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ABSTRACT

This booklet summarizes a report that evaluated how the United Kingdom's Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was fulfilling its responsibility to monitor the ways in which schools were addressing and preventing racism and promoting racial equality. The research occurred between August 1999 and April 2000, during which time OFSTED introduced a new inspection framework. This research considers the new framework's potential to report on racial equality. It also discusses processes of inspection under the previous framework. By analyzing 60 inspection reports and documents from 30 local education authorities and interviewing key stakeholders, the study revealed how, even when there is compelling evidence of a school's problems with racial inequality, issues concerning ethnic differences in attainment and exclusion rates, racial harassment, and support for students who have English as a second language are rarely reported to teachers, parents, and administrators. The report explains how both past and present frameworks, although apparently robust, frequently fail to deliver on racial equality. Principals and district administrators in three contrasting local authorities suggest ways in which the school inspection process might be improved so as to contribute effectively to the realization of racial justice. (SM)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

of a Report for the
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INSPECTING SCHOOLS FOR race equality OFSTED'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

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Marlene Morrison

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Report for the Commission for Racial Equality

I. Introduction

Context

The research set out to investigate the extent to which OFSTED school inspection reports apply the sections of the inspection framework relating to race equality, and the quality of such reporting. The research took place between August 1999 and April 2000, during which time OFSTED introduced a new inspection framework in January 2000. This research addresses this new inspection framework and considers its potential to report on race equality. It reports also on processes of inspection under the previous framework, drawing on the experiences and perspectives of HMI, contracted inspectors, headteachers and local education authority advisers.

Thirty inspection reports are analysed of schools in three local education authorities (LEAs), all carried out under the previous framework. The three LEAs selected were a London borough in which a substantial proportion of the school population is from ethnic minority communities; a new unitary authority in the south of England where the proportion of pupils from ethnic minority communities is close to the national average; and a shire county in the Midlands, in which the school population is predominantly white.

Legislation introduced in the late 1980s and 1990s promoted assessment procedures and the publication and interpretation of school-based data designed to make schools more accountable. Increasingly, race equality initiatives also focused on the relative attainment of ethnic minority pupils and on the differential achievement between groups. A new national programme of school inspections was introduced in 1993. The 1996 Schools Inspection Act set out a broad frame-

work for school inspections focusing on quality, standards, the management of financial resources and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. In March 1999 the Government, in its response to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (Macpherson 1999), gave OFSTED a lead role in monitoring the implementation of strategies designed to prevent and address racism in schools (Home Office, 1999).

Aims and objectives

The research set out to establish:

- The ways in which OFSTED is fulfilling the responsibilities given to it by Government to raise standards by preventing and addressing racism in schools
- The extent to which the OFSTED inspection framework requirements, as they relate to race equality, are reflected in the inspection reports of primary, secondary, and special schools
- The extent to which members of contracted inspection teams are familiar with the implications of the inspection framework for race equality in schools
- The extent to which headteachers understood the resulting assessments of race equality as a feature of inspection and the importance attached to it by inspectors
- The extent to which the reporting of best and worst practice supported or inhibited the reporting of race equality outcomes under the previous framework, and the implications of this for the effectiveness of the current framework and subsequent school-based developments.

Research design and methodology

Evidence was collected from:

- A range of OFSTED documents
- A sample of 60 school inspection reports, from three LEAs, of which 30 were analysed in depth

- Interviews with six OFSTED personnel, including three members of the senior management team
- Interviews with six contracted inspectors
- Interviews with ten headteachers of schools from our sample of 60 schools
- Interviews with three senior LEA officers.

The interviews with OFSTED personnel, inspectors, LEA advisers and headteachers enabled much of the documentary sources on which the research drew to be contextualised and cast light on the processes of inspection as seen from their varied perspectives.

2. The current and previous inspection frameworks

OFSTED's lead role in preventing racism

The Government has given a lead role to OFSTED in the prevention of racism through education. The Government accepted the recommendation of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report that OFSTED inspections include examination of how schools implement strategies to prevent racism in education. Yet it is difficult to see how contracted inspectors will fulfil this duty since it would appear that neither they nor headteachers have been officially informed of it. There is no mention of it on the OFSTED web-site or in *Update*, the regular newsletter issued to inspectors. The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 1998-99 made no reference to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report, published earlier that year, or to OFSTED's designated lead role in reporting on race equality provision in schools.

Educational inclusion

The current inspection framework, which came into operation in January 2000 has a number of additional features that could potentially contribute to greater race equality in schools. It adopts the term 'educational inclusion' to cover a range of equality issues, including race equality. Yet this document, and most of the other material issued by OFSTED, fails to discuss racism or its impact on learners of whatever ethnic background.

Silence on racism

The failure of OFSTED to name and discuss racism and 'openly and adequately to recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership' (Macpherson, 1999: para. 6.34) places it and its contracted inspectors in a weak position to fulfil the lead role given to it by Government. It is difficult to see how OFSTED and its leadership can contribute to the prevention of racism through the inspection of schools while OFSTED continues to avoid any direct discussion of racism in its standard policy documents and public statements. While OFSTED has published focused research (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996) and conducted thematic inspections on the achievement of ethnic minority pupils (OFSTED 1999), these have not yet informed its work overall.

3. HMI perspectives on race equality and school inspection*Race equality and educational inclusion*

Members of HMI lead the researchers to understand that equality will be a key feature of educational inclusion. The notion of 'educational inclusion' is to underpin training for contracted inspectors, although the timetable for this training has yet to be confirmed and it has not been made clear whether it will be mandatory. Evidence from interviews suggests that race equality is not recognised by all at OFSTED as a central feature of educational inclusion. Currently, race equality is seen by members of the OFSTED senior management team not as one key principle underpinning standards in education but as one of a number of 'baubles on the Christmas tree' of school inspection which, although important, may cause the tree to topple over.

Ethnic monitoring

There remains, under the current inspection framework, little guidance on monitoring by ethnicity or on the use to which ethnic data may be put by inspectors. Members of HMI stress how this new framework encourages inspectors to evaluate a school's practices and identify differential achievement. Nevertheless, there appears to be a conflation, in the minds of some HMI, of the requirements to include ethnic composition among the characteristics of a school and the processes of monitoring by ethnicity. It is these processes of ethnic monitoring

which would reveal any differentials between groups in attainment, in access to the school's services and provisions, and in the use of disciplinary procedures such as exclusion. However, the failure of schools to collect these data is rarely reported on. There are some uncertainties within OFSTED as to whether regular school inspection is capable of revealing evidence of racial harassment and bullying, which is something that the Government requires OFSTED to monitor.

A common language of race equality

HMI recognises the need for 'a common language' when discussing issues of race equality. Yet some members of HMI, including members of the OFSTED senior management team, themselves lack confidence in using such a language. Race equality has yet to become a central part of the corporate culture and discourse within OFSTED.

4. Inspectors' perspectives

Inspectors were agreed that both the former and the current inspection frameworks permit the inspection of race equality issues in schools. They argued that the degree to which such issues are to be found in reports depends, firstly, on the sensitivity of individual contracted inspectors to such issues and, secondly, on the degree of importance which the reporting inspector as team leader attaches to race equality. Although the former inspection schedule provided a common framework for reporting on race equality and other equalities issues, lack of experience and/or expertise among contracted inspectors meant that, in practice, the benefits of such a common framework were often lost to schools. Having a new inspection framework does not overcome these deficiencies in experience and expertise.

Training needs

Inspectors argued that they needed specific training on race equality issues if they were to be effective in these matters. They were also of the opinion that schools needed training on race equality and, in particular, on the value and importance of ethnic monitoring as part of their efforts to improve the quality of education and overall educational standards.

English as an Additional Language

Inspectors recognised the importance of inspecting EAL provision, but were concerned that it was often designated to someone who lacked the specific skills and expertise to make accurate judgements, based on the evidence, of EAL provision by the school. In particular, concerns were expressed about the quality of reporting in schools where the numbers of pupils needing such provision were small.

Race equality and white schools

It was generally recognised by inspectors that race equality issues in white schools were of considerable importance but they believed that such schools needed further guidance from OFSTED on this aspect of their provision. Inspectors felt that within the time constraints of inspection it was particularly difficult to make judgements about the effectiveness of race equality measures in such schools.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

This was generally recognised by inspectors as the part of the inspection framework where provision for race equality, and particularly cultural diversity, might be inspected. A number of concerns were raised, however. These related to the extent to which this aspect of the framework might encourage inspectors to view pupils from ethnic minority communities as presenting attitudinal or behavioural problems to schools. Inspectors believed that associating race equality primarily with the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils distracted from two key issues. The first is the need to ensure high standards for all pupils, regardless of ethnicity, and the second is the need for schools themselves to make structural changes in order to guarantee equality of access to everything the school has to offer.

Racial harassment and bullying

Inspectors recognised that the collection of evidence on racial harassment and bullying was difficult within the constraints of the inspection time-scale and resources.

School management

Inspectors also recognised that the effectiveness of a school's provision in promoting race equality and addressing racism was likely to depend on the leadership of the headteacher.

Failing schools

It was generally believed by contracted inspectors that inadequacies in a school's provision for race equality was unlikely to lead to a judgement that the school was failing or in need of special measures.

Leadership

Inspectors were not convinced that the OFSTED leadership recognised race equality as an essential component of quality in education. They looked to its leadership actively to support them in developing this aspect of educational and social inclusion.

5. School Inspection reports

A pervasive feature of the inspection reports analysed was standardisation of format. Schools provided 'satisfactory', 'sound', 'good', or 'very good' 'value for money'. If they did not reach 'satisfactory' in accordance with most of the judgement criteria, they were judged as needing 'special measures'. Except for one school in the latter category, all schools had 'strengths' which 'outweighed' their 'weaknesses', and both these and the *Key Issues for Action* were expressed qualitatively. In the final report, overall judgements applied a language that rarely prioritised issues of race or addressed attainment by specific ethnic groups. Although differentials in attainment were identified in the text of some reports, the tendency was for such issues to become hidden in stock phrases like 'the need to raise improvement for all' or the need for greater recognition of 'cultural diversity' in a school's curriculum. This was especially the case in the sections of the reports on *Main Findings* and *Key Issues for Action*.

The 'key indicators' provide the main source of statistical data; among the more recent reports analysed this was presented in a comparative form with national averages, similar schools, and all schools. Key Stage, test and examination results provided the main source of com-

parative data. The reporting of differential attainment by ethnicity was significantly absent from inspection reports.

Also absent from reports was the term 'race equality'. Our findings are supported by an OFSTED-based text search for the term race equality in 10,623 reports between 1997 and 1999, which found the terms racial equality or race equality in only 0.25 per cent of the reports. Elements of race equality were implicit in the concept of equal opportunities, mostly in relation to access. Equality of opportunity was embedded in the reports but it did not constitute a prime focus. Racial equality was, in effect, marginal and often wholly absent.

Data on ethnicity was inconsistently applied. Critically, precise numerical data on the ethnic composition of pupil populations were significantly lacking. Where data was used, this was most frequently to define the characteristics of a school and its catchment area, rather than to consider pupils' attainment, achievements or progress. Without precise data, observations that ethnic minority pupils 'hold their own' or that 'some reach very high standards' were relatively meaningless judgements. Consequently it was difficult to establish the extent to which a school, or its curriculum, matched the needs of its pupils.

The needs of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) were not always addressed coherently. The distinction between pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language was not always clear. In the absence of precise evidence from the inspection reports, it is difficult for a reader to establish the extent to which sufficient and appropriate EAL support is being given. It is also difficult to assess the impact of a school's provision on pupils' performance.

6. Headteachers' perspectives

Prior to inspection, headteachers in the research sample did not generally anticipate that equality issues in general, or race equality in particular, were likely to be a feature of inspection. In only one of the schools visited was an issue of race equality identified as a Key Issue for Action. These headteachers reported that in working to promote race equality they would value greater Government leadership.

- Publicise to schools OFSTED's Government-designated lead responsibility for monitoring strategies to address and prevent racism in schools
- Ensure that LEAs are provided with appropriate resources to follow up and support schools which receive critical assessments of their provision for race equality
- Resource training for headteachers on race equality issues, giving priority to the needs of both the headteachers in schools which are experiencing changes in their ethnic composition (for example, the enrolment of refugees and asylum seekers) and to those who work in predominantly white communities
- Establish an independent, publicly accountable working group to evaluate the 'impact of inspection' processes and reporting on race equality in education.

To OFSTED

- Publicise to contracted inspectors and the wider educational community OFSTED's designated lead responsibility for monitoring strategies to address and prevent racism in schools
- Encourage a corporate culture and discourse of race equality within OFSTED
- Recognise and promote race equality as a central feature of the drive to improve standards in schools
- Require schools to systematically monitor their provision by ethnicity, including pupil attainment and the school's use of sanctions such as exclusion
- Expand OFSTED's definition of educational inclusion in the context of inspection to address how all learners, and particularly learners in predominantly white schools, might be encouraged to challenge racism and promote race equality
- Routinely include a comment on issues of race equality in that part of the school inspection reports sent to parents

Inspector training

The headteachers felt that while OFSTED should monitor the strategies used to address and prevent racism in schools, this will only be done sensitively and professionally if contracted inspectors are given appropriate training.

The role of LEAs

For schools to be able to act on any negative assessments they will need follow-up support and advice from external advisers, particularly from their local education authority advisory services.

Ethnic monitoring

Interviews with headteachers indicate that not all recognise the value of ethnic monitoring of pupils' attainments and achievements. Some headteachers do not recognise that monitoring by ethnicity is an important tool which can support the processes of target setting. The current 2000 OFSTED framework does not require them to monitor pupils' attainments by ethnicity, nor are they issued with advice by Government on how this might be done effectively.

Headteacher support and training

A number of the headteachers in our sample acknowledged that they need training and support if they are effectively to challenge inequalities and address and prevent racism through education.

7. Recommendations*To the Department for Education and Employment*

- Provide detailed guidance to schools on the purposes and practicalities of monitoring pupils' attainment and achievements by ethnicity, as a key aspect of improving standards in schools
- Require and resource schools to introduce ethnic monitoring within a specified time-scale and to respond to any inequalities in attainment and provision it identifies
- Require and facilitate the ethnic monitoring of teacher employment

- Provide guidance to inspectors and headteachers on indicators of race equality in schools, including indicators in predominantly white schools
- Provide guidance to inspectors and schools on ethnic monitoring as an essential feature of school inspection and school self-evaluation
- Ensure that training for contracted inspectors on educational inclusion is mandatory
- Ensure that race equality is an explicit feature of mandatory training for contracted inspectors
- Enhance inspector training on race equality with regular instructions and guidance, made available on the OFSTED web-site and in regular OFSTED publications such as *Update*
- Ensure that all inspectors required to inspect EAL provision are given appropriate training
- Amend the pre-inspection parents' questionnaire to include an assessment of equalities initiatives in general and provision for race equality in particular
- Where appropriate, invite parents to comment on a school's EAL provision
- Review whether regular school inspections are, in practice, an effective means of monitoring schools' strategies to prevent racial harassment and bullying and, if not, arrange for a special HMI inspection of this provision
- Ensure that race equality issues are given priority in early reviews of the new inspection framework and in reviews of contracted inspectors' reports
- Conduct or commission further research on how OFSTED might most effectively monitor strategies to prevent and address racism in schools
- Require inspectors to identify in their reports successful strategies adopted by schools to promote race equality

- Require inspectors to establish whether those attending the pre-inspection parents' meeting are representative of the school population in terms of ethnicity
- Require inspectors to provide interpretation services wherever this is appropriate to ensure parents' full participation in pre-inspection meetings

To schools

- Develop self-evaluation tools on race equality
- Encourage dialogue between teachers, parents and governors on ways of promoting race equality in the school
- Engage in discussion with OFSTED inspectors about race equality initiatives and the self-evaluation tools the school has developed, viewing inspection as an additional opportunity for professional dialogue
- Use and apply the CRE Standards for Racial Equality in Schools, *Learning for All* (CRE 1999)

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INSPECTING SCHOOLS FOR race equality OFSTED'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Audrey Osler and **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**
Marlene Morrison **of a Report for the**
Commission for Racial Equality

In response to the 1999 Macpherson Report on the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, the Government gave OFSTED lead responsibility for monitoring how schools address and prevent racism. This research, undertaken for the Commission for Racial Equality, evaluates how OFSTED is fulfilling that responsibility.

Through a meticulous analysis of inspection reports and documents, the researchers reveal how, even where there is compelling evidence of racial inequalities in a school's educational provision, issues concerning ethnic differentials in attainment and exclusion rates, racial harassment or the support provided for pupils who have English as an additional language are rarely reported to teachers, parents and governors. From the voices of HMI and contracted inspectors we learn something of the OFSTED culture and how both past and present frameworks, although apparently robust, frequently fail to deliver on race equality. Headteachers and LEA officers in three contrasting local authorities suggest ways in which the school inspection process might be improved so as to contribute effectively to the realisation of racial justice.

This report is essential reading for teachers, governors, researchers and policy makers, and all who are concerned with improving standards and achieving race equality in education.

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