

The evaluation of teaching in England

History and future of teacher evaluation

1870s-80s: England experimented with 'payment by results' where the pay of teachers and headteachers was linked directly to the observation of teaching and pupil tests by the inspectorate; this introduced 'strategic behaviour', disadvantaging some groups of pupils, and was abandoned.

Pre-1992: Formal evaluation by senior staff through lesson observations and links between teaching and pupils' progress in school were infrequent. HMI inspection visits were rare, perhaps every 25 years to a school. Local authority sometimes, often by invitation, would take a view on teaching, often only in one or two subjects, in a school.

1992 (Ofsted formed) – mid-1990s: Regular (3 yearly) evaluation of teaching in all schools by Ofsted. Headteachers were formally handed the grades for each teacher observed. Regular, formal lesson observation by senior staff in schools was still relatively unusual but increasing, in part as a response to the inspection system.

Future: More schools are likely to become academies which are not subject to the regulations regarding teacher appraisal, although academies are still subject to Ofsted inspection. This is unlikely to reduce the level of evaluation. Ofsted will keep its focus on the quality of teaching and on leadership of teaching as part of the inspection regime. There is increasingly proportionate inspection focused on all schools becoming at least good by 2015. If this occurs, almost all schools will only be inspected once every four or five years with increasingly intense focus on remaining weaker schools.

Present day
Evaluation, outcomes and consequences

Mid-1990s – Mid-2000s: Introduction of a formal appraisal system for all teachers which included formal lesson observations and target setting. To access higher salaries teachers have to undergo an evaluation (crossing the threshold). System still means that some mediocre teachers are rewarded. These changes and the impact of the inspection system lead to more accurate and more reliable self-evaluation of the quality of teaching in schools.

EVALUATION

OUTCOMES AND CONSEQUENCES

Evaluation of teaching of each individual teacher

Evaluation by the headteacher & senior staff, often as part of the performance management process; sometimes a contribution by pupils. Newly qualified teachers are evaluated against the Teachers' Standards as set by government and peer assessment is increasingly common as part of professional development. Ofsted judges the *quality of teaching* but it does not judge the *individual teacher*. Most schools inspected infrequently, so little observation of individual teachers by Ofsted; more frequent observations in weaker schools.

Outcomes and consequences for the individual teacher

Salary progression from main scale to upper pay spine; decisions about promotion. Feedback is given about strengths and weaknesses; areas for improvement are supported by professional development. In a small number of cases competency procedures include setting targets for improvement, a support package may lead to dismissal if improvement does not occur. Effective target setting leads to improved teaching and improved achievement for groups of pupils and individuals taught by each teacher.

Evaluation of teaching in a school: Evaluation of overall quality of teaching by headteacher and senior staff through lesson observations; progress data; scrutiny of pupils' work; often try to apply Ofsted criteria. Evaluation of overall quality of teaching by Ofsted in proportion to previous inspection outcomes. School may commission external evaluation – consultant; local authority. School governing bodies may ask headteachers for their evaluations of teaching.

Outcomes and consequences for the school

Successful professional development programmes build on strengths and tackle weaknesses leading to improved teaching and achievement. Ofsted reports on the quality of teaching which if outstanding may lead to a school being exempt from future inspection or, if inadequate could lead to an increase in inspection intensity and frequency. Ofsted assesses the impact of teaching over time alongside its own direct observations. Any evidence of poor teaching will make it difficult for a school to be graded as good or better. Where a school is judged inadequate, it may lead to the resignation of the headteacher.

Evaluation of teaching nationally: Synthesis of inspection outcomes – including quality of teaching in HMCI's annual report.

Outcomes and consequences nationally: Annual report has some impact on government policy and public perception of teaching. Overall, the quality of teaching is gradually improving.

Strengths and a key point for improvement

School leaders are expected to undertake high-quality self-evaluation and leadership of teaching. Proportionate inspection is focused where it can have most impact on improving teaching.
However, the quality of teaching is slow to improve in a significant minority of schools.

Teachers' feelings/views about the process of evaluation

Teachers are not always positive about 'being observed'. They usually see the need for evaluation leading to improvement but can focus too much on 'What grade am I?' Teachers' professional associations are opposed to what they deem excessive evaluation by headteacher and are opposed to Ofsted but headteacher professional associations are more receptive to inspection. Ofsted does not observe every teacher during an inspection and some are disappointed if they are not. Most volunteer to receive feedback from the inspectors about lesson observed.