		301	133	81	43	8	20	16	168

Appendix Q – Example of selectively transcribed interview

Transcription of interview with Inspector A

Inspected since 1996 – 9 years as Team Inspector and RGI

2. Inspector's experience of inspecting primary school geography:
Insp. A: Have inspected geography about 20 – 25% of the time, because I am a geography specialist. It depends on the size of the team. If there are only two in a team, we have to half the subjects. If the team is bigger, say seven, it can be better distributed. On about 25 – 30% of the time geography was inspected fully and in about 20% of the time was a full page report written (usually ¾ of a page). It would probably have some examples of good practice in it. Because of the nature of the evidence, the report is often a recollection of what happened rather than specific recommendations. It might have given one or two clues for improvement, rather than saying 'this should be better in this area.' Paragraphs are sometimes just descriptive – possibly because geography was taught on different days to the inspection and so no teaching was seen, and other sources of evidence were used instead – the team would thus be trying to give credit to the subject. If it stands out that the quality is not good eg too many worksheets, this may be traced back to weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge and understanding. The worksheet issue may of course apply across the school to other subjects as well. Inspected partly – 60 – 70% of the time. In 2004-2005, geography rarely had its own separate paragraph – it was often linked to history. eg "only two lessons were seen in the humanities, one in history and one in geography. In the geography lesson..." Towards the end of this time, inspectors were quite relieved to do this because this reduced their workload and they didn't have to write as much, especially once they were aware of the new (2005) framework. They were pleased when the 2003 framework allowed them to sample subjects – so in geography, maybe just a statement was made in the report – sometime a single line eg resources were adequate. Much the same applied to history. It often alternates with geography on the timetable, and so sometimes an inspection saw a lot of history and on others a lot of geography.
Geography not inspected at all: In this case not much was given in terms of feedback. On some occasions, inspectors who were inspecting geography were not necessarily experts in geography – but this also applies to teachers in primary schools and also to coordinators in small primary schools – the teachers try to cover the whole 11 subjects. It is a different scenario in large schools with "coordinators for all subjects". So, size of school is a factor. Most inspectors are endorsed for everything and so will be more expert in some subjects than others. As a result, some reports will be more bland than others - in such cases the inspectors would appreciate what was going on, but could not comment on what was not going on. An expert, on the other hand, can spot things easily and can diagnose what is going wrong.
Subject coordinators: In small schools we often did group interviews eg for all the foundation subjects. We always fed back in English, Maths and Science and ICT –

and possibly in SEN. We rarely fed back to the geography coordinator. In my first inspections (1996) everyone was interviewed and given one-to-one feedback. But, in the early days inspectors were told not to give advice –this has mellowed over the years and inspectors latterly had a long conversation on issues. Unfortunately the capability became less – in the early days there was a lot of capability but they couldn't do it – and then it became a lot of wanting to do it but there was less capability. Also, in the early days interviews with pupils took place more often, and inspectors covered quite a lot of ground with them. Certainly, when no lessons were seen we'd try to back it up with geography interviews with Yr 2 and Yr 6 pupils – these often covered history and sometimes DT as well.
Scrutiny of work: Inspection teams would ask for books in subjects which were not seen taught during an inspection – they would also look at books during lessons. Sometimes feedback was to the head teacher as an anecdote eg on resources or overuse of worksheets – but not to the coordinator. It was rare for geography to figure as a key issue in a report. "Geography was not seen necessarily as important as the raising of issues in the core subjects."
Other evidence: We would also examine geography displays eg on Chembakoli and Isle of Struay

3.Changes in the ways inspections were conducted and reported:
Insp A: I have inspected since 1996 – Early reports were very formal – civil service type of reports – They were thorough and "got under the skin of the subjects". Every subject was reported on, including geography. Every subject had a good page of reasonable in-depth analysis of the subject.... It did have the effect of informing the schools that they would be looking at every subject.
Geography, like some of the other foundation subjects, has been a bit marginalised, although, where possible, the inspection team has been able to see it. In about 50% of the schools geography was on the timetable and able to be seen during the inspection.
How standards and provision might be improved:
Insp A: Official guidance eg the National Curriculum guidance, is reasonably helpful – it has given the non-specialist a framework within which to work. The publishers have followed suit with their publications on guidance. Links with IT as well – use of e-mail and teleconferencing in some schools. Residential trips are important eg one school I know goes to Normandy each year and uses the trip for history and geography. Location can also be a factor, depending on the expertise of the coordinator – a specialist can make the most of a local area eg in urban areas to study street furniture.

4. Effect of changes to the inspection framework in September 2003
MPB "Have the revisions to the framework had an impact on this?"
Insp A: Over the years the foundation subjects have been marginalised to the point that schools play the game a bit. If they think a subject is not being inspected, then you don't have to worry about it as much as the core subjects, which become very high profile...I can understand why a school would do that. You don't measure geographical standards in a school nationally, but you do in English and Maths.

You don't have national rankings in geography but you do in English, mathematics and science. If I was in a head's position, and I might think that I like geography and value it and I want to promote it, but when push comes to shove, you don't get measured on standards in geography. You get measured on those in English. The testing regime has pushed the foundation subjects to one side, which has been compounded by the fact that inspections seem to have got lighter – a lighter touch on the foundation subjects, which reinforces the notion that the core subjects are the ones to look at and to value most highly. Some schools, however, have cracked the holy grail of realising that literacy can be taught through geography and history, and that you can teach maths through geography – a specialist may be able to do that. There have been schools which can promote maths and literacy skills through geography – but these are a minority of schools.

5. Impact of inspections on the primary school curriculum:
Agenda for inspections: Insp.A: I think the past frameworks have inadvertently narrowed the curriculum in the foundation subjects and have led schools to focus more on the core subjects. Geography, for instance, has been given less "emotional" time (if not physical time). It may appear on the timetable and there may be a coordinator, but the emotional effort, time and commitment someone can give to that is going to be in proportion to the time given to English, maths and class teaching. It's hard to give it the level of commitment, and if an inspection is coming along we may know that it may only be inspected a little bit, with two or three lines in the report.

6. Changes in inspecting and reporting on geography:
MB: We seem to have covered this earlier in the interview.

7. Provision for geography in primary schools:
Main influences on geography:
MB: What do you consider are the main factors which influence standards and provision in geography in primary schools?
Insp A: Good quality leadership within the school – for example, when there is a head teacher who has geography as a main subject – can influence the way it is taught in the school – Specialist expertise – eg the deputy head or the geography coordinator – a good enthusiastic coordinator who has geography as a main subject or is a current member of the GA. Subject knowledge is therefore very important. Availability of resources and ability to use them is also important –
Geography coordinators: In geography particularly, the quality of the coordinator varies according to the size of the school. When there are only two or three members of staff, they struggle to manage all and sundry. If geography happens to be their specialism, they probably do that one better than the other subjects – but in my experience it's just a matter of the availability of the staff. Occasionally if head teachers are enthusiastic about geography they may appoint
a like-minded person – then they can work together on a residential field trip. But generally it's more tied up with availability than capability.

Newly qualified teachers: My experience of newly qualified teachers has been quite refreshing. They seem to come out of college with a slightly broader view of the curriculum. They seem quite open to see that literacy can be taught through history and geography. They are also good on ICT and can use interactive whiteboards to promote geography and to use a variety of software programs. They are more confident in this than more established mature teachers.

8. Influence of HMCI Annual Reports on improvement in geography in primary schools:
Insp. A: I don't know if they have much impact on standards in geography. Perhaps LEA colleagues and inspectors tend to look at these things and try and form some strategic overview of where policy is going. I don't think HMCI reports hold much of value for the teacher on the sharp edge of things. They have too much to do to have the time to sit and pore over the latest findings of a subject. In the future (after 2005), however, with subject reporting, that may be all we have. Perversely, it might be more useful – rather like in the 1980s when the 'HMI subject matters' booklets came out. For a coordinator, they were specific to your subject responsibility – and so might be read with more interest – more reader friendly than looking at part of a long report. The down side is that schools may not feel criticisms of geography nationally apply to them.

9. Government proposals for monitoring standards in geography after September 2005:
Insp. A: Also, with the new 2005 framework, the only subjects we are likely to look at will be English, maths and science – identified in the PANDA. Even if geography was identified as a weakness, it would be unlikely to form part of the inspection focus, and so the inspection will not help geography at all. However, the subject surveys might be helpful, and they **will** be inspected by specialists.

10. Summation: Insp. A: Although inspections might give some clues for improvement, the reports have tended to be descriptive, with examples of good practice. However, they were often combined with other subjects and so were quite brief.

Appendix R – Example of grouping together the responses to each interview question/topic – Inspector interviews:
Changes in the inspection framework in Sept 2003

Inspector A:

In 2004-2005, geography rarely had its own separate paragraph – often linked to history. eg "only two lessons were seen in the humanities, one in history and one in geography. In the geography lesson..." Towards the end of this time, inspectors were quite relieved to do this because this reduced their workload and they didn't have to write as much, especially once they were aware of the new (2005) framework. They were pleased when the framework allowed them to sample subjects – so in geography, maybe just a statement was made in the report – sometime a single line eg resources were adequate.

Also, with the new 2005 framework, the only subjects we are likely to look at will be English, maths and science – identified in the PANDA. Even if geography was identified as a weakness it would be unlikely to form part of the inspection focus, and so the inspection will not help geography at all.

Inspector B:

Changes in inspections:

In the early days of Ofsted (1994+) we interviewed every coordinator and gave feedback to them because that was a requirement. That went out with the second framework (January 2000 - check this) The changes in the framework have had a major negative impact on geography (1). So, the changes in the inspection framework have had a significant impact on the foundation subjects.

In the new SEFs (self-evaluation forms) there won't be many schools saying that they are improving in geography.

Inspector C:

The second framework was weakened in Dec 1997 when inspections reported much less on the curriculum and curriculum coverage and schemes of work provided the schools could show they were actually doing some of the foundation subjects – The National Curriculum was weakened preparatory to the next version.

Relationship between inspections and the curriculum:

The inspection framework is published – transparent – focus was on the core subjects in the last framework (Sept 2003) – schools would draw inferences that they should hammer the core (2).

2005 Framework:

Will reinforce this view – self-evaluation – data led – so inspectors unlikely to know if there is a problem in geography as there is no data on it. Data does exist on the core subjects, but not on geography – no subjects will be inspected as such.

Inspector D:

Changes in the Ofsted framework had to reflect the changes in emphasis for numeracy and literacy_– there was no longer the requirement to report on geography specifically – that's why it then was sampled or lumped together with

history and RE (3)under the humanities heading – and it often got missed out altogether.
Under the last framework (Sept 2003) they would interview the English, mathematics, science and ICT coordinators – but the other coordinators were interviewed as a group – to discover common threads running through these subjects – inspections didn't pick out specific things happening in specific subjects.
Revisions to framework
There have been dramatic changes – the very early inspections were, in a way, more rigorous – but they didn't always give good feedback on how to improve in geography –
In the new 2005 framework, subjects have been taken out of it. The new way of subject reviews – of going to look at a sample of schools – could be a better way - it would benefit the schools visited as they will get feedback on geography. May also come up with threads useful to all schools.

Inspector E:
2003 framework - had the more slimmed down and focused inspections (4)and where the foundation subjects were a bit of an optional extra (5).
Until September 2003, it was standard practice to interview every subject coordinator, including the geography coordinator – since then we are more selective. Sometimes, since September 2003 you may have talked to the geography coordinator along with the history and RE coordinators to save time. Sometimes you may not talk to the geography coordinator at all. When talking to them as a group, you can't pursue subject-related issues in the same depth as in the old days when you spoke to them on their own. Since September 2003 it has been standard practice only to give feedback to the core subject coordinators (6) at the end of the inspection, and not normally to the foundation subject coordinators.
Changes in reporting on geography
Over the past 11 years, reports have become less descriptive and more analytical in terms of cause and effect, and therefore more able to point the school the way forward – but, the irony is that there has been the trend of slimming down inspection and reporting so that geography has got squeezed out (7) – with the potential benefits of better inspection and better reporting taking place – especially since September 2003. The revisions to the framework are thus very significant in relation to provision and standards in geography.
With the introduction of the 2003 framework the soft pedal was being depressed as far as the foundation subjects were concerned.
2005 Framework
In relation to geography, it will continue and exacerbate the situation since 2003 in terms of saying to schools "Your SATs results in core subjects are the most important factors and so geography is likely to be even further sidelined"

Inspector F:
There was a demise in the inspection of geography (8) – a gradual demise. In the initial stages of Ofsted inspections, up to 1998, every subject was inspected fully. After that it declined, and after 2003 there was hardly any.

Later on, there was an improvement in that there was feedback, but it tended to be in the core subjects. So the foundation subjects lost out because there was less feedback to them. And, later on, when there was feedback, it was on standards in those subjects which were measured by statutory tests – there was no feedback on standards in the foundation subjects, including geography.
September 2003 was a major change – the inspection trails were set up and subjects like geography did not really figure (9)unless the school brought it out in the S4 form. On only ONE occasion was geography part of an inspection trail, but it was more as a combined subject –
After 2003, teams could sample the curriculum and so very little geography was inspected. (20% at the most) I, and many of my colleagues, were disenchanted by this. Led to broad brush statements on geography (10) in the reports. There was very little said about the subject in the report, and so very little feedback to the school about it. There were some disheartened coordinators and disheartened schools, especially if they thought they were doing 'all right' in these subjects.
For example: The school asked: "Are you not going to say anything about it?"
We replied " Well, no. We don't really have time for that. It's not really what we are about." – and the schools didn't like it.
Even in a small school in the early days of inspections there was the requirement to inspect all the subjects that were taught. Yes, the teams were small but, in comparison with 2003 onwards, the number of inspection days was considerably more –
The broad and balanced curriculum has gone out of the window.(11)

Example of grouping together the responses to each interview question/topic – inspector interviews:
National priorities – impact of the core subjects – curriculum balance – NLS and NNS – SATs
Inspectors
Inspector A
Over the years the foundation subjects have been marginalised to the point that schools play the game a bit. If they think a subject is not being inspected, then you don't have to worry about it as much as the core subjects, which become very high profile...I can understand why a school would do that. You don't measure geographical standards in a school nationally, but you do in English and Maths. You don't have national rankings in geography but you do in English, mathematics and science. If I was in a head's position I might think that I like geography and value it and I want to promote it, but when push comes to shove, you don't get measured on the height of geography. You get measured on the height of English. The testing regime has pushed the foundation subjects to one side, which has been compounded by the fact that inspections seem to have got lighter – a lighter touch on the foundation subjects, which reinforces the notion that the core subjects are the ones to look at and to value most highly.
I think the past frameworks have inadvertently narrowed the curriculum in the foundation subjects and have led schools to focus more on the core subjects.

Geography, for instance, has been given less "emotional" time (if not physical time). It may appear on the timetable and there may be a coordinator, but the emotional effort, time and commitment someone can give to that is going to be in proportion to the time given to English, maths and class teaching. It's hard to give it the level of commitment, and if an inspection is coming along we may know that it may only be inspected a little bit, with two or three lines in the report.

Inspector B

In terms of what I've seen in inspections, standards in geography in primary schools have fallen because primary schools have been pushed into thinking that all they've got to do is teach English and mathematics, and a bit of science. In the majority of cases the mornings are nothing but English and mathematics – and geography comes in occasionally in some afternoons, sometimes when it's balanced against history. My worry is that we're putting people through schools now who genuinely believe that it's English and mathematics, and a bit of science – and other subjects. In the 1970s teachers could plan a curriculum that was integrated – I'm not sure teachers know how to do that any more – you do need someone with geography skills. My worry is that we're putting people through schools now who genuinely believe that it's English and mathematics, and a bit of science – and other subjects. In the 1970s teachers could plan a curriculum that was integrated – I'm not sure teachers know how to do that any more – you do need someone with geography skills

Balance and breadth of the curriculum:

The foundation subjects have been almost totally side-lined. The balance in the primary curriculum has switched to being English and mathematics in the morning, and the other subjects squeezed into the afternoon, with geography and history balanced against each other –half a term of geography and half a term of history. This has meant that children have not developed geographical skills. The introduction of the SATs has also skewed the curriculum. School governors are very concerned that English and mathematics are given priority – the assumption being that if English and mathematics are OK then everything else is all right. Everything is driving primary schools to ensure their SATs results are OK. This will be even more so in the new framework

Inspector C:

The huge focus lately on the core skills in English, mathematics and science, and the numeracy and literacy strategies and the KS3 secondary strategy – these have particularly focused on the core subjects of English and maths – and also of ICT – these have had a negative impact on the standing of geography and also on the teaching of it.

Effects on balance and breadth of the curriculum:

First attack on breadth was when National Curriculum was weakened in Dec 1997. – then the literacy and numeracy strategies moved the focus very strongly on to those subjects

Inspector D:

What are the main factors which influence the quality of standards and provision in geography?

The emphasis the government places on numeracy and literacy – if they have a high priority, then other subjects such as geography tend to move lower down the list. It's really the emphasis on other subjects which determines the quality of standards and provision in geography

I don't come across a lot of people who come into primary schools because they want to teach geography – they tend to be wanting other subjects eg En, Ma, Sc and ICT. In schools, the amount of time they allocate to the subject has changed a lot – at the moment it's quite a battle to ensure they provide the appropriate time, (a la Dearing), that they should be giving to the foundation subjects

The major changes occurred with the numeracy and literacy strategies – When schools had to do one hour literacy and one hour numeracy it pinched the curriculum and so there was not enough time to fully address all the other subjects – and geography suffered alongside others – Changes in the Ofsted framework had to reflect the changes in emphasis for numeracy and literacy – there was no longer the requirement to report on geography specifically – that's why it then was sampled or lumped together with history and RE under the humanities heading – and it often got missed out altogether

In a sense, Ofsted has abdicated responsibility for inspecting geography and other foundation subjects because there was pressure on it to inspect the core subjects.

From the LEA adviser point of view working with schools through inspections, geography has been low down in the list of priorities – they go for the core subjects. SATs are another factor.

Although reports may say "the school offers a broad and balanced curriculum" this is because they have bigger fish to fry and so they don't make an issue about it. There is a requirement to say whether a school is meeting statutory requirements, and to say that they do is easier than spending time looking for evidence that they do not – a cop out.

Changes in the framework have not affected the balance of the curriculum. It is the numeracy and literacy strategies and the numeracy and literacy hours which have done this. They have caused there to be less geography and have affected the balance of the curriculum – if there's less geography, the geography curriculum is less broad.

Many teachers like teaching geography and children enjoy it, especially if it is taught well. But, head teachers, governors, LEAs and Ofsted say they have to raise standards in reading and writing and so we have to spend more time on them. In small schools, the coordinator may be responsible for several subjects eg English, history and geography, so geography would be way down the list in terms of importance.

The role of the head teacher in relation to improvement in geography depends on how broad and creative a curriculum he wants to develop. If he's still tied up with standards in numeracy and literacy he won't be so keen to promote geography. But, good heads are much better at providing a broad and balanced curriculum which gives full provision for geography. Poor heads are not as good and as efficient and are having to spend all their efforts on improving numeracy and

literacy; they don't therefore have as much time to work on geography. Also, the enthusiasm and confidence of the head teacher are important if they are to develop a broad and creative curriculum.
In the role of an LEA advisor I haven't seen much geography taught. More usually it's numeracy and literacy because they are what Ofsted will focus on, and so when we are preparing schools for inspection they are what we focus on.

Inspector E:
What are the main factors which (potentially) influence the quality of provision and standards in geography?
Firstly, national priorities and the pressure put on schools to meet them – and the extent to which these do/do not relate to geography. So, the bigger context within which individual schools operate is a big factor
Inside the school, the commitment of the head teacher and, maybe to a lesser extent, governors, to the breadth of the curriculum, and seeing the foundation subjects get a fair crack of the whip is a major factor.
How might standards and provision be improved?
Because of the enormous influence of the DfEE and Ofsted in setting the agenda for schools – despite the commitment and enthusiasm of schools for geography – with the pressure of league tables and inspections, the schools will inevitably be influenced by that. To improve standards in geography, it would have to be a national quest accompanied by professional development and training to show schools how to improve it.
Changes to the balance and breadth of the curriculum
It has shifted the balance to the core subjects and away from the foundation subjects. The hidden agenda of national development has been to say to schools 'We expect you to teach geography, but we're not too bothered about the standards you are achieving.' The inspection handbook guidance on judging balance and breadth of the curriculum warns you off finding fault with the curriculum just because the school doesn't teach everything in the programmes of study. It encourages schools to be selective, and so as an inspector you are left pretty wide open as to whether you judge the breadth and balance to be there or not. The message to schools about what is important is strong. With the introduction of the 2003 framework the soft pedal was being depressed as far as the foundation subjects were concerned.
2005 Framework
In relation to geography, it will continue and exacerbate the situation since 2003 in terms of saying to schools "Your SATs results in core subjects are the most important factors and so geography is likely to be even further sidelined"

Appendix S: Process of sorting/grouping/qualitative analysis

Examples of identification of sensitizing concepts
Changes in the inspection framework

Sensitizing concept	How identified by colour and number
major negative impact on geography	Red 1
hammer the core	Red 2
sampled or lumped together with history and RE	Red 3
slimmed down and focused inspections	Red 4
foundation subjects were a bit of an optional extra	Red 5
only to give feedback to the core subject coordinators	Red 6
geography has got squeezed out	Red 7
demise in the inspection of geography	Red 8
inspection trails were set up	Red 9
broadbrush statements on geography	Red 10
the broad and balanced curriculum has gone out of the window	Red 11