Inspiring teachers:
perspectives and practices

Full report

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Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

This research study investigates the notion of 'inspiring' teaching through case studies of a purposive sample of 17 primary and secondary school teachers in England. The research was commissioned by CfBT Education Trust as part of a collaborative professional development initiative involving its schools. It arose from headteachers' suggestions that schools nominate a number of 'inspiring' teachers so that their practice could be studied and the results shared across the participating schools to promote the professional development of staff and spread good practice through encouraging greater collaboration and learning across the CfBT family of schools. The purposive samples are thus viewed as exemplars of good practice by their schools by showing practice that is seen as 'inspiring' for colleagues and students.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first contextualises the work in relevant literature, exploring gaps and definitions in the existing body of knowledge about inspiring teaching, and connecting the contribution of this study to these issues. The second outlines the aims and methods that guided the research.

Part 1: Links to literature on inspiring and effective teaching

Inspiring teaching in policy and practice

The words 'inspiring' and 'inspirational' are not new to the field of education, but have come into more frequent use in recent UK education policy. The language of the Teachers' Standards published by the Department for Education (DfE) reflects this, stating that teachers must, among other things, "inspire, motivate, and challenge pupils" (DfE, 2013, p.7) as part of the "minimal level of practice expected of trainees and teachers" (p.3). In addition, Ofsted inspection reports can be found using the word 'inspiring' or 'inspirational' to describe teaching, environment and leadership in schools (e.g. Ofsted, 2011).

The same terminology has also come into vogue in literature aimed at an audience of practitioners. Handbooks or study texts for practitioners offering 'recipes' for inspiring teaching are numerous, though they do not always take the same view of what inspiring teaching means or what inspiring teachers do. McGuey and Moore (2007), for example, posit a roadmap to inspiring teaching, advising teachers to begin with well-thought-out personal and classroom mission statements, then working to model behaviours, build mutual respect, listen to students and build relationships. Some texts take this a step further to provide examples of step-by-step activities to use with students; Erwin's (2010) book is a notable example, emphasising socio-emotional learning and approaches to improving student self-awareness and ownership. Harmin (2006) adopts a more narrowly focused approach focusing on active learning as the desired outcome of inspiring teaching, targeting a younger student age bracket. Ryan and Gilbert (2001) take an ambitious stance, using words like 'exciting' and 'creative' interchangeably with 'inspiring', and implicitly defining inspiration in terms of a lifelong impact: "What is it that inspirational teachers do? In short, they plan for their pupils to be inspirational" (p.5). Striving for inspiring practice is often framed as challenging, if not at odds with, an assessment-driven policy context (e.g. Hayes, 2006). The evidence for these collections of advice, guidance and practical exercises is primarily the authors' personal experiences as educators and similar anecdotal evidence rather than being grounded in research.

A growing number of newspaper, magazine and journal articles also aim to either describe or prescribe inspiring teaching practices. These range from opinion pieces in daily newspapers

(e.g. Furnham, 2001, 2010) to peer-reviewed non-empirical articles. The bulk of these include profiles of teachers identified as inspiring, often drawing on the practice of one or several teachers, or on personal experience, to suggest criteria for cultivating inspiring practice (e.g. Collins, 2006; Richards, 2004). Many are subject-specific, particularly those aimed at the secondary level (e.g. Blake, 2006), offering tips for teachers to use in their own classrooms.

A few prevalent themes are apparent across the types of literature described thus far:

- inspiring teaching is frequently described as exciting, innovative and/or creative

- evidence of inspiration is framed in various ways, usually one or more of the following: immediate student engagement in the classroom, a lasting effect on students' aspirations and self-concepts, or interest in a particular subject

- specific practices are described that might be more usually linked to notions of 'effective' practice.

The first of these statements hints at a partial definition of inspiring teaching as it is often intuitively understood. The second introduces a definitional challenge, as it is essential to understand what is meant by inspiration before attempting to measure it and investigate how it is engendered. The implications of the third point are dealt with in greater depth in the section below.

Effective teaching literature and its relationship to inspiring teaching

In examining the literature related to inspiring teaching, it is worth considering definitions and findings from research focusing on effective teaching. The word effective is frequently mentioned in writings about inspiring teaching; in addition, there is a far more comprehensive evidence base for teacher effectiveness and effective practice than currently exists for inspiring teaching.

It has been well established that teachers and teaching matter, in the sense that they are influential in promoting student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Day et al., 2007). Establishing how to measure teacher effectiveness and defining what effective teaching means, however, are complex endeavours with inherent challenges, as stated in a review by Ko, Sammons and Bakkum (2013). Educational effectiveness research in general, and teacher effectiveness research (TER) in particular, imply an emphasis on promoting positive student outcomes (especially academic progress but also socio-emotional and behavioural outcomes). Three fundamental questions summarise the embedded definitional challenge for this type of research (Sammons, 1996):

- Effective in promoting which outcomes?

- Effective over what time period?

- Effective for whom?

These questions shed light on a few central considerations: the priorities and goals of education for students, stability and change over time, and differential effectiveness (i.e. variations in outcomes for groups of students by ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.).

To date, most studies of teacher effectiveness have prioritised cognitive outcomes, perhaps because this has consistently remained one of the key objectives of schooling even when other goals and outcomes are also deemed important and desirable (Creemers, 1999). Increasingly, however, educational effectiveness researchers have acknowledged the importance of accounting for a broader range of non-cognitive outcomes (Creemers, Kyriakides & Sammons, 2010). In the study of teacher effectiveness, this implies a need to examine teacher effects on social, emotional and behavioural outcomes as well as academic attainment (Ko et al., 2013; Sammons, 1996).

Building on this literature base, definitions of teacher effectiveness vary, but most draw on the notions of measuring gains in student achievement while accounting for prior attainment and other baseline measures (Little, Goe & Bell, 2009; Mortimore et al., 1988; Reynolds, 1995); in short, establishing 'effective' teaching as that which leads to better outcomes than expected based on student intake. Because there is evidence that teaching approaches and strategies vary across different school contexts (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993), context considerations have also been incorporated into definitions and studies of effectiveness (Luyten & Snijders, 1996; Luyten, 1995; Muijs et al., 2004). Some definitions of effectiveness have been expanded to include considerations of teacher behaviours and classroom processes, teacher characteristics, working environments, and a variety of other factors at the teacher, class and school levels (Campbell et al., 2004); a more complete presentation of various definitions can be found in the review by Ko et al. (2013).

While teacher effectiveness research has traditionally involved statistical approaches and large-scale datasets (Day et al., 2007), researchers have increasingly made use of multiple and mixed methods to more fully explore and describe effective teaching practice (Kington et al., 2011; Sammons et al., 2007). Methods used to gain information about teachers' practices and behaviours have included interviews, observations (scheduled and unscheduled), inspection frameworks, student assessment scores, and surveys administered to a variety of stakeholders including teachers, principals, students and parents (Ko et al., 2013; Little et al., 2009).

While all of these sources of information may have value, some present significant challenges in terms of their validity and reliability. Teachers' perceptions of their own practice, for example, have been shown to differ from researchers' observations (e.g. Camburn & Barnes, 2004), raising questions of what influences teachers' thinking about effective teaching, their lessons, and themselves, and how this changes with experience. As a result, some studies have specifically explored teachers' constructs of effective practice (Kington et al., 2013). Research into students' views, on the other hand, has demonstrated reliability and validity (Wilkerson et al.; Worrell & Kuterbach, 2001), despite the concerns of some sceptics who doubt that students have the maturity and knowledge to evaluate teachers appropriately.

Ultimately, one of the goals of many of these research endeavours is not just to compare which teachers are more or less effective, but to arrive at some characterisation of what constitutes effective teaching. The Effective Classroom Practice (ECP) study findings, which combined qualitative and quantitative evidence from two systematic lesson observation schedules (ISTOF[1] and QoT[2]), teacher interviews, student surveys and qualitative field notes, provide one comprehensive view of effective teaching practice, with key characteristics displayed in Figure 1.1 below (Day, 2008). Teachers identified as more effective were seen to address these areas in "consistently more positive and more reflective, complex and contextually-responsive ways" (ibid. p.15).

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[1] International System for Teacher Observation and Feedback; see Teddlie et al. (2006)
[2] Lesson Observation Form for Evaluating the Quality of Teaching; see van de Grift (2007)

Figure 1.1: Characteristics of effective practice from the ECP study
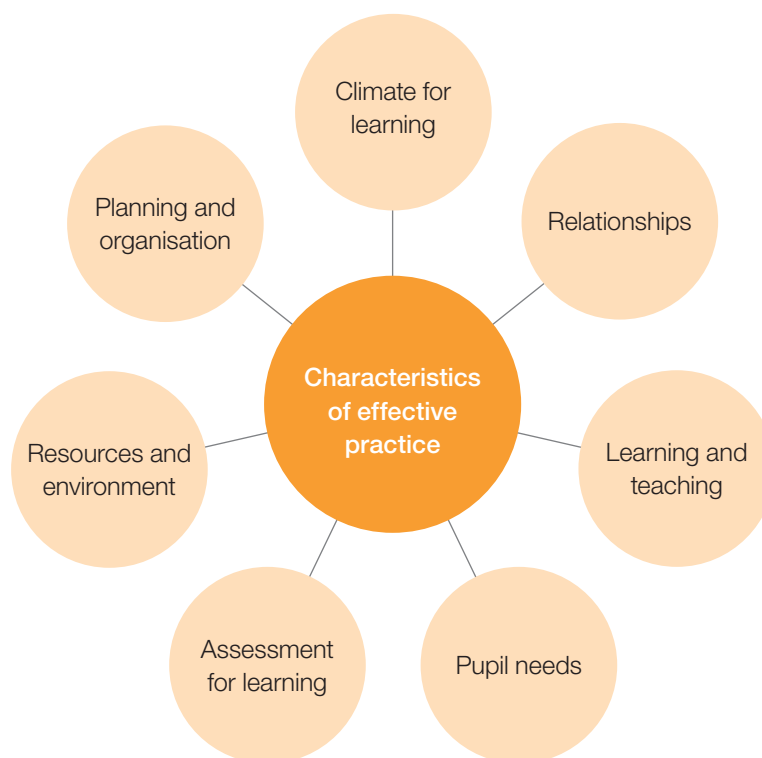
Many of these themes resonate with the findings from the study of inspiring teachers presented in this report, suggesting that there may be links between characteristics of inspiring and effective practice. There is an important distinction between inspiring and effective teaching, however, from the perspective of measurement and evaluation. While there is a strong tradition for judgements of effective teaching to be based on student outcomes, as discussed above, the word 'inspiring' casts a wider net, raising a fundamental question: What does it mean for a student to be inspired, and how can this be observed or measured? Put differently, how far do inspirational outcomes overlap with effective outcomes (e.g. attainment/progress), or are they fundamentally different?

Defining and theorising inspiring teaching
Authors' approaches to defining and measuring inspiration and inspiring teaching vary widely. Despite its increased presence in policy language and popular and practitioner literature, inspiring teaching is still a very new area of enquiry for empirical research, and so the knowledge base is currently fragmented and inconsistent.

One operational definition implicitly links inspiration to outcomes of student engagement (e.g. Bryson & Hand, 2007) and motivation (e.g. Bowman, 2007). This is similar to the term 'stimulating influence' used by van der Zee (2011) to define inspiration, in a study of RE teachers indicating student outcomes of inspiring teaching as "social virtues, knowledge, insight, spirituality and a sense of transcendence" (p.21). Van der Zee's study used a survey which asked students to name an inspiring teacher, describe his or her qualities, and rate the teacher on a variety of items; because this was done in the context of religious education, many of the same domains might prove less useful with regard to other subjects.

Another approach to a theoretical framework for inspiring teaching is more concerned with longer-term effects. Bryan, Glynn and Kittleson (2011), in a study of secondary science students using student questionnaires and essays (and a smaller number of interviews), also focused on motivation, but included building students' self-efficacy and self-determination, finding that all three were related to achievement. Although this was not primarily a study of inspiring teaching, one of the key findings was that inspiring teachers were identified as strong motivators for future aspirations, not just immediate effort or engagement. Santolini's (2009) study of pre-service teachers' motivations to enter the profession also offers a possible understanding of what it means to be inspired, indicating that the participants' experiences with inspiring teachers when they were in school affected their career trajectories and choices in adulthood.

Only a few studies have proceeded with a more grounded approach, allowing understandings of what it means to inspire and to be inspired to emerge from the data in line with the approach adopted in this project. Darlington's (2012) study of what inspires students in science lessons, which used a dialogic approach involving both teacher and student views, found differences in the ways in which adults and children thought about what inspires students. Another study examined pre-service teachers' perceptions about what makes a teacher 'inspirational', finding that inspiring teachers were characterised as dedicated, positive, and caring (Burke & Nierenberg, 1998). Lamb and Wedell (2013) have similarly sought a grounded understanding of inspirational teachers through a series of case studies, taking into consideration relevant cultural contexts in China and Indonesia.

While some of these studies overlap in their definitions of inspiring teaching and its outcomes, there remains an overall lack of clarity and agreement. When the definitions and outcomes used explicitly and implicitly in existing literature are drawn together, however, it appears that a framework for understanding inspiring teaching might hinge on the following dimensions:

- positive student outcomes (e.g. motivation, self-efficacy, aspiration, achievement), timeframe (both long- and short-term effects)

- particular teacher behaviours and practices

- teacher characteristics (e.g. personality traits, knowledge and motivation) and relationships (heavily emphasised in the non-empirical literature).

Hobbs's (2012) small-scale study introduces additional teacher factors, particularly teacher knowledge, identity and passion, that resonate with themes emerging from the non-empirical literature on inspiring teaching.

McGonigal (2004), based on the responses of a class of pre-service teachers, highlights a few interesting questions about inspiring teaching that might be explored through the sort of framework set forth above. That is, he questions whether different sorts of teachers (in terms of personality and methods) might be inspiring for different students, and whether inspiring teaching helps students to internalise their learning through providing memorable experiences. However, there is little evidence that these areas have yet been addressed empirically.

Another gap in the literature concerns both theory and methodology. The studies described above rely primarily on attitudinal measures, interviews and similar indirect measures. What is missing so far, then, is direct observation and measurement. This raises the question: how can inspiring

teaching be identified from a researcher's perspective? The present study of nominated inspiring teachers has sought to address this question via mixed-methods research using a range of approaches including both perceptions and observations.

Contributions of the current study

If the concept of inspirational practice has shifted from a popular notion of good teaching and learning to a standard that must be met by schools and teachers, the importance of arriving at a common understanding of what this means cannot be overstated. In the section above, some preliminary attempts to develop a conceptual framework were outlined.

The findings reported in this document provide new evidence and insights about what inspiring teachers do (through observations), what they think (through interviews), and how their students think about their teachers and lessons (through questionnaires). The use of multiple observation instruments begins to address the gap outlined at the end of the previous section by providing measures of what inspiring teaching might 'look like', i.e. what teachers do and what happens in their classrooms.

Part 2: Aims and methods

The research had two complementary components – an investigation led by practitioners and another led by a team of academics from the Department of Education at the University of Oxford and the Institute of Education at the University of Worcester. Each study adopted different methods and a different approach to investigating what it is to be an inspiring teacher. This report presents a description of inspiring teachers – drawing exclusively on the academic study which focused on a sub-sample of 17 of the original 36 teachers.

A complementary summary report based on both phases of the research is also available.

Aims

The main aim of the research was to provide robust new evidence about both inspiring teachers and inspiring teaching from different perspectives to increase understanding of these widely-used but elusive and often poorly-defined concepts. The teachers nominated were treated as exemplars of good practice and regarded as 'inspiring' by their schools.

The aim of the practice-driven approach was to identify the characteristics of some of CfBT Schools Trust's (CST) most effective teachers, understand how this group of teachers has grown professionally, and use the findings as part of a professional development strategy for all CST's teachers. This approach was designed to sit alongside a more academic approach. The academic approach (the focus of this report) was guided by three research questions:

- What do inspiring teachers say about their practice?

- What do inspiring teachers do in their classrooms?

- What are their students' views and experiences?

Methods

This research adopted a mixed-methods design to illuminate features of good practice and to better understand these exemplary teachers' views and conceptions of their work and the perspectives of their students.

Sample

The study collected information from 17 teachers working in nine CfBT schools: seven primary teachers and 11 secondary teachers (see Table 1.1 and Appendix A1 for further sample details).

Table 1.1: Composition of the sample by school level and gender

	Female	Male	Total
Primary	7	0	**7**
Secondary	6	4	**10**
Total	**13**	**4**	**17**

Teachers in the primary sample taught all subjects in general primary education; at the secondary level the subjects taught varied widely, including English, Mathematics, History, Geography, Modern Foreign Languages, Art and Physical Education. The year groups that participants taught also varied greatly, ranging from Nursery to Year 12. Most were early- or mid-career teachers and most had worked in more than one school and held additional responsibilities in their school.

Methods of data collection

The focus of this research was on the teacher as the main unit of analysis, but information about the perceptions of the headteacher and classes of students taught by each teacher was also collected. The instruments used included interviews, international systematic classroom observation protocols, classroom qualitative observation notes, ranking sheets and student questionnaire surveys. The majority of these instruments had been generated and/or validated in the English context in previous published work (Kington et al., 2012; Day et al., 2007; Day et al., 2006; Sammons et al., 2007). Further details about the methods of data collection and the approach to analysis are included in Appendix A2 and A3.

- **Interviews.** Teachers' views and perceptions were collected through a semi-structured, face-to-face interview. These interviews explored issues such as professional trajectory, identification of inspiring teachers, definition of inspiring teaching and factors affecting practice and levels of job satisfaction, motivation and commitment.

- **Classroom systematic observation.** Two observational instruments were used in the present study, namely the International System of Teacher Observation and Feedback (ISTOF) and the Lesson Observation Form for Evaluating the Quality of Teaching (QoT). The main purpose in using these instruments was to investigate whether the participating teachers identified as 'inspiring' also showed behaviours typically associated with teacher effectiveness and to explore the extent of variations amongst the sample in their observed classroom practice. It was hypothesised that teachers in the sample might be more likely to show behaviours associated with teacher effectiveness as they were purposively selected by headteachers for being particularly inspiring teachers and, given that the definition of what constitutes an inspiring teacher was left to headteachers' discretion, it was considered highly possible that they might have based their decision on existing criteria such as their own observations, inspection-based assessments of

what counts as 'good' or 'outstanding' teaching, or students' academic progress (value added measures), tests or examination results as well as teachers' reputations with colleagues and students.

- **Classroom qualitative notes.** The qualitative component of the observation of classroom practice comprised rich descriptive field notes to describe the lesson, which included detail on the structure, organisation and flow of the lesson, the nature of lesson activities, interactions between students and teachers, classroom climate and comments on the teachers' persona.

- **Ranking sheets.** In order to explore the relative importance that teachers and headteachers in the study assigned to different teacher attributes – and with the aim of providing data triangulation – the teachers in our sample, as well as the headteachers of the schools in which they worked, were asked to complete a structured ranking sheet.

- **Student survey.** A questionnaire was administered to students in some of the classes taught by the participant teachers, with the aim of providing evidence on students' engagement with school and their perceptions about their teacher and classroom climate. There were two versions of the questionnaire survey (i.e. primary school and secondary school versions), although most of the items were the same across questionnaires. Items on the questionnaire were organised into four sections, namely *My school, My teacher, My classroom* and *About you in this class*. The numbers of student, class and school returns are shown in Table 1.2. In total, questionnaire responses from 203 students in 11 of the participating teachers' classes were collected.

Table 1.2: Student questionnaire data returns

	Number of students	Number of classes/teachers	Number of schools
Primary school questionnaire	35	2	2
Secondary school questionnaire	168	9	5
Total	**203**	**11**	**7**

2. The characteristics of inspiring teachers

Participants identified the main characteristics of inspiring teachers, which included:

- Having and transmitting enthusiasm

- Cultivating positive relationship with students

- Being flexible and adapting their practice

- Making learning purposeful and relevant for students

- Promoting a safe and stimulating classroom climate

- Establishing clear and positive classroom management

- Being reflective about their own practice and developing collaboratively

- Bringing innovation to the classroom.

In addition, teachers expressed the view that several aspects, such as job satisfaction, external policy agendas, school ethos and support, substantially affect their ability to inspire their students and learning community.

Teachers also associated the concept of inspiring teaching to effective teaching but separated it from that of outstanding teaching, as defined by Ofsted criteria.

Inspiring teachers regarded the following aspects as the most important for their practice:

- Enthusiasm for teaching

- Positive relationships with children

- High levels of motivation and commitment

- Confidence in the classroom.

These views were, to a great extent, shared by their headteachers. Teachers' priorities were also highly consistent across school sectors, genders and years of teaching experience.

This chapter reports the way in which teachers in the sample described what it was to be an inspiring teacher. The interviews allowed the in-depth probing of issues relating to the teachers' understanding and definition of inspiring teaching.

When interviewees were asked whether they had ever come across inspiring teachers, all but one provided at least one example. The sources from which teachers were able to identify inspiring teachers are shown in Figure 2.1. The majority of them (nine out of 17) referred to particular teachers who had taught them when they were at school. Interestingly, most participants referred to teachers who taught them the same subject they went on to specialise in or teachers who had taught them in

similar year levels to the ones they were currently teaching. Nearly half (eight) also cited inspirational colleagues at the schools where they had worked, including both teachers and headteachers. Other less common examples came from mentors during teacher training, teachers in their own families and friends who also worked as teachers.

Figure 2.1: Sources of inspiring teachers' examples
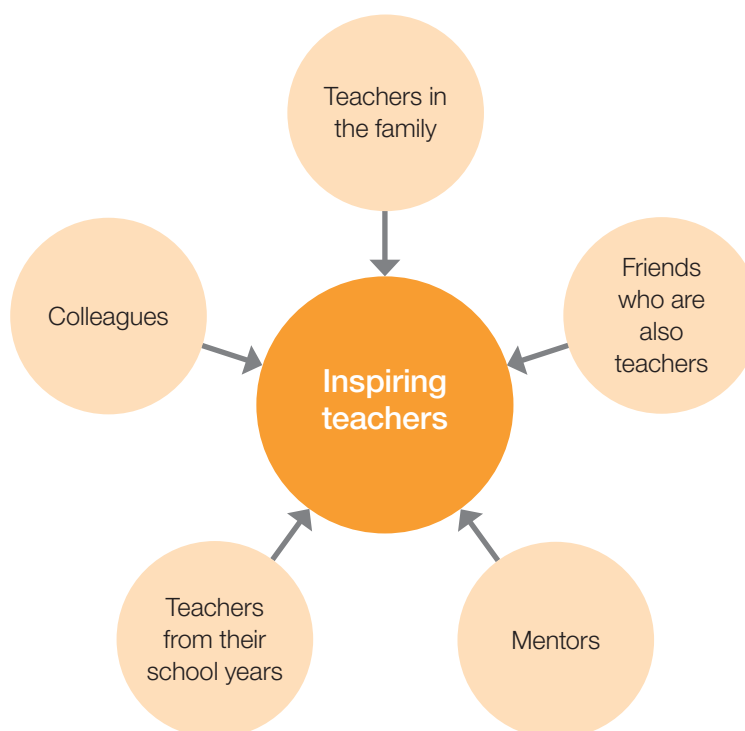
The reasons that interviewees gave about why they felt these people were especially inspiring were explored. Interestingly, two interviewees actually stated it was the experience of having been taught by a particularly uninspiring and weak teacher that helped motivate them to become teachers, with the aim of contributing to prevent these negative teaching practices:

> *"She was my Year 6 teacher and she told my parents that I would not go very far, and my parents told me this when I was in secondary school. She said to my parents: 'Don't expect a lot from her, she won't go very far', and that gave me the incentive to prove her wrong. There have been not inspirational teachers for the right reasons in my educational career and I think that's probably another reason why I am as I am, because I want children to be inspired for the right reasons."* (Female, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

> *"I probably wanted to teach this subject because my teacher was so uninspiring. And being good at it I found it easy, but there were lots of people that didn't find it easy, so my mission has always been to try to simplify the subject as much as possible. And then various teachers who kind of had either been heavily sarcastic or had had something about their personalities, because I think a lot of teaching is your relationship with the students."* (Female, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

2.1 Characteristics of inspiring teachers

Participants' views on what characteristics an inspiring teacher showed were obtained by asking them this directly, as well as through examples they drew from their own experience with inspirational teachers and their interpretations about why they thought they had been nominated as inspiring teachers.

The word cloud shown in Figure 2.2 shows the frequency in which different constructs appeared in the interviews associated with the concept of inspiring teachers. Here the bigger the size of the word, the more frequently it was mentioned by the interviewees.

Figure 2.2: Word cloud for concepts related to inspiring teachers

The two characteristics most frequently mentioned were *enthusiasm for teaching* (mentioned by 14 out of the 17 teachers) and *positive relationships with students* (with 11 teachers referring to this aspect). These two main features are followed by less commonly identified characteristics such as *flexibility, relevant teaching, safe and stimulating classroom climate, positive classroom management, reflectiveness* and *innovative teaching*.

2.1.1 Enthusiasm for teaching

According to the interviewees, perhaps the key aspect of being an inspiring teacher is having a passion for the profession and being able to transmit that enthusiasm, either for learning or for a particular subject, to their students. This, teachers stressed, is closely associated with creating a stimulating learning climate and making lessons enjoyable:

"Number one for me is a passion for their career, I don't think that you can be a teacher if you don't absolutely adore, love your job, if you're not dedicated, if you're not inspired by the learning that happens in your own classroom, you cannot be an inspirationally driven teacher, so that's where I think the starting point is." (Female, Primary school, 16–20 years of experience)

"I think for me it's the way they get children excited about learning. It's about taking something that, actually let's face it, isn't that interesting to children, and making it something that they desperately want to do." (Female, Primary school, 0–5 years of experience)

Teachers also linked this sense of enthusiasm and passion for the profession with being constantly looking for opportunities for professional development and improvement:

"I put enthusiasm as one of the top, because I do genuinely think if you're enthusiastic about your job, that means that your whole profession will become better (…) You've got to love what you do, and if you don't like what you do, you're probably not going to be good at it, it's that type of thing. So yeah, if you've got real enthusiasm to do a bit of research, to go out there and sort of see how other people do stuff, and then take things on board, and be available to, you know, hear feedback, then yeah, that's going to do it, I think, so I'm going to say enthusiasm." (Male, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

During the interviews, participants recognised this feature in their work teams. A female teacher said: *"My team is very, very strong, and all of them have enthusiasm for the job, they all have a passion for the job, which I think is the key to teaching, really."* (Female, Secondary school, 11–15 years of experience).

Another said:

"I had a PE teacher who was really good fun. She just had a real passion for her subject and she really enjoyed teaching and you could tell she really enjoyed being with the students, and again that was, it was just enjoyable to be in her classroom. So I don't know whether her actual teaching was inspiring, but just the atmosphere of the classroom made you want to be there." (Female, Secondary school, 0–5 years of experience)

This trait was considered equally important by practitioners across school sector (primary/secondary), gender and career phase. In relation to their own teaching, interviewees felt very positively about this aspect. The majority of them felt they were very enthusiastic and able to motivate students.

2.1.2 Positive relationships with students
Participants in the study also strongly indicated that inspiring teachers prioritise building and maintaining positive relationships with all students:

"I still love that every new child you have expands that relationship, and getting to know them, and to know what's special about them, and seeing them grow, just being aware. So I think that inspiring teachers must have great relationships with their children, and they must understand their children, and be able to respond to their children's needs." (Female, Primary school, 16–20 years of experience)

This aspect seems to go hand-in-hand with getting to know students as learners and as people too, as well as being aware of their family situation and social context:

> *"The getting to know the children and getting to know them individually, and actually knowing where they are coming from but also where they need to go next, it's about that because you can inspire them in lots of different ways but you need to know where they need to go. And I suppose just kind of saying: 'What do the children actually want to get out of this?' "*
> (Female, Primary school, 6–10 years of experience)

> *"You have to know the students who you are teaching, and I think people say that that's a given, but I think it's going beyond learning about how they learn, it's learning about them and, you know, their sense of humour."* (Male, Secondary school, 0–5 years of experience)

They also stressed that their relationship with students is dynamic and that building up this relationship requires effort and an important period of adaptation through which teachers get to know the students and vice versa:

> *"I think the relationships really are important. But you can't start to build that quite early on, it's difficult because when you're first new somewhere the kids are much more standoffish, they're testing you, so it's more difficult."* (Female, Secondary school, 11–15 years of experience)

> *"I think at the start of the year you're probably not quite relaxed, whereas now we have a bit of a laugh and a joke together. I think at the start with them there were a few more barriers, then they got to know me, and they got to understand where I'm coming from and then sort of throughout the year that's sort of broken away, which I think means that the relationship with me and the group is a lot better than it was at the start, but the start has to happen in order to get there, at the same time."* (Male, Secondary school, 0–5 years of experience)

> *"We worked really hard on building good relationships with the children. It's nice to have that, you know, they see you as a person not a teacher, they do. You have to share a bit of yourself with them and they give back a bit to you, and that sort of builds a good relationship."*
> (Female, Primary school, 11–15 years of experience)

> *"At that point it was all about being friendly, and helping to build that confidence, making them realise that I'm not a scary person. And building that, and being friendly and approachable, letting them know all the time that if they need me they can come and tell me things."*
> (Female, Primary school, 0–5 years of experience)

Another aspect identified as crucial for developing good relationships was promoting mutual respect among teachers and students:

> *"I think respect, understanding of children, and by that I mean understanding that they are very intelligent emotionally. I think those factors will influence how well children learn, I think that inspires them to learn, because they want to learn, you've got to get them to want to learn from you, haven't you?"* (Female, Primary school, 0–5 years of experience)

> *"You do need to get to know your children really, really well, and there are some children in that class that I have never taught before and had very limited contact with, so they need to get to*

*know me as a teacher and I need to get to know them, and there is that mutual respect,
I respect them as human beings, they respect me and they know very clearly that I'm going
to be consistent."* (Female, Primary school, 16–20 years of experience)

The ability to develop good relationships was also found within the teachers whom the participants
described as examples that had inspired them:

*"I have teachers that I remember from my own school days, but not necessarily because of
things that they did within lessons, so it might just have been that they were the sort of person
that you could approach generally, not just about the subject. Somebody that could support you
but also somebody for whom, as a student, you know that that teacher really does have your
best interest, and would do everything in their power to do right by you, be there for you, but
accept as well that your needs are not the same as that student needs, and that student needs."*
(Female, Secondary school, 11–15 years of experience)

*"At my last school I felt the head of department was quite inspirational, he had just a really lovely
way with the kids, a really good rapport with kids, and I felt that that was sort of the bond that
actually got the best out of the kids. So I aspired to be like him."* (Female, Secondary school,
11–15 years of experience)

Most of the teachers in the sample reported having positive relationships with their students and also
liking children/young people, and this did not differ by their gender, school sector or career phase.
In general, these teachers felt they were able to develop and maintain positive relationships with their
students and this was a priority in their practice. Creating positive relationships with students seems
to be central to these teachers' sense of self-efficacy and ability to teach well:

*"I think I do develop good relationships one-to-one with pupils and I do try to really understand
each individual's needs and what they need from me in order to be the best they can be. (…)
I do try to have a good relationship with pupils because if they can't be honest with me then
I'm not going to be able to do the best for them."* (Female, Secondary school, 11–15 years of
experience)

*"I've been lucky enough that, well, I do this job because I like children and I think children then
pick up on the fact that I like them. It's really as simple as that. They know when a teacher is just
doing it because that's their job. They know that I do it because I like spending time with them,
so they respond accordingly."* (Female, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

*"I think I have quite a good relationship with the students that are in our school. I think, on the
whole, I've got a positive sort of … they see me as quite young still, so they can associate with
that, I think that that helps a lot of them, it helps to be a male, and I think a lot of the boys who
maybe, across the school, find themselves disillusioned with education, find it a lot easier to
sort of associate with myself and they see me as a role model, and I think at times I can sort
of empathise with those a little bit more, and when they come to me or they want to talk about
things like where they're coming from, and I try to sort of reflect that in: 'If I were in my lesson,
what would I like to be doing?' and I think they appreciate it and they see fun and enjoyment in
that."* (Male, Secondary school, 0–5 years of experience)

However, two of the teachers did not fit this pattern and showed a preference for a different approach, highlighting their desire to limit their relationship with students outside the classroom. This may reflect particular concerns to avoid suggestions of inappropriate behaviour and the dangers of social media:

"Teachers often make that mistake: 'I want to be your friend.' But I tell the kids they are not my friends, I want nothing to do with them outside school, I don't do Facebook, I don't do anything else like that, even when they've left. Because I think that is sometimes just stepping over the mark." (Male, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

"I'm not interested in being the sort of teacher that they bring their problems to, I think we've got excellent people in the school that are left to that, and I think that it could really get in the way of learning, when teachers become concerned with becoming someone all opened up to about their problems; that's not what I'm here for." (Female, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

Around a third of the teachers (six out of 17) suggested that a characteristic feature of inspiring teachers is that they are flexible and adapt their teaching according to their students' needs:

"I think inspiring teaching is about targeting the right sort of lesson for the right sort of student." (Female, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

Indeed, these teachers said that adaptability was vital and that often plans could change throughout a lesson depending on the needs or interests of the class. These teachers also commented on their confidence in being able to adapt lesson plans to respond appropriately to broader learning needs as they arose and felt this had a positive effect on student engagement and learning.

"Sometimes you make mistakes because you don't know these kids. But once you do, and understand where they're coming from, you can then start beginning to engage your material to them. It's a strange thing, is that: 'Do I have a series of lessons that I keep churning out?' And the answer is no. Most of my lessons are really re-adjusted to the group I'm dealing with." (Male, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

"If they're not getting anything from it, if they're not learning, or if they're not engaged with something, you might as well stop and try something new. Or ask them, like sometimes I'll stop and I'll say, this isn't working for you, is it? And I'm not telling them off, it's just that it isn't. And they'll be like, not really, it's too hard… or, we've just had PE. So I'll say okay, well… let's try it this way then… would that be better? And then it's almost like they engage more, because they kind of planned their lesson. And you can still use a lot of the resources that you've got, it's just in a different way." (Male, Secondary school, 0–5 years of experience)

Finally, it is interesting that secondary school teachers in the sample spoke more explicitly than primary teachers about the need to adapt instruction to individual students' needs.

2.1.3 Safe and stimulating classroom climate
In the view of five of the interviewees, inspiring teachers create positive learning climates for students, encouraging an open and trusting environment where students can feel happy, calm, relaxed and safe. This again emphasises the socio-emotional component of inspiring teaching, combined with the more practical aspects of activities and planning:

"I've very rarely seen a good lesson that I thought was inspiring that had just been down to the activities. It's more down to the response and the introduction of them and the kind of atmosphere they created." (Female, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

"I think [an inspiring teacher] is somebody who creates enthusiasm, and makes you feel like you can and do want to do stuff, and gives you the confidence to try things, and fail, and not be frightened to fail. I think that's sort of inspirational, it's that… you look at it and you think, I want to do that, I want to be able to have a go at that… It is that trying to build the structure but build the confidence in the individual. To me, that's what inspiration is all about." (Female, Secondary school, 11–15 years of experience)

2.1.4 Positive classroom management

In addition, most teachers referred to positive classroom management as an aspect that enabled inspiring teaching. Having good control of the class and being fair, firm and consistent were stressed as prerequisites for successful teaching and learning:

"[…] you need to have control of your class. If you haven't got control, then you'll never be an inspiring teacher. You need to be there, in control of it. Unless you've got that, then you can't teach anything." (Male, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

"I've seen lots of different teaching styles, and… the teachers that are too firm and too strict, they don't build a rapport, but the teachers who are too relaxed, and too friendly, get taken advantage of… They take the mickey, because kids need structure, and they need boundaries. They respect you more if you give them boundaries, and they know where they stand." (Female, Secondary school, 11–15 years of experience)

Teachers also argued that good classroom management was linked with their clear academic and behavioural expectations, as well as consistency across the school and fairness across students. They continued to emphasise the need for a positive approach in behaviour management:

"Consistency and fairness, it's something that has to be established before anything else. We encourage teachers to be not the same but similar in their approach and ensure that routines, rules are established right at the very beginning, and that they're consistently followed." (Female, Primary school, 16–20 years of experience)

"Management side of it I like to think there's a really clear firmness but fairness. So they know exactly how they have to behave, and they know what my expectations are, and they know that if they cross those lines there are consequences. So there's sort of that classroom management side of things is very structured, and very clear." (Female, Secondary school, 11–15 years of experience)

The way these teachers said they preferred to deal with misbehaviour and disruptions was generally positive:

"I try and tend to get them to like settle and behave, not from, like, shouting or being really rigid, but you know, sometimes you can have a joke, or you can praise, give a compliment…" (Male, Secondary school, 0–5 years of experience)

"Classroom management I think is very important. But I don't like shouting, I will punish very rarely, I hope for most of the time I can keep a student engaged… it doesn't mean I'll avoid a conflict." (Male, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

"Planning lessons does increase the engagement of your students, making sure that everyone's got some work that they can access obviously engages them, but there is still a little bit of behaviour management to do within lessons and I suppose it's through consistency in the sanctions and positivity most of the time. So it is, it has to be much more positive than negative, and it just has to be so consistent with the warnings that I use, or with whatever sanctioning system you've got, and… and you've got to follow through with things." (Male, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

"Generally speaking, if you're teaching an interesting enough lesson, the kids are too involved to make a problem, you get the chattiness but nothing worse than that really. I think one of my pupils once said, his friend said: 'Does Miss shout a lot and tell you off if you're too noisy?' and he turned round and said: 'No, but she has a look' and I thought: 'Well, that's the sort of teacher I'd like to be.' " (Female, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

2.1.5 Purposeful and relevant teaching

Four of the teachers stressed the connection between inspiring teaching and linking learning experiences to students' own lives, and of making learning purposeful:

"I think as long as you ensure that the children are understanding things, and they see the relevance of it to their lives, and they see that you've got some passion and enthusiasm and you want to be there, I think that in itself keeps the children in the classroom and inspires them in some way." (Female, Secondary school, 0–5 years of experience)

"Being inspiring to me it's also making it purposeful; you know, if the children are just doing it for the sake of it, well, what's the point? Are they really going to get anything else out of it? Are they going to be inspired to carry on?" (Female, Primary school, 6–10 years of experience)

Teachers generally felt confident that they could make their teaching relevant to students' lives, although this was perceived as being more difficult in certain subjects:

"I think it's important to try to find the uses for it, to find interesting topics they can relate to. And for me, I think I'm quite lucky doing this subject. Woe betide someone who does mathematics where, to be honest, it's much more difficult to try and find a link." (Male, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

2.1.6 Reflectiveness and collaboration

According to four of the interviewees, inspiring teachers are reflective about their practice and constantly look for ways to develop their practice further:

"I think it had got to be someone who's… for me, the key is to be continually reflective, continually being driven and determined, you know, being reflective and continuing to have that hard work and determination, that encompasses everything else, because it makes sure that your behaviour management is good, it makes sure that your pedagogy is okay, and I think if you continue to do those things, then that hopefully ensures that your practice is at a high standard." (Female, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

"The teacher I work with is inspiring to me, because I always feel that she's very reflective and very… was always looking out for… I think the psychology of the children is very important, their mindset of how they feel in the lesson can affect a lot, so I think that's what I've learned from a number of staff here that's inspired me." (Female, Primary school, 0–5 years of experience)

Participants also stressed that an important aspect of inspiring teachers' ability to reflect on their practice was to be able to do it collaboratively and thus contribute to the professional development of their teams:

"It's also your ability to work with the members of staff, because it's okay to be inspiring in your own classroom (…) but actually, inspiring teachers also go and share their ideas and their work, and I feel that's really important." (Female, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

2.1.7 Innovative teaching

A number of participants (four out of 17) suggested that inspiring teachers, as well as being knowledgeable, also bring innovation into their practice and use new, modern approaches to teaching. They exploit their creativity and are willing to take some risks:

"This [inspiring] teacher usually had a knowledge and an understanding, and a desire to trial new and modern methods." (Female, Secondary school, 6–10 years of experience)

"Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, and I think, you know, no matter what stage you're at in your career you should still be doing those things, like taking a risk, not going straight for the things that are easy, or that they know." (Male, Secondary school, 0–5 years of experience)

"I use my initiative quite a lot, I believe, to find things out that the children need or that we need to know." (Female, Primary school, 0–5 years of experience)

This approach is associated with using a rich variety of instructional activities to create stimulating lessons:

"It tends to be a bit more active, I think, because they enjoy that more… But I think it's very important to get a real mix of different types of lessons in there." (Male, Secondary school, 0–5 years of experience)

Finally, as evidenced by the teachers' views on what makes an inspiring teacher, the eight aspects mentioned above, represented in Figure 2.3, are not identified in isolation from each other, but usually appear in conjunction, are closely interrelated and are seen to influence and support one another:

"Number one for me is a passion for their career. I think there is a slight bit of madness to it, you have to be little bit crazy and a little bit different and I don't think you can inspire others to learn if you're not willing to learn as well. Creativity, imagination and, yes, there has to be an element of fun, you need to be relaxed, you need to be confident, and you need to have a mutual respect between yourself and your pupils, and your learning environment has to be in such a way that children feel that they can take risks and that it's absolutely fine to do that. There has to be discipline, there has to be rules, there has to be procedure, and there has to be an element of fairness and children have to be treated the same way and no one should ever feel as they are not a favourite, because every child is a favourite. So there are a few things." (Female, Primary school, 16–20 years of experience)

Figure 2.3: Characteristics of inspiring teachers

Interestingly, when defining inspiring teaching, these teachers also touched on the relationship of this concept to others that are more commonly used to describe teachers and their practice, such as effective and outstanding teaching. Indeed, several teachers strongly expressed the belief that being inspiring and being effective were two related and mutually-dependent aspects of teaching:

"I think to be inspiring as a teacher you have to be effective, you have to make sure that the kids are learning, and that they're enjoying being in your classroom." (Female, Secondary school, 0–5 years of experience)

However, two of the 17 teachers emphasised a distinction they saw between being inspiring and being an outstanding teacher, a category used by Ofsted in the inspection process. They suggested that being inspiring was much more due to the link with relationships:

"An inspiring teacher isn't necessarily an outstanding teacher. I think that teachers do much more, and I think you could observe a teacher in this school and give them a 1, and say they're outstanding, but they have zero relationships with students outside of the classroom, whereas you could give a teacher a 3 or a 4, but they've really invested their time and they really care." (Male, Secondary school, 0–5 years of experience)

2.1.8 Factors related to the characteristics of inspiring teachers
Career aspirations

Teachers were also asked about their plans for the future and whether they would like to take on other responsibilities within the school. A large number of interviewees (12 out of 17) said they preferred to continue with their prime role as classroom teachers, a position in which they felt comfortable and had developed a strong sense of efficacy. However, a few teachers saw leadership positions as offering an attractive opportunity to have a greater impact on their schools in future.

Job satisfaction, motivation and commitment

The concepts of job satisfaction, motivation and commitment were also explored during the interviews with teachers. These aspects have particular relevance in the context of this study, as they tend to influence one of the most important aspects these teachers commented on in defining inspiring teaching: enthusiasm. The vast majority of teachers in the study indicated that their current motivation as a teacher was high and they were generally sustaining their commitment and engagement. Phrases such as *"It's a vocation for some"*, *"I love my job"* and *"I'm dedicated"* were used. Only one of the teachers was becoming disillusioned with his work. Taken together, primary school teachers typically expressed higher levels of motivation than the secondary teachers in our sample. Teachers were particularly satisfied with the aspects of their jobs that involved being in contact with students.

Teachers' well-being and motivation at work were affected by several personal, professional and work-based circumstances, both positively and negatively. Some of the most commonly emerging factors were: workload negatively affecting work-life balance, adapting to new roles within the school, external pressures related to student and teacher assessment, school support, student behaviour and interest, and personal and health factors. These factors, depicted in Figure 2.4, are described below.

Figure 2.4: Factors affecting job satisfaction, motivation and commitment

Job satisfaction, motivation and commitment				
Work-life balance	Adapting to new roles	External pressures	School support	Student behaviour and interest

- Workload and work-life balance. In general, participants agreed that teaching was an extremely demanding profession in terms of time. Indeed, the issues of excessive workload and difficulties in achieving and sustaining a satisfactory work-life balance appeared very frequently in the interviews and were more commonly referred to by female teachers. Teachers also suggested that the issue of work-life balance impacts differently at particular points in teachers' lives.

- Adapting to new roles. Starting to teach for the first time and adapting to the demands of a new position were often cited as challenging events that affected teachers' sense of efficacy and levels of satisfaction. Being successful and obtaining recognition and respect from colleagues and school leaders were also noted as important positives.

- External policy related to student and teacher assessment. Another aspect that was identified as relevant by teachers in terms of their motivation levels was dealing with pressures set externally,

often related to recent changes in assessment of students and teachers, that were perceived as unrealistic and counterproductive.

- School support. Teachers' well-being and satisfaction with their jobs were related to their perceptions of the overall school climate in terms of the support teachers could obtain from their colleagues and their headteacher.

- Student behaviour and interest. Finally, only a very few teachers indicated that their motivation levels were associated with students' behaviour or attitudes towards them or the subject.

The impact of external policy agendas

The majority of interviewees had strong and negative views about the recent changes in national curriculum, national assessments and examinations. Some of the major concerns voiced were that in combination these changes were highly political, produced great confusion and work overload, and lacked clarity. This was seen to have shifted the focus from engaging students and innovating in teaching to managing change and achieving targets with too much focus on tests and examination results. Teachers felt they had to put in more time and that their past efforts in developing their resources and planning were being wasted, including the need to replace expensive texts and materials because of the curriculum and examination changes.

School factors affecting teacher practice

A supportive school culture was noted as a key factor in sustaining teachers' job satisfaction, motivation and commitment. In particular, aspects such as the quality of leadership, relationships with colleagues, relevant opportunities for continuing professional development and a shared behaviour management policy are, according to teachers, important factors that enhanced their daily practice and self-efficacy. These aspects are depicted in Figure 2.5 and described below.

Figure 2.5: School factors affecting teacher practice

- Quality of leadership. The most frequently mentioned school factor affecting teacher practice was the support coming from the school leadership. Nine interviewees explicitly drew attention to this factor and most of them valued leadership styles that they felt were approachable and participative. They also preferred school leaders who set clear, aspirational and realistic expectations for teachers, and provided them with relevant and constructive feedback. The views with regard to the support provided by the leadership teams were more positive among primary school teachers, and this may reflect the differences in organisational size between the sectors.

- Relationships with colleagues. The degree to which the school ethos is one that promotes positive and collaborative relationships among teachers was also considered a very important factor, noted by approximately half of the interviewees. The motivation from collaboration and the role of mentoring were also highlighted by some.

- Collaborative professional development. Most teachers reported that their school had some type of professional development programme in place, such as breakfast training sessions or INSET days. Five teachers considered collaborative and personalised learning, with colleagues within their school, to be their preferred form of professional development.

- Shared behaviour management policy. The fourth school factor frequently mentioned as having an impact on these teachers' practice was the promotion of a consistent and shared behaviour management system across the school.

Developmental needs

Teachers were asked not only about what they saw as their strengths but also about any professional development needs. The areas that they identified for further development were highly diverse. The three most common areas teachers wanted to improve were:

- subject knowledge

- differentiation

- IT skills.

However, they also mentioned various other pedagogical skills such as: planning lessons effectively, assessment practices – particularly due to proposed national curriculum changes, outdoor learning, bringing new resources to the classroom, classroom management, homework monitoring, questioning, marking and student-led learning. These areas are presented in Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.6: Areas of professional development

2.2 The relative importance of different characteristics

To explore the relative importance that teachers and headteachers assigned to different teacher attributes, participants were asked to rank-order 17 constructs that had been previously identified in the earlier ECP research (Kington et al., 2013). The response rate for this was high, with a total of 16 out of 17 (94 per cent) teachers and eight out of nine (89 per cent) headteachers returning the ranking sheets.

Figure 2.7 lists the aspects included in the instrument, ordered according to the number of times that they were chosen as one of three most important teacher attributes by teachers. In line with the findings from the interviews outlined in previous sections of this report, the categories *Enthusiasm for teaching, Positive relationships with children, High levels of motivation/commitment and Confidence in the classroom* were, according to the teachers in our sample, key attributes of inspiring and effective teaching. This confirms that those attributes of teaching considered most important by this group of inspiring teachers are socio-emotional and relate to how teachers feel about their work and their relationships with children.

On the other hand, among the qualities more frequently ranked as the least important were: having *Many years of teaching experience*, developing *Good collegiality within the school* and having a *Sense of vocation*. These aspects did not emerge strongly as related to inspiring teaching in the teacher interviews either. It is important to notice that, although these attributes were chosen as relatively less important teaching qualities, they were still considered relevant qualities by some of the teachers, although generally not as important as the rest of those listed.

The views of headteachers in the participant schools were also explored. The aim of this exercise was to identify the degree of agreement between teachers' priorities and those of headteachers. We found substantial overlap in the rank orders, especially in the attributes chosen as more and least important, by both teachers and headteachers. This suggests that, taken together, the two groups form a fairly homogeneous population with regard to their constructs of the relative importance of attributes of inspiring and effective teaching.

Figure 2.7: Teacher attributes and their importance according to teachers
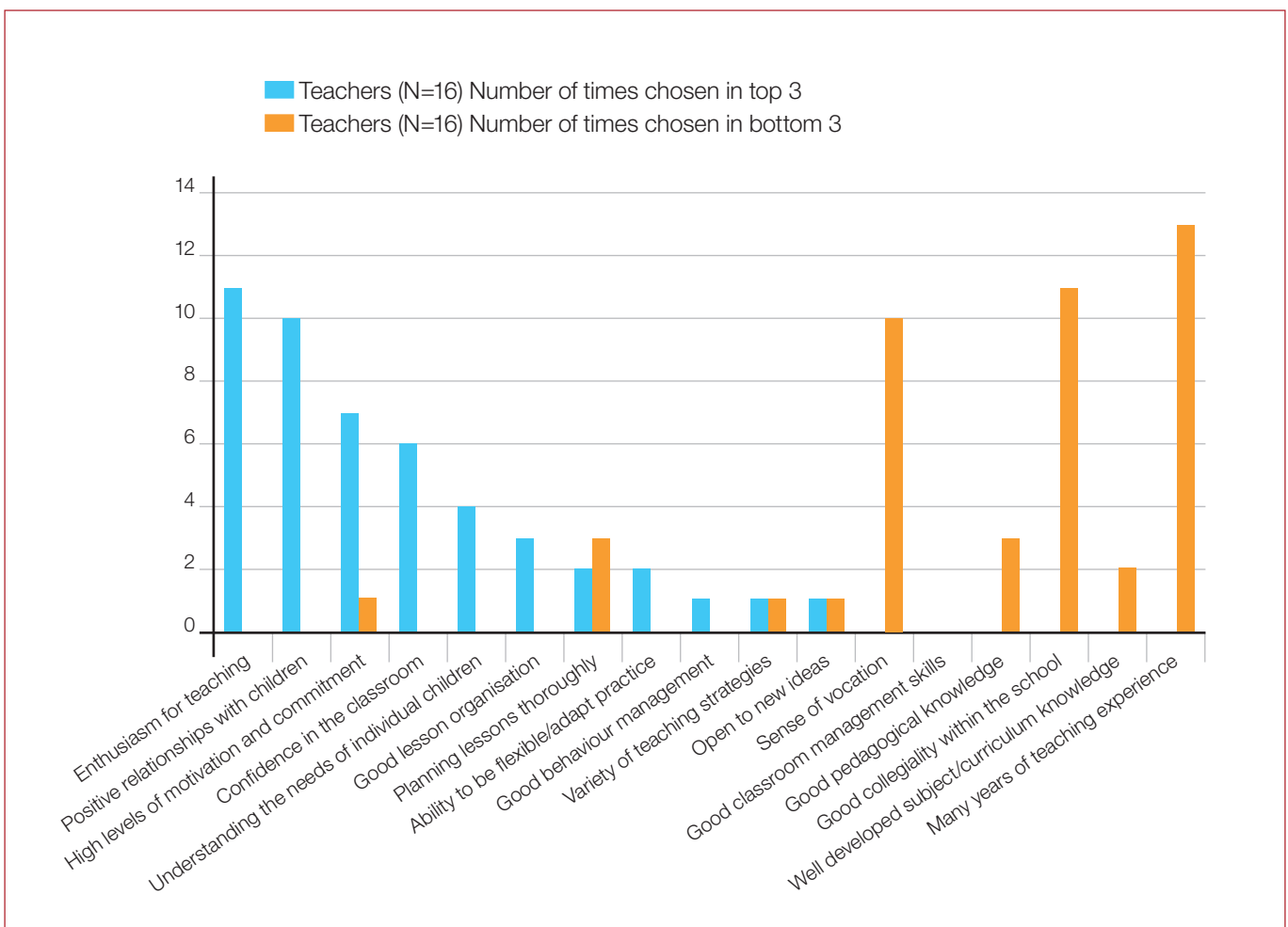
As shown in Figure 2.8, headteachers frequently chose the categories *Enthusiasm for teaching* and *Positive relationships with children* as the most important attributes but also assigned higher relevance to *Understanding the needs of individual children*.

Developing *Good collegiality within the school* and having *Many years of teaching experience* were also rated as relatively less important by headteachers, in line with the pattern for teachers when compared to the rest of the attributes.

Figure 2.8: Teacher attributes and their importance according to headteachers
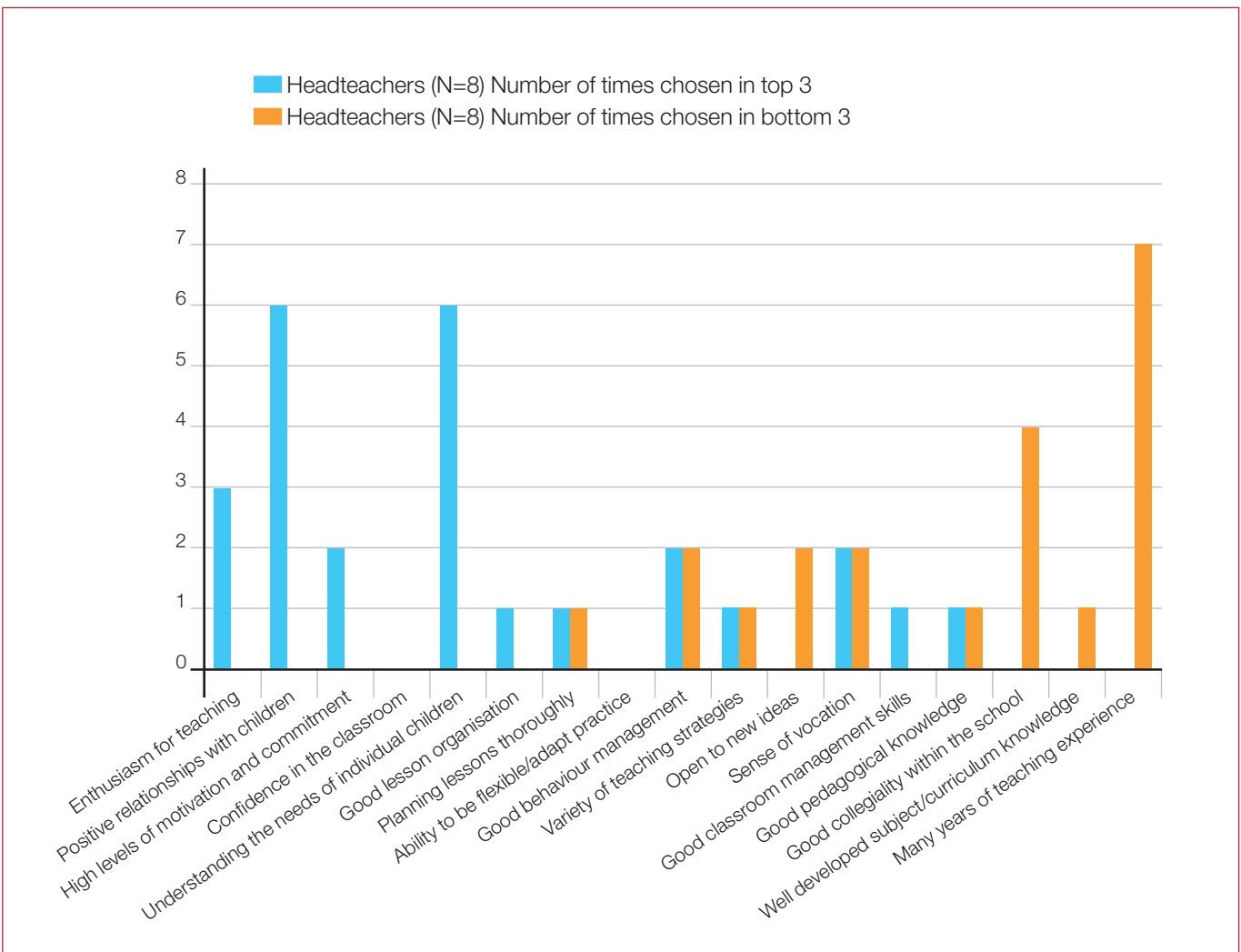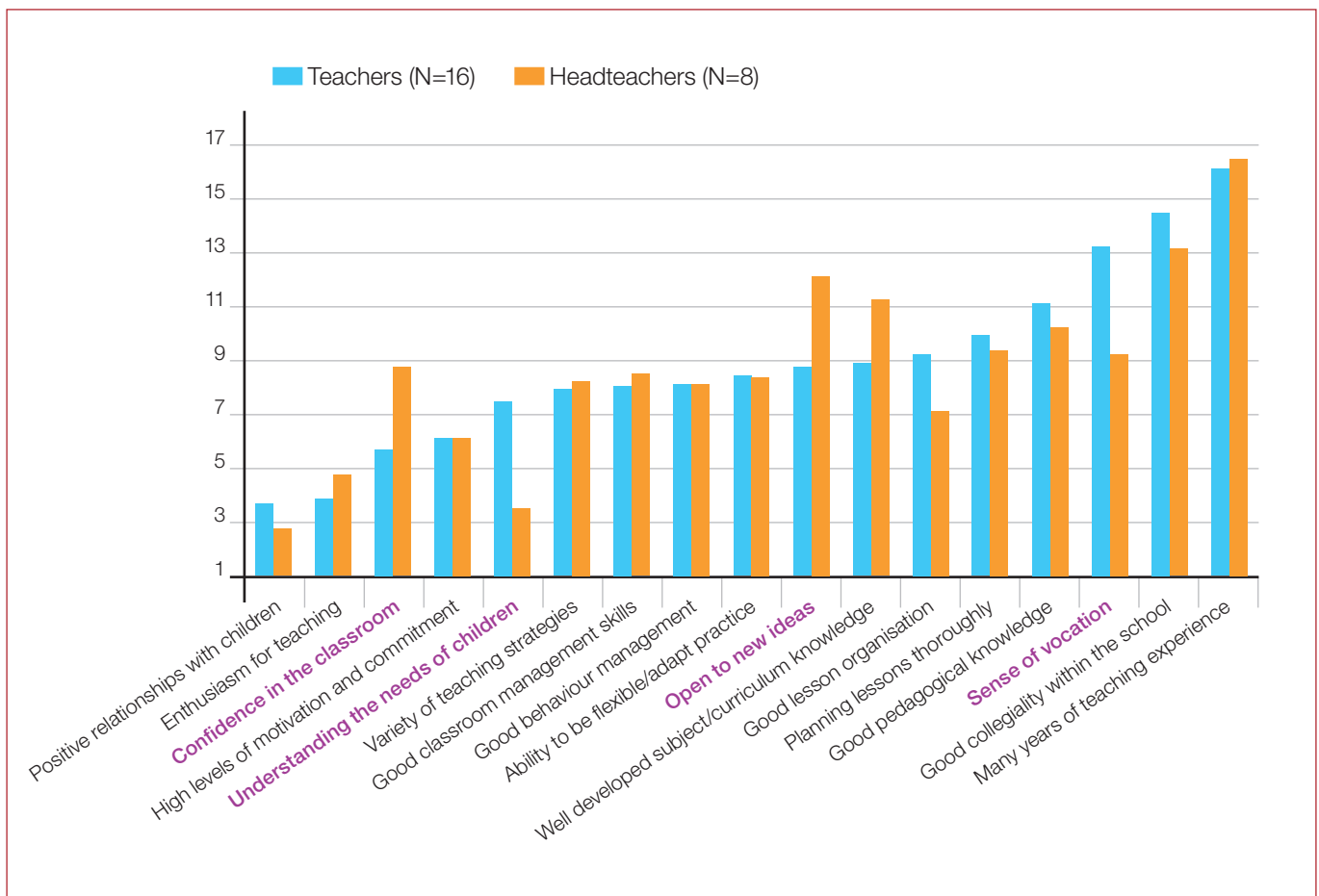
Differences between groups

Mean rankings provide another way of visualising the degree of agreement in the importance attributed to these constructs. In the following section we present the mean rank scores assigned by teachers and headteachers. In addition, within the group of teachers in our sample, mean rankings were also calculated to show differences between subgroups defined by the variables school sector (primary/secondary), gender and years of experience.

Differences between teachers and headteachers

Mean rank scores for each teacher attribute were calculated for the classroom teachers and the headteachers as separate groups. Figure 2.9 shows the constructs ordered by the importance attributed to them by teachers, where one represents the higher possible rank position and 17 the lowest. There is clear similarity in the length of the bars identifying teachers' and headteachers' mean rank scores for many of the categories, indicating that both groups put most of the attributes in a very similar order.

Figure 2.9: Average ranking position for teacher attributes according to teachers and headteachers*

(1 = Highest rank position, 17 = Lowest rank position)

* Constructs for which the magnitude of the difference across groups is large (Hedges' g ≥. 8), are shown in purple.

However, there are a few somewhat larger differences between the ranking of teachers and headteachers for some constructs. We use Hedges' g (unbiased) calculation of effect size, a more conservative indicator of the magnitude of the difference between two means than other commonly used measures of effect size, such as Cohen's d, as it adds a correction factor for small samples (Hedges & Olkin, 1985). Constructs shown in purple in Figure 2.9 are those for which the magnitude of the difference between teachers' and headteachers' mean rank scores can be considered large (Hedges' g is equal or higher than .8). Thus, for example, a substantive difference was found between the construct *Confidence in the classroom*, ranked higher by teachers on average (M = 5.69) than by headteachers (M = 8.75). Similarly, being *Open to new ideas* is also regarded as more important by teachers (M = 8.75) than by headteachers (M = 12.13). Conversely, *Understanding the needs of children* is rated as more relevant for headteachers (M = 3.50) than for teachers (M = 7.50), as well as the construct *[having a] Sense of vocation*, which is also typically ranked higher by headteachers (M = 9.25) than by teachers (M = 13.27).

Interestingly, the findings obtained from the ranking sheets, both in terms of the relative importance attributed to the attributes and the similarities between teachers' and headteachers' views, coincide quite closely with the result of the earlier ECP project, based on a larger sample of teachers identified as more effective practitioners, based on value-added analyses of student attainment data across three years (Kington et al., 2008). This suggests that the features of effective practice are widely recognised and valued in schools, and that being an effective teacher and being an inspiring teacher are likely to be associated. Being effective may be an important and necessary prerequisite but not a sufficient condition for being identified as an inspiring practitioner.

Differences by school sector

Mean rank scores were also compared for primary and secondary teachers. Overall there was general agreement; however, some discrepancy was found in the attributes that were ranked lower in terms of importance by primary and secondary school teachers, as depicted in Figure 2.10. There were clearer differences between the two sectors in the ratings of two constructs related to lesson preparation and organisation. Thus, *Planning lessons thoroughly* was rated as more important by secondary teachers (M = 8.00) than by primary teachers (M = 12.43). Similarly, *Good lesson organisation* was rated substantially higher in the priorities of secondary teachers (M = 7.44) compared with those of primary teachers (M = 11.57). The mean ranking of attributes where large differences were found, are shown in purple in Figure 2.10, following.

Figure 2.10: Average ranking position for teacher attributes by school level

(1 = Highest rank position, 17 = Lowest rank position)*
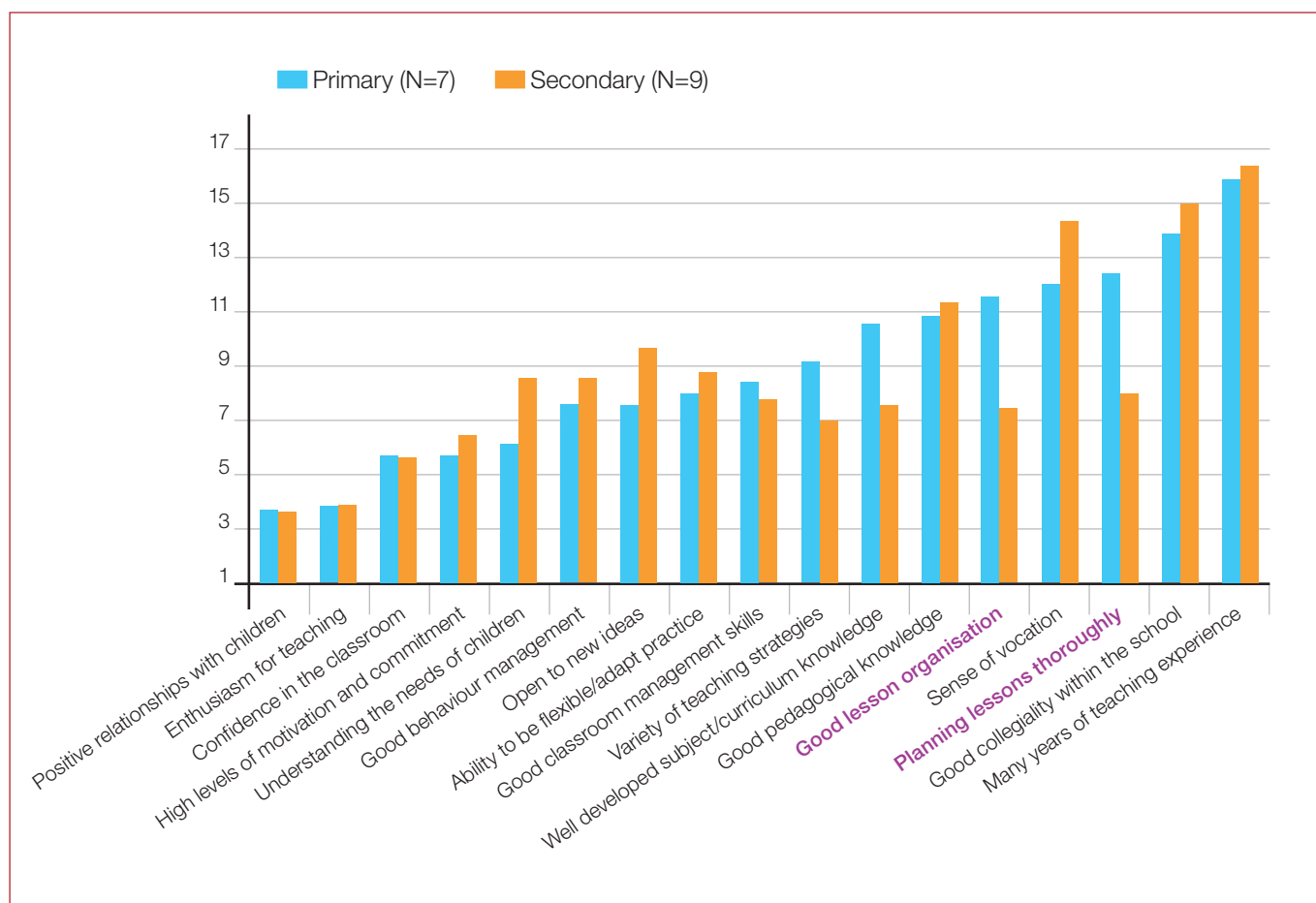
* Constructs for which the magnitude of the difference across groups is large (Hedges' g ≥. 8), are shown in purple.

Differences by teacher gender

With regard to gender differences, Figure 2.11 indicates similar ratings between female and male teachers in our sample for most of the constructs. The two teacher attributes for which the mean ranking varied substantially by gender were *High levels of motivation and commitment*, which was regarded more as a priority by female teachers (M = 5.25) than by males (M = 8.75), and *Ability to be flexible/adapt practice*, which was ranked more highly by female teachers (M = 7.58) than by males (M = 11.00). The bars referring to these constructs are highlighted in purple in Figure 2.11.

Figure 2.11: Average ranking position for teacher attributes by gender

(1 = Highest rank position, 17 = Lowest rank position)*
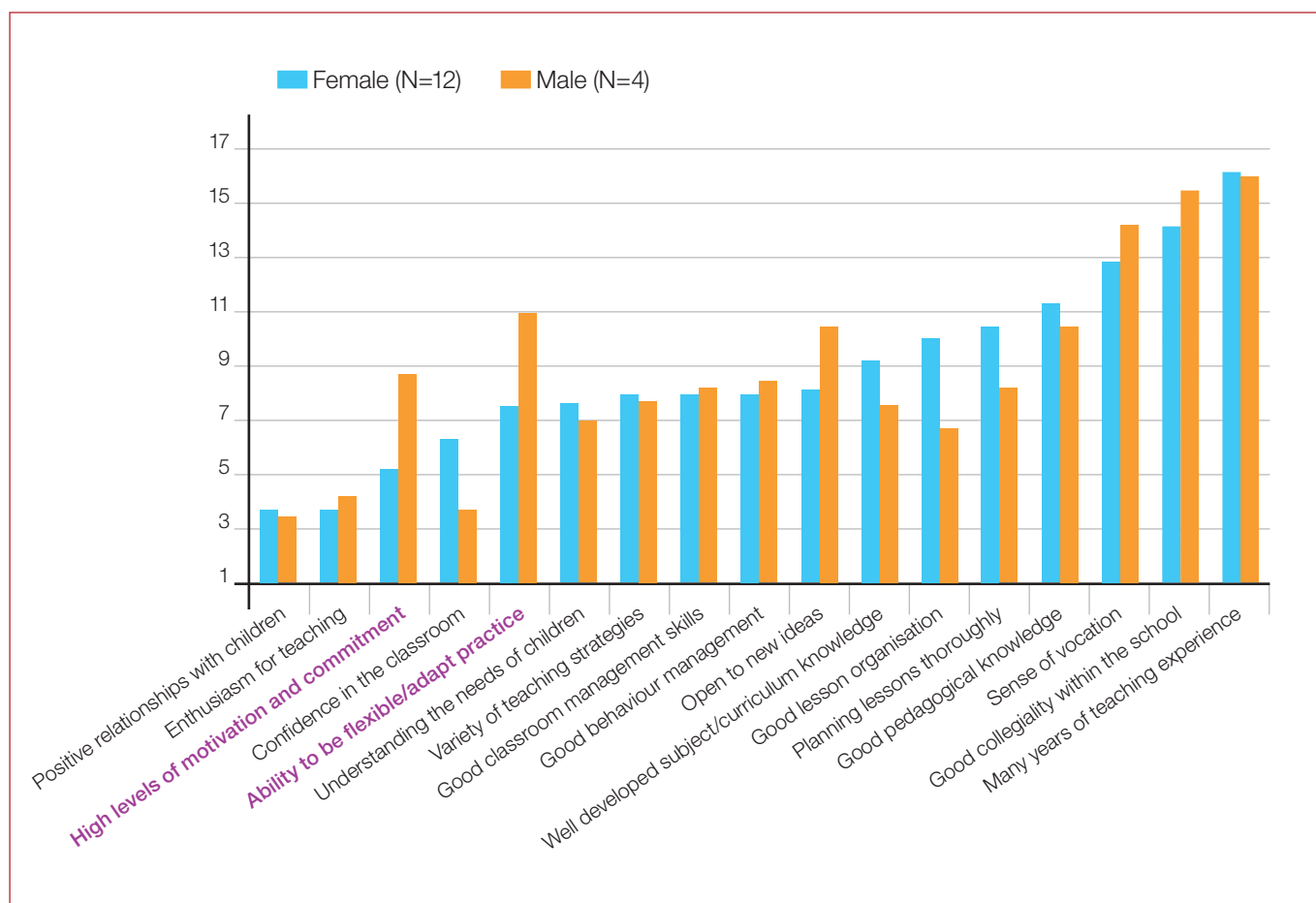

* Constructs for which the magnitude of the difference across groups is large (Hedges' g ≥. 8), are shown in purple.

Differences by career phase

Finally, teachers were classified in two groups according to their years of teaching experience, namely teachers in earlier career phases (up to seven years) and mid-career phases (between eight and 23 years).[3] As Figure 2.12 shows, the importance attributed to most of the attributes was similar across less and more experienced teachers. However, when compared to the group with more than seven years of experience, the group with seven years or less of experience differed substantially in their ratings of two attributes related to behaviour management. As shown in purple in Figure 2.12, *Good behaviour management* was considered less important by early-career participants (M = 10.29) than by mid-career teachers (M = 6.44). Similarly, *Good classroom management skills* was not accorded as much priority for early-career teachers (M = 9.43) compared to the mid-career group (M = 7.00). This suggests that more experienced teachers place a higher value on maintaining behaviour and discipline.

[3] The sample of the study did not include late-career teachers.

Figure 2.12: Average ranking position for teacher attributes by career phase

(1 = Highest rank position, 17 = Lowest rank position)*

* Constructs for which the magnitude of the difference across groups is large (Hedges' g ≥. 8), are shown in purple.

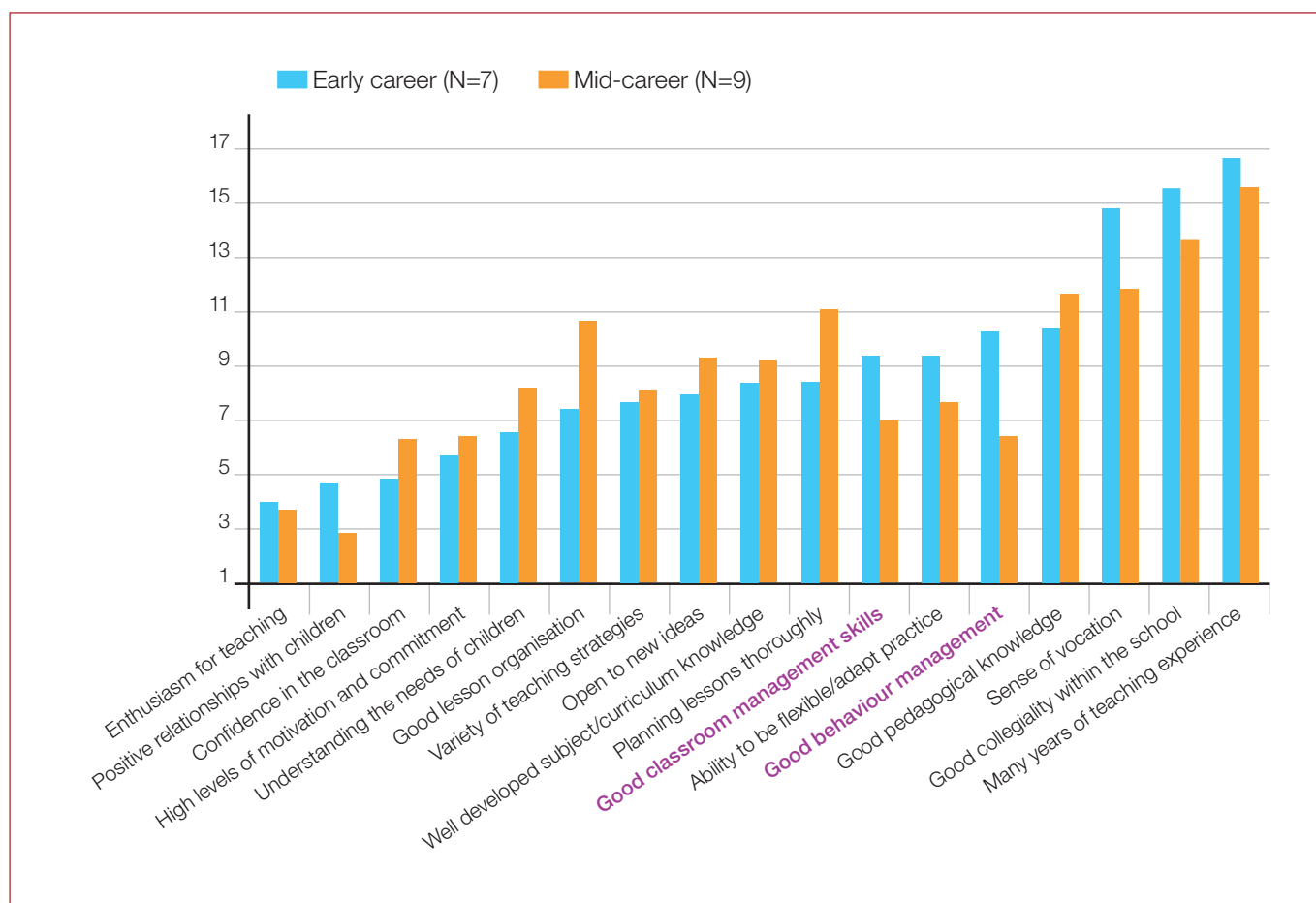All in all, the perception of teachers in our sample of what are the key aspects of their practice differed somewhat by their school sector, gender and career phase. Finally, it is important to bear in mind that the results of these descriptive analyses refer only to the purposive sample of teachers and headteachers that participated in the study. Given the non-random selection of the sample and its small size, the results are not intended to provide evidence that can be generalised to other groups of teachers not involved in this study.

3. What do inspiring teachers do in the classroom?

The research employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore what inspiring teachers do in the classroom. These are reported separately in this chapter.

Based on the sample observed for this project, inspiring teachers demonstrated many practices and behaviours associated with highly effective teaching, including:

- creating a positive, safe, and supportive climate for learning

- managing behaviour, space, time and resources efficiently and effectively

- implementing clear instruction, including explicit and high expectations and objectives for learning

- good behaviour management skills and efficient use of learning time

- skilful use of questioning and feedback to make lessons highly interactive and extend learning.

In addition, inspiring teachers:

- use largely informal approaches to meet individual student needs

- promote high levels of student engagement and motivation through varied learning activities and arrangements

- seek and honour student choice and input

- use a wide variety of activities or approaches over the course of a lesson

- show high levels of commitment and care for students' learning and well-being

- develop and reinforce positive relationships with students.

3.1 Qualitative observation findings

Semi-structured qualitative observations allowed researchers to gain first-hand insight into teachers' classroom practice, and offered an opportunity to make notes about specific aspects of lessons, dynamics, practices and behaviours, either beyond the scope of the quantitative observation instruments, or simply in greater detail.

The teachers observed were the same as those interviewed. In most cases, the interview with each teacher was preceded by at least one lesson observation. This was the preferred order of data collection so that the interviews could refer to the class groups observed, but in a few instances the teachers' timetables made it necessary to conduct interviews prior to the observations.

The observation field notes were initially framed by a schedule based on one used in the Effective Classroom Practice study (Day, 2008). This schedule included a set of key questions about teachers' relationships with students and lesson structure (see Appendix A2 for more information on the methods of data collection). This was not a restrictive framework, however, and researchers were also able to make notes of many aspects of the classrooms and lessons beyond the scope of the specific questions included in the schedule.

Several key themes emerged from the qualitative observation data (see Figure 3.1); these are described in detail in the sections that follow. The order of the sections, and the more specific breakdown of topics within each, is given according to how frequently each appeared in the field notes overall (from most to least).

Figure 3.1: Major themes from qualitative observation data

Lesson structure and activities

Questioning and feedback

Classroom management

Pupil behaviours

Relationships/interactions

Classroom environment

Climate for learning

Subject knowledge
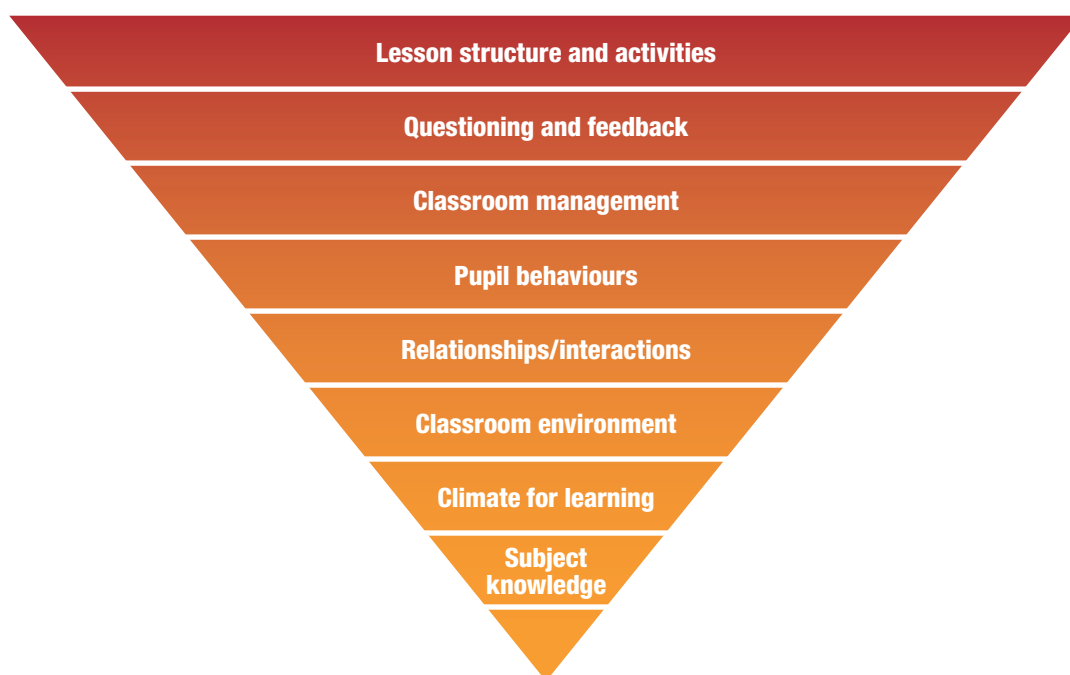
3.1.1 Lesson activities and structure
The most prevalent theme emerging from the field notes related to lesson activities and structure.

Timing and transitions
All of the qualitative field notes taken by the researchers included mentions of lesson timing, with references to features linked to the lesson introduction, transitions between lesson components, and lesson closure.

In general, the vast majority of observed lessons included a distinct introduction component. Many teachers opted to open their lessons with engaging, exciting or interactive warm-up activities – some of which were directly related to the main topic of the lesson, while others were designed more for engagement than content – before proceeding with an overview of the lesson objectives and task instructions.

Students are asked to gather on the carpet, with the teacher seated in front of them. Showing them a small handbag with a seashell image on it, the teacher explains that she has found the bag but doesn't know who it belongs to.

She asks the students to get into 'talking triads' to discuss whether they think she should open the bag or not, and why. They take turns expressing their opinions in small groups, and then volunteer to share their ideas with the class. Some claim it shouldn't be opened, as "it's private", while others disagree ("What if there's something important in it?").

The class comes to the consensus that the bag must be opened in order to identify its owner, and the teacher calls on volunteers to pull items out of the bag as clues. Small bottles labelled as 'seaweed-scented conditioner' and 'leg-growing potion' provoke eager guesses: "It's a mermaid!" Students are animated and excited, and all appear extremely engaged.

This is followed by the main content of the lesson, which involves creating and describing a character (using images as well as words).

Female teacher, 16–20 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 1 (Primary)

All lessons included a clear objective, usually made explicit early in the lesson. Many teachers displayed the objective throughout the lesson, but some chose to reveal it after some initial discussion or review. Teachers almost always required students to engage with the objectives, but to varying degrees. In many lessons, this included students reading the objective aloud, writing it in individual notebooks, or defining key words in the objective statement. Some teachers took this a step further and asked students to explain the relevance or importance of the objective, or to connect it to skills, strategies and content based on their prior knowledge.

At the start of the lesson, the objective is already written on the board in Spanish: 'Hablar de mi colegio con muchos detalles'

Students are asked to translate the objective, and the teacher calls on volunteers to share their translations.

A key word in the objective is written in red, while the rest is in black. In English, the teacher asks, "Why did I put that [muchos] in red?"

A student suggests that this is because they need to use a lot of detail.

The teacher asks why the objective is important. Student responses relate to being successful in the speaking examination.

Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Modern Foreign Languages)

Many teachers communicated specific timeframes for lesson activities, and some formally timed or counted down to specific deadlines. Most of the observed lessons included smooth transitions between activities or parts of the lesson. This often appeared to hinge on clarity about what to do next, established cues to hurry students along (many teachers used verbal countdowns), and warnings or reminders well before each transition actually took place.

Students are spread out at several tables, filling out a questionnaire about the activity they have just done. The teacher uses a tambourine to get their attention, and warns, "Don't be too careful! We only have 5 minutes."

In 5 minutes, an alarm rings to mark the end of the activity.

The teacher asks students to "stop, look, and listen", and then tells them to regroup on the carpet. She counts down: "Five, four, three…"

By the time she gets to 'one', students are seated on the carpet, ready for the next task.

Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 1 (Primary)

Lesson closures, when compared across the sample of observed lessons, appeared to be much more variable than introductions. A few of the dismissals were somewhat abrupt, though most were calm and orderly. Many teachers ended with a whole-class discussion; alternatively, there were also many who used structured debriefing (such as 'whip-around' questioning in which every student must answer one question aloud). Some chose to use individual formal written assessments to check for understanding. In several classes, mainly those involving assignments that would continue into the next lesson, there was no formal closure, just time to tidy up and announcements such as homework reminders and expectations for the following session. Regardless of the specific strategies adopted by teachers to facilitate lesson closure, most included some attempt to prompt students to reflect on their learning (either aloud or on paper).

Students write their homework assignment in their planners, pack up their belongings, and stand behind their seats. They appear to be following a clearly established set of dismissal routines.

The teacher compliments those who are properly packed and tidied up, and then asks students to come up with 'two truths and a lie' about the lesson before dismissing them.

Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Geography)

Differentiation

Formal types of differentiation (explicitly different activities or versions of a task) were not very common in most of the observed lessons. There were some exceptions, ranging from discreetly-communicated modifications to assignments, to multiple problem sets allowing every student to self-select the appropriate level of difficulty (this is addressed in more detail under 'Student input and choice' below).

Nonetheless, teachers did make frequent use of informal approaches to meet students' individual needs. The most commonly observed form of differentiation was extra individual support from teachers during periods of independent or small-group work. In secondary classrooms, this often seemed to be an organic process, in which teachers circulated to check for understanding and stopped where their support was most strongly needed. Many of the primary teachers, on the other hand, seemed to have pre-determined to whom they would offer extra support.

> Students are seated at several large tables, working on their mathematics investigation packets.
>
> After checking that everyone seems to be on track with locating appropriate resources and getting started, the teacher seats herself at the table on the far right of the room, and discusses the activity with two girls.
>
> She looks around frequently to monitor the class, and occasionally gets up to respond to check the progress of other students, but repeatedly returns to work more closely with the students at that far right table.
>
> She can be heard asking them to explain their reasoning out loud to her before writing it down, and then to read out their responses once written.
>
> *Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 2 (Primary)*

Another adult was in the room in some of the observed lessons. For the most part, the additional adult (most often an NQT or teaching assistant) appeared to have been assigned to a particular student or group of students. In the researchers' conversations with teachers after the observed lessons, these students were most often described as either having school-identified SEN or struggling with their skills in the particular subject area. Thus, allocating these individuals or groups to additional adults in the classroom also appeared to work as a means of differentiating by providing individual support as needed.

Making connections

All of the teachers incorporated links to the lesson content or lesson objectives in some way. Most frequently, teachers made connections between the lesson content and upcoming examinations, often framing this by explaining how the task at hand related to examination standards and performance. Some teachers also made the lesson tasks or content more relevant to students by drawing connections to daily life beyond the classroom, to popular culture, or to novel or exciting events likely to engage students' interest and attention.

> Synoptic thinking, the teacher explains, is "seeing everything together".
>
> "This is how to get the top marks," he says, referring to A levels.
>
> He elicits students' ideas about social networking sites and how they have changed over time, comparing some of the different sites and what has made them successes or failures.
>
> "This was synoptic thinking," he informs the students, "you've just done it!"
>
> A Powerpoint slide is projected, entitled 'The Marks Scheme', with three levels and explanations of what it takes to do well at each level. "We're going to work on these level 3 approaches," the teacher announces, before handing out resources for the main lesson activity.
>
> *Male teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 5 (History)*

It was quite common for the teachers to engage students actively in the process of making these connections. Some teachers elicited students' examples to illustrate specific links already introduced by the teacher; others used more open-ended queries to draw out students' own ideas about how the topic or task might be relevant to their lives, future skills, or other subjects.

Clarification

In many of the lessons observed, teachers were seen to engage in frequent clarification of task instructions and lesson objectives. This was not, generally, a matter of sheer repetition. Rather, teachers elicited explanations and questions, reworded instructions from the students themselves, and checked in with students one-to-one during lesson activities to make sure students were on track and understanding.

At the beginning of a lesson on measurement, the teacher demonstrates appropriate use of a ruler, tape measure and metre stick.

"Line up the end of the ruler to the end of the paper, and make sure it stays in place," she cautions.

She prompts the children to think about when to use a ruler, and when to use a metre stick, using images of sea creatures. "How big is a starfish? …Is a ruler the best thing for the job?" Children put their thumbs up or down in response, and the teacher demonstrates measuring on the smart-board, calling attention to how she checks that she is marking off her measurements correctly. "If your creature is less than 30cm, use the ruler."

For a larger 'creature', the teacher measures on the carpet, marking off measurements with chalk (this delights some of the children, who remark "Uh oh!" and "Very naughty!").

After the teacher has demonstrated how to properly use the rulers and metre sticks to complete the upcoming task, students are ready to go outside and work in pairs.

While they are working outside, the teacher checks in with various student pairs, making sure they understand the instructions and expectations.

Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 1 (Primary)

Student input and choice

Student input was actively sought and honoured by most of the teachers, although this was done in a wide variety of ways and with respect to different aspects of the lessons. Some teachers allowed students freedom to choose from several activities during a portion of the lesson, while others asked that they select their own partners or groups for a collaborative task.

Some teachers, particularly at Key Stage 2 and above, also gave students a choice between two or more difficulty levels for a particular activity, or allowed students to define their own targets.

Students work at several group tables around the room. The middle table is reserved for lesson materials. There are several stacks of paper with different three-dimensional shapes on them. Students are asked to draw the 'net' and calculate the surface area of a 3-D solid.

Each of the shapes sheets is marked with asterisks to indicate a level of difficulty, from '*' to '****'. Students get up from their tables to select sheets to work on. Many appear confident, opting for shapes labelled '***' or '****'.

Female teacher, 16–20 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 2 (Primary)

The lesson objective is written on the board at the beginning of the lesson: 'Continue working on my [art project] using my imagination. I must…'

The teacher uses this unfinished sentence as a prompt, and asks students to set their own targets which they will use to self-evaluate later.

She provides a set of helpful words as guidance, and writes these on the board as well. Some are technical ('markmaking', 'texture', 'background' and 'colour') and others are behavioural ('focus', 'concentrate' and 'explore').

Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Art)

Variety

Activities were varied in almost all of the lessons observed, except in instances where students were continuing with an ongoing assignment or activity. This variety was often more striking in primary classrooms, in which it was common for students to physically change configurations or groupings to transition to activities involving different materials and modes of instruction.

Children start in a cluster on the carpet. The teacher chooses a few volunteers to stand, and the rest of the class tries to think of ways in which those standing make a pattern by looking for things that are different and things in common (such as hair length for the former and number of limbs for the latter).

The class then scatters into predetermined small groups. Children seem to be grouped by ability, and each group has a different activity. For example, one group is 'shopping', using pretend money and groceries to practise counting money, while another is using gloves as tools to help them work out how to count in fives.

A few minutes pass, and students are again gathered on the carpet at the front of the room, where the group that was using gloves helps to teach the rest of the class to count in fives while the teacher helps by asking the 'teachers' questions, to prompt thorough explanations.

This is followed up with hands-on practice: children take off their shoes and use their toes to count in fives.

Finally, to wrap up the lesson and relax before the next one, children line up and are taken outside for a few minutes of unstructured 'walk and talk' time.

Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 0 (Primary)

In secondary classrooms, though some lessons involved students remaining seated or using a more limited set of materials, there was still clear evidence of varied tasks and activities. For these older students, it was more common for this variety to involve working with different partners during the lesson, switching from whole-class discussions to group or individual activities or vice versa, and alternating between spoken and written tasks. Some teachers also provided variety by introducing novel activities and materials to their lessons.

The teacher has created different stations at several tables around the classroom, each representing a different part of the experience of being stranded on a desert island.

On each table is a writing prompt, accompanied by props (one table holds a pile of clothes, another has food wrappers, and a third has images of wild beasts or monsters). Some additional props are scattered around the room to add to the effect.

Students are given dry-erase felt-tip pens, and told to write their responses to the prompts directly onto the tabletops. They are allowed to interact with the props as they choose; some put on costumes from the clothing pile, and many wear paper masks.

All of the students write busily, despite clear variations in ability and/or motivation (some write articulately and go on for paragraphs in response to a prompt, others write a sentence or two with grammar or spelling errors).

Students move freely between the tables as they finish responding to each prompt. Some take occasional breaks from writing to read others' responses and discuss their thinking with classmates.

Male teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (English)

Use of technology

Almost all of the classrooms contained smart-boards. The vast majority of teachers presented their lessons using this technology, but only some allowed students to interact with the board or other technology tool. Some teachers used technology in creative or unusual ways, which seemed to be popular with students.

Students work in pairs. Each pair is given an iPad to use for the activity.

The task requires students to select a celebrity, use an iPad application to manipulate an image, and record dialogue for their celebrity.

Students are very happy with the activity. They are allowed to move about to different areas, including the backyard outside the classroom door, to record their presentations.

Their videos are shared in a joint blog once completed, and they also complete some written work handouts to accompany their presentations.

Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 4 (Modern Foreign Languages)

3.1.2 Questioning and feedback

Teachers' approaches to questioning and feedback were heavily featured in the field notes, although the specific strategies and techniques varied from teacher to teacher and, to some extent, between primary and secondary classrooms.

Positive feedback

All of the teachers used positive feedback, in whole-class discussions as well as conversations with small groups and individual students. Many responded to every contribution with positivity, using phrases such as "Brilliant effort" when students offered incorrect answers. Teachers frequently

offered words of praise without making the reason explicit (e.g. "Lovely", "Brilliant", "Really, really good work", "Jolly good", "Spot on", "Excellent", "This pleases me"), but a few were more specific:

"You counted in 9s, that's really interesting!"
(Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience, Primary, Key Stage 0)

"Well bowled, excellent!"
(Male teacher, 0–5 years' experience, Secondary Physical Education, Key Stage 3)

"There is no actual scientific evidence! I love that."
(Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience, Secondary English, Key Stage 3)

In primary lessons, teachers were more likely to offer explicit positive feedback about students' behaviour as well as their academic efforts and progress:

"Amazing sitting!"
(Female teacher, 16–20 years' experience, Primary, Key Stage 1)

"Lovely listening faces."
(Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience, Primary, Key Stage 0)

Circulation
In almost all of the lessons observed, teachers circulated while students were working. This looked different from classroom to classroom. Many teachers remained standing and conducted quick check-ins with student groups or individuals, glancing at student work, responding to questions, and offering more involved individual support when necessary. Some preferred to sit down while visiting each table or group, and in primary classrooms, teachers often knelt down on the floor while speaking with seated groups or individual students. The majority of teachers managed to circulate to every part of the room, although it was common for teachers' time to be unevenly distributed between different groups of students. Most teachers used probing questions while circulating to check for understanding, and many also used questioning to support collaboration and communication between students.

> The teacher circulates to each group as they continue working to find different ways to draw 2 metre x 10 metre paths using 1 metre x 2 metre rectangles.
>
> She prompts students to reflect on their work and encourages them to communicate with each other:
>
> "Is there any other way?"
>
> "How many have you found?"
>
> "Have you discussed this way with your group?"
>
> "Are you sure that's all?"
>
> *Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Mathematics)*

Open-ended questions

All of the teachers used at least some open-ended questions during their lessons. When these questions were academically oriented, they often involved asking students to make their own connections to real-world situations, draw on prior knowledge, or explain how they found a solution or arrived at an answer:

> *"What do you know about pirates?"*
> (Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience, Primary, Key Stage 0)

> *"Are there connections without the date?"*
> (Male teacher, 6–10 years' experience, Secondary History, Key Stage 5)

> *"How can you convince me that it's 89?"*
> (Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience, Secondary Mathematics, Key Stage 3)

An entirely different type of open-ended question involved prompting students to reflect on their own learning or on the work and ideas of their peers. It was common for students to be asked to engage explicitly with these metacognitive types of questions in secondary lessons.

> Students are engaged in a 'speed dating' activity. Girls stand in a semicircle facing inward, boys stand in a smaller semicircle facing the girls. Each 'couple' takes turns speaking in Spanish for 1.5 minutes per person, after which the listening partner must offer feedback. As the teacher circulates, she asks, "How could he do better?" "What do you think she can improve?"
>
> At the end of the lesson, following another group speaking activity, the teacher asks one student from each group to identify an area of progress and an area for improvement.
>
> *Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Modern Foreign Languages)*

Primary teachers also invited students to reflect and offer feedback, but usually in simpler terms:

> *"Can you tell me about what you've done today?"*
> (Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience, Primary, Key Stage 0)

> *"What was easy?"*
> (Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience, Primary, Key Stage 1)

All students encouraged to contribute

Nearly every observed teacher made some attempt to make lessons and interactions as inclusive as possible. The majority of teachers used cold-calling and informal monitoring (i.e. attempting not to call on the same individuals too much, actively encouraging reluctant or shy students, and ignoring or redirecting students who spoke out of turn) to accomplish this.

> The teacher asks a student by name to explain which food item he would bring with him if he knew he would be stranded, and why. The boy's body language shows embarrassment: shrugging, shrinking away from the teacher, smiling apologetically, and he says, "I don't know".
>
> The teacher ignores another student who is attempting to interrupt, and encourages gently, "You know it, I'm certain of it. Tell us what you're thinking, we'd love to hear your ideas."
>
> After this prompting, the student does give a quiet answer.
>
> *Male teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (English)*

In rare instances, teachers also used pre-planned strategies or structures to ensure that all students participated.

> The teacher rings a bell to get children's attention, and asks them to gather and sit on the carpet with three descriptive words in mind.
>
> She brings out a set of lollipop sticks with children's names written on them, and draws from these to determine which students to call on to share their adjectives.
>
> *Female teacher, 16–20 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 1 (Primary)*

> Some of the students refuse to participate or have forgotten to bring their P.E. kits.
>
> Rather than allowing them to sit out, the teacher assigns these students the task of managing matches so that they can (and in fact must) participate.
>
> As there are several cricket matches being played at once in different areas of the field, there are enough manager roles for all of those who are unprepared or reluctant to play.
>
> *Male teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Physical Education)*

3.1.3 Classroom management
Evidence of routines

Evidence of well-understood routines was noted frequently in the researchers' field notes from lesson observations. Some of the most commonly-observed routines involved:

- students knowing what to do at the beginnings and endings of lessons without being reminded

- rules and consequences

- ways of communicating in the classroom (particularly knowing when and to whom it was appropriate to speak during the lesson)

- the handling of resources and materials.

It is useful to note here that, as most of the observations took place in the summer term towards the end of the academic year, teachers had, in most cases, had a good deal of time to establish routines with their students.

As the lesson progresses, the teacher keeps a list of late arrivals, warnings, and points on the whiteboard. He does not mention what he is doing, and students do not argue when they are recorded as late or misbehaving. There appears to be a well-established set of rules and consequences that are mutually understood.

Male teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Mathematics)

Responding to disruptions

No major disruptions were seen in any of the lessons. The minor disruptions that did occur in some classrooms were swiftly and appropriately handled; some of these included interruptions from outside the classroom (e.g. students from other classes making noise in hallways or outdoors, messengers sent by other teachers to borrow supplies or ask questions, other staff members needing to speak with the teacher, students removed from other classrooms for misbehaviour). Many teachers, especially in secondary schools, strategically ignored minor disruptions (such as occasional whispering out of turn) and only responded to more serious infractions like disrespectful language.

When responding to minor disruptions, most teachers avoided role-confirming remarks in favour of gentle reminders and quick comments with an emphasis on promoting productive use of time:

"You can talk, but you have to talk at a lower level."
(Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience, Secondary Art, Key Stage 3)

"How is that helping the game?"
(Male teacher, 6–10 years' experience, Secondary Mathematics, Key Stage 4)

Primary teachers also tended to refer to school-wide behaviour management policies when redirecting students:

"If I have to wait for you one more time, it's a white cloud."
(Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience, Primary, Key Stage 1)

"Let's go and have a look at the silver star chart and tell me where you will be on it, shall we?"
(Female teacher, 16–20 years' experience, Primary, Key Stage 1)

The field notes document that most of the teachers used an even tone when responding to disruptions, but several also raised their voices to be heard when classroom noise levels rose above an appropriate volume, and a few used stricter tones and language to redirect their students. There were often a greater number of disruptions in classes where the teacher opted to use a loud or stern tone, but it is not possible, based on this data alone, to support claims about which of these conditions may have caused or contributed to the other.

Student responsibility for classroom space and resources

It was evident in almost all of the classrooms that students were given responsibility and ownership for the classroom space and resources. Some teachers accomplished this by assigning specific temporary duties (e.g. handing out calculators), others seemed to have established routines that encouraged students to voluntarily claim responsibility for resource distribution or tidying-up tasks. In a few instances, students demonstrated that they had internalised a certain care for common

space and resources, so that it was not only a formal classroom expectation but also a part of the individual students' values.

> After hearing instructions for the activity, students are up and about, moving freely around the room. They appear to be spontaneously taking on jobs, fetching and distributing rulers, mirrors and other resources to their groups and in some cases other tables as well.
>
> After the activity is over, they repeat this behaviour, sorting out their completed packets and resources. One particularly eager volunteer blurts out, "I'll collect it!" while others are organising resources in bins around the room and in the middle of each table.
>
> Several students walk around checking under and around tables and picking up paper scraps left over from the activity to put in the rubbish bin.
>
> The teacher oversees all of this, and compliments students who are being especially proactive.
>
> *Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 2 (Primary)*

Student leadership roles

In several classes, students were given a variety of leadership roles and responsibilities (not just related to classroom space and resources), which served as a classroom management tool in multiple ways. In some cases, students who exhibited challenging behaviours were chosen for leadership roles in order to occupy them and give them a reason to behave constructively. On the other hand, some teachers also selected students with exceptionally strong academic skills or exemplary behaviour to lead their peers by example. In many cases, students taking over small jobs in the classroom left the teacher free to proceed with the lesson, allowing for more efficient transitions.

> One of the boys in the class appears to have particularly strong writing skills – he writes a great deal in response to each prompt, using complex sentence structure and advanced vocabulary. He finishes early, and the teacher encourages him to sit with struggling students and prompt them to assist with their writing. He models teacher behaviour, helping his peers to express their own ideas by asking them a lot of questions. It seems clear that he has been given this 'teacher's assistant' role before.
>
> Towards the end of the same lesson, the teacher announces that he will be distributing sweets as students leave the room. One of the boys is given the job of handing out exactly one sweet to each of his classmates. He was sometimes silly and spoke loudly and out of turn during the lesson, but appears to take this responsibility very seriously, smiles widely when the teacher selects him, and proceeds to behave perfectly during the lesson closure (listening to his peers when they speak, and packing up quickly to be ready for his special role).
>
> *Male teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (English)*

> As students settle at the beginning of the lesson, two students are charged with distributing notebooks and materials while the teacher starts with registration.
>
> *Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 4 (Modern Foreign Languages)*

Expectation to help each other

Based on student behaviour, and in some cases explicit teacher feedback (e.g. "Help each other out!"), there was an expectation in many of the observed classrooms that students should help one another with assignments and tasks. This was sometimes facilitated by teachers, but quite frequently students helped each other spontaneously without having been directed to do so.

> As students work through a problem set, the teacher requires them to ask the other people at their tables for help before asking him.
>
> From time to time, when everyone at a particular table is stuck, the teacher suggests that one of them get up and go to another table to ask other students to explain a solution strategy. In these instances, he points out specific peers that they should approach for help.
>
> *Male teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Mathematics)*

> Small groups of young children are working in different areas of the classroom as well as outside, accessible through an open classroom door (with adults there to help and monitor).
>
> Some of the children are counting and sorting 'treasure'. They help each other to find specific 'gems' (marbles) and 'coins' (silver and gold paper circles), and take turns holding containers while another child places the treasure inside.
>
> Another group is painting a treasure chest made of cardboard. They share paint, sometimes getting more water for themselves and for each other.
>
> *Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 0 (Primary)*

3.1.4 Student behaviour

Engagement

Either all or very nearly all students were engaged during all of the lessons observed, though in a few cases this engagement fluctuated depending on the specific activity over the course of the lesson. This observation, combined with the interview evidence, suggests that inspiring teachers lay a strong emphasis on promoting engagement. Below are a few representative excerpts from the field notes:

> *"Students are very focused... students speak quietly, very engaged."*
> (From a Key Stage 3 English lesson, Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience)

> *"Most students are engaged and having a great time."*
> (From a Key Stage 3 Physical Education lesson, Male teacher, 0–5 years' experience)

> *"Students are engaged… there is lots of giggling and happy expressions… no one is idle."*
> (From a Key Stage 2 Mathematics lesson, Female teacher, 16–20 years' experience)

Task-focused communication

In many of the lessons observed, students communicated frequently with their peers about the activity or task at hand. These classes were highly interactive, providing opportunities for students to work together collaboratively. Sometimes this was formalised and built into the instructions for a particular activity, but more often it appeared to be an expectation that required little prompting, forming part of the classroom norms established by the teacher.

Students comment on one another's drawings and ask one another for advice:

"What do you think?"

"Should I do more for the leaves?"

"Does the face look angry to you?"

Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Art)

Students work on their calculations at their tables, discussing and comparing with their neighbours. Several are arguing (academically) about how they arrived at particular solutions. One of the students can be heard reminding another to check the units he has used for his calculations.

Female teacher, 16–20 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 2 (Primary)

Enthusiasm

Students showed enthusiasm in many of the observed lessons. This was often prompted by a particularly stimulating activity or the prospect of some small reward, but sometimes there appeared to be a pervasive student enthusiasm for the class or subject in general. The lessons where student enthusiasm was most overt were often those which were observed to be particularly interactive and lively. Also, although kinaesthetic activity was mainly observed in primary school lessons, secondary students seemed to respond to physical activity with great enthusiasm when the opportunity was presented.

The teacher forms small groups of students. She announces, "I want you to run around like we're in a newsroom," going on to explain that they will be gathering information about hurricanes.

Students take turns as runners, dashing to opposite ends of the room to pick up and read laminated fact cards before returning to their groups to relay what they remember from what they read.

There is a lot of chatter (which sounds on-task) while students are running around and gathering facts. Students cheer on their runners excitedly and urge each other to collect more facts as quickly as possible. Some groups argue about the facts being brought to them, concerned with making sure they're getting only new information.

Following the activity, the teacher invites students to share out. One particularly eager volunteer reads his group's facts while imitating a news announcer's voice.

Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Geography)

Groupwork and communication skills

In almost all of the lessons, researchers noted examples of instances in which students demonstrated productive groupwork or communication skills. In some lessons this was prompted or guided by the teachers, but in many other instances it appeared to be spontaneous behaviour on the part of the students. Even when teachers did not seem to be directly initiating or facilitating actively, however, there appeared to be a strong possibility that teachers had previously established guidelines or best practices for collaborative work and constructive communication skills.

Students are seated on the floor in a group, facing the teacher, who says:

"I'd like you to get into talking triads, and take turns telling each other what you know about pirates."

She pauses, and adds with emphasis, "Remember to really use your listening faces!"

Students turn towards their partners (based on proximity), and one at a time, they list the facts they can think of about pirates (e.g. "They are in ships", "They go in the water"). After 1 minute, the teacher tells them it is time to switch. Now, the other partner talks, and the first one listens.

Every student in the group seems to adhere to the norms of the activity. They look each other in the eye, and wait patiently for their turn without interrupting. Many also nod to show that they are really listening.

Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 0 (Primary)

Students work on an individual task, but are allowed to discuss with peers at their discretion. Many of them choose to take advantage of this option. Some seem to be checking to make sure others fully understand the task:

"Do you get it?"

"No, it's my professor of, so you need a subject."

Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Modern Foreign Languages)

Independence

Similarly, many of the activities observed required students (sometimes pairs or groups of students) to work quite independently, with minimal guidance from their teachers. While conclusions drawn from only one or two observations per teacher cannot draw conclusions about what was done by the teacher over the whole academic term or year, the independent behaviours exhibited by students nonetheless indicated that teachers had very likely encouraged this over time, and designed lessons to provide opportunities for student independence.

Children choose from a variety of activities related to the theme of the lesson. They are free to move about between the classroom and supervised outdoor space, and they need not stick with just one choice of activity.

Many of the groups of children are not working directly with an adult, although there is always at least one adult nearby. Several children are engaged in imaginative play with water in a trough for this purpose outdoors, another bunch is painting and taking charge of their own tidying up.

One or two children are clearly staying close to the teacher or other supporting adults, but most seem perfectly comfortable to get on with their own endeavours without depending on adult assistance or approval.

Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 0 (Primary)

Peer feedback

In quite a few classes, students were encouraged to give feedback to one another as a formal or informal part of the lesson, essentially marking one another's work or providing constructive criticism for a peer's verbal contribution. Many of the teachers guided students in this process when it was done in a whole-class format, and circulated to listen to students' conversation when feedback was exchanged in pairs or small groups. With the exception of a very few isolated incidents of silliness or disrespect for their peers (which were typically addressed and redirected immediately by teachers), students generally expressed their feedback thoughtfully, articulately and specifically. This was true even in the youngest classes.

Students have just finished an investigation packet. One girl is asked to present her work. The teacher displays the written work from the packet on a document camera, while the girl reads out her conclusion to the whole class.

When she has finished, students clap.

The teacher asks the class, "What has she done well? What could she do as a next step?"

Several students offer feedback:

"She's drawn the lines on, so it's easy to see."

"She's done really well. She could, if she likes, explain why she thinks that."

Feedback is phrased respectfully and constructively, with no negative language. Students seem to begin with positive comments even when they are suggesting improvements.

The teacher praises each student who offers feedback, and probes further when comments are unclear or incorrect: "Not quite, but I like your thinking. What do you mean by…?"

Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 2 (Primary)

3.1.5 Relationships and interactions

Relationships between teachers and students were characterised most often as "relaxed", "warm", "friendly" and (in a few cases) "businesslike". As noted in the interview evidence earlier, teachers said they laid a strong emphasis on positive relationships with students, and the observation data strongly support these claims.

High expectations

Teachers expressed high expectations of their students. This was usually observed through a combination of providing encouraging formative feedback to individual students, clearly-expressed expectations that students would be able to complete challenging tasks, and setting targets expressly designed to move each student to the next level. Most teachers did not allow students to take breaks if they finished a task early; instead, they used further questioning to help students to extend their thinking.

As the teacher circulates to various groups working on a patterning activity, a student claims to have finished early. The teacher glances at his work, and then says, "So my challenge for you then is, can you predict the number of ways for 2 by 6 or 2 by 9 or 2 by 5?"

Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Mathematics)

Safe and supportive space to learn

Teachers were seen as creating safe spaces for students to contribute and also to make mistakes. This was reflected in the feedback given when students gave erroneous answers, and also in other students' positive and constructive responses in those instances. Below are some of the relevant notes written by the researchers during observations:

"Safe environment to make mistakes, teacher quashes laughing at peers immediately."
(From a Key Stage 3 Mathematics lesson, Male teacher, 6–10 years' experience)

"Students are not afraid of making mistakes."
(From a Key Stage 4 Modern Foreign Languages lesson, Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience)

"Students seem comfortable offering ideas even when they are not sure if they are correct."
(From a Key Stage 1 lesson, Female teacher, 16–20 years' experience)

Additionally, some teachers demonstrated a willingness or even an eagerness to be challenged or corrected, albeit respectfully, by their students.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher challenges students to come up with a question she can't answer. She names this activity 'Beat the teacher'.

Students try excitedly to stump her with the most advanced mathematics questions they can think of.

Female teacher, 16–20 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 2 (Primary)

Humour

Many of the teachers used humour at some point during the lesson. In most of the lessons, this was not so much a matter of actually telling jokes as being willing to laugh with students (for example, at the teacher's own mistakes, or as a mild way of redirecting silly behaviours), or to say unexpected things to surprise them. This helped to create a positive climate, support classroom management and promote student engagement and enthusiasm.

As students write the objective, the teacher is playing spooky music to set the tone for the lesson text.

As an aside, she says, "That is me snoring."

Students scream with laughter at this.

Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (English)

Treating students as individuals

In the interactions between teachers and students, it was clear that teachers made an effort to know and refer to students as individuals. This was based on a variety of evidence: some teachers merely called on students by name, others greeted each student individually at the door before the lesson began, while still others made comments that showed awareness of students' lives and interests beyond the classroom.

During registration, the teacher says good morning to each student individually. She offers a few positive comments based on individuals' work in a previous lesson, e.g. "Great learning yesterday!"

Students have just had a 'taster' day to see what secondary school will be like. Before formally beginning the lesson, the teacher gives students a chance to share their experiences and feelings about this.

Female teacher, 16–20 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 2 (Primary)

Awareness of individual targets/needs

Teachers demonstrated awareness of the students' individual learning needs and targets both explicitly (by directly discussing the targets) and implicitly (by offering extra support to a struggling student or extension opportunities to students with stronger skills). This is included under the category of relationships because teacher conversations and interactions with students so often revolved around, or at least mentioned, academic targets and progress.

The teacher keeps a list of students' targets in an application in her iPad. She reads them aloud to students during the lesson to make sure they know their own targets.

Female teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (English)

Enthusiasm and mutual liking

Some aspects of the relationships between teachers and their students were less concrete, but nonetheless evidence was present in the researchers' field notes. Students were seen, in the majority of observed classes, as appearing to like their teachers, while teachers were generally seen to show enthusiasm and enjoyment in their dealings with students.

Sense of authority

In some lessons, there was a more pointed sense of teacher authority:

"Very structured but supportive approach."
(From a Key Stage 3 Geography lesson, Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience)

"Strict about silence as needed, sometimes a sharp tone of voice to redirect students."
(From a Key Stage 1 lesson, Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience)

This may have been a feature of some teachers' individual style of lesson delivery, or a response to classes that had previously exhibited challenging behaviours. Whatever the reasons behind it, this sense of strong teacher authority was a prominent feature in some classrooms and not at all in others.

3.1.6 Classroom environment

Every classroom had some academic reference material on display. The vast majority also included colourful and stimulating decoration, many examples of students' work and information about classroom and school norms or rules. Most primary classrooms also prominently featured behaviour or reward charts, suggesting that extrinsic reward and recognition systems were viewed as important.

Posters on the wall say: 'Aim high', 'Be determined', 'Think creatively', 'Attitude is everything'.

Class rules are explicitly displayed.

Phrases are posted inside laminated shapes, with students' names written next to various accomplishments. The shapes are labelled with: 'I can do it', 'Dare to be different', 'More than just me', 'How well did I do?'. These correspond to various student behaviours during class for which the teacher gives special acknowledgements.

A 'table points' chart on one wall indicates that groups are also acknowledged for their collaborative work.

'Working walls' for literacy and numeracy can be seen on bulletin boards at the sides of the room. The literacy wall includes references for punctuation, specific and technical vocabulary, and 'writers of the day' (which acknowledges individual students and lists their specific accomplishments). The numeracy working wall also includes some student work.

'Super stars' (these, too, celebrate the accomplishments of a few individuals from the class), as well as a star chart, are posted at the front of the class.

Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 2 (Primary)

Resources were accessible in most of the classrooms, and for younger students, it was often apparent that drawers, shelves or bins had been placed lower down so that they could be reached by small children.

A book corner is tented to provide a covered library space containing shelves with a selection of books labelled according to reading levels, fiction and non-fiction. The shelves are all low enough for students to see and reach by themselves, and the tent gives a sense of being especially for children.

Resources are kept in bins and on shelves within students' reach. They are able to take out and put away their own materials during small-group activities within the lesson.

Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 0 (Primary)

Some classrooms also featured furniture that was relatively easy to rearrange for different types of activities; this appeared to be of more importance for some lessons than others (for example, in a Key Stage 3 Art lesson in which students were continuing to work on a longer-term individual project, moving tables around the room might not have been necessary or even appropriate).

To allow students to run back and forth during the activity, tables must be moved slightly. The students manage this within a minute, and the activity begins promptly.

At the end of the activity, the teacher requests, "Can you move your tables back into their original positions, if you moved them?"

This is again accomplished without losing time, and the teacher goes on swiftly to debrief the activity as a whole class.

[In a later lesson the same day with a different year group, the table configuration has again been changed to accommodate a much smaller class.]

Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Geography)

Many of the primary classrooms, particularly those containing the youngest students (Key Stages 0 and 1), were divided into zones or stations. Some teachers used these defined areas to allow multiple activities, or different approaches to the same objective, to take place simultaneously in one classroom. Other teachers used the subdivisions of space much as though they were different rooms within the classroom, so that individual zones were associated with specific subjects (e.g. literacy, numeracy or art), or specific types of tasks (e.g. a kitchen area with sinks and utensils for cooking, a library corner with bookshelves for students to select from and comfortable seating, or a painting area with easily washable tables, access to water, and tiled flooring). Secondary classrooms tended not to have stations or zones, but instead had clearly visible and easily-accessed areas for different types of resources (e.g. calculators, books, dictionaries and scissors).

The classroom is separated into several activity areas.

One small corner near the door to the yard has been turned into a 'submarine' for imaginative play, a small boxed-in area containing props such as a toy periscope.

At the back of the room is a painting area with a lot of table space and access to a sink.

Tables are clustered in three other areas of the room to facilitate group activities.

Shelves and bins along the wall hold a variety of resources, which seem to have been intentionally arranged according to who may access them (certain materials are kept at student height, while others are stored higher up if they require teacher supervision to be used).

A book corner at the front of the room is arranged to give students comfortable places to sit and read. Shelves are low enough for students to reach, and they form a sort of library cubicle so that the book corner is set apart from the rest of the space.

Outside, there are also a variety of activity areas (e.g. toys and props, water play, climbing frame). These are shared with other neighbouring classes.

Female teacher, 11–15 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 1 (Primary)

3.1.7 Climate for learning

In the field notes for the lessons observed, researchers made comments on the classroom climate for learning as they perceived it. In this context, the most commonly used term was 'relaxed'. There were also references to evident mutual respect, productivity, fun, energy, calm and a sense of common purpose.

It is, however, difficult to illustrate climate for learning in the same way as some of the more concrete themes in this chapter. In many instances, the researchers noted their sense of the climate for learning, but without this being explicitly linked to a discrete set of practices or behaviours:

> *"Relaxed but productive; there is a sense that all are working towards a common goal."*
> (From a Key Stage 3 Modern Foreign Languages lesson, female teacher, 11–15 years' experience)

> *"There is a general sense of fun to the lesson, as well as productivity."*
> (From a Key Stage 3 Geography lesson, female teacher, 0–5 years' experience)

> *"Energetic but relaxed."*
> (From a Key Stage 3 Art lesson, female teacher, 11–15 years' experience)

> *"Calm… sense of fun."*
> (From a Key Stage 4 Mathematics lesson, male teacher, 6–10 years' experience)

> *"Warm and friendly environment."*
> (From a Key Stage 0 lesson, female teacher, 0–5 years' experience)

> *"Relaxed, excited, inviting."*
> (From a Key Stage 1 lesson, female teacher, 16–20 years' experience)

It is worth mentioning that this theme was the most likely to overlap with some combination of the others during the coding process. For example, in classes where the climate was described as relaxed or friendly, the teachers' relationship to and interactions with students were also often described in the same or similar terms. In other words, while climate for learning was included explicitly in the qualitative observation notes, it was also closely tied to and influenced by a combination of more specific features of the lessons observed, especially the relationships and interactions between teacher and students.

3.1.8 Teacher subject knowledge

Teacher subject knowledge was referred to in the majority of the field notes, but only very briefly. This is not to say that subject knowledge is unimportant or unrelated to inspirational teaching. On the contrary, in a sample of teachers who had all been nominated as inspiring, it is possible that strong subject knowledge was a prerequisite, and did not stand out because there may have been little variation in this respect between individual teachers. Very few subject knowledge errors were observed. Specifically, out of a total of 28 lesson observations with 17 teachers, the researchers noted only two, relatively minor, errors.

References to subject knowledge in the qualitative notes most commonly related to teachers' use of accessible language and explanations. In some cases, when students struggled to understand

a concept based on an initial explanation, teachers demonstrated the depth of their subject knowledge by thinking on their feet and finding another way to explain the same concept so that students could better understand.

> Students are having difficulty describing and understanding exponential growth. To illustrate, the teacher uses a diagram of a family tree to illustrate a population pyramid on a smaller scale.
>
> *Female teacher, 0–5 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 5 (Geography)*

In addition, teachers' subject knowledge was evident in their awareness of common misconceptions, or of solution strategies and approaches that would work well for students to succeed at a particular task. Depending on the subject and type of task, this ranged from more general strategies (for writing descriptively, for example) to tips, tricks and ways of remembering that were specific to narrower topics.

> The teacher asks about the word 'antipatico', "Where's the woodpecker bit?" A student responds, making it clear that they understand this refers to an accent.
>
> In the same lesson, the teacher mentions 'toothpaste words', and asks if students remember what they are. They are able to tell him that this means cognates, and his use of the association between cognate, Colgate and toothpaste seems to work in helping them remember.
>
> *Male teacher, 6–10 years' experience. Age group/subject: Key Stage 3 (Modern Foreign Languages)*

3.2 Discussion of findings and links to interviews

While the teacher interview data yielded insights into how teachers think about inspiring teaching and their own classroom practice, the qualitative observation data presented in the sections above allow the reader to understand what teachers actually did in practice.

It is difficult to establish with certainty whether teachers' common practices in the observed lessons are indicators specifically of inspiring teaching, or whether some might be necessary but not sufficient conditions for it. In other words, the findings tell us what these teachers are doing, but not necessarily which of these things are what makes them stand out as inspiring. Further research would be needed to establish more conclusive connections between inspiring teaching and specific observed practices. This might, for example, involve working with a sample including teachers identified as inspiring as well as teachers who are not so classified, to provide a basis for comparison.

Some of the themes emerging from the teacher interviews were not directly observable, and so cannot be compared to the observation data. Other themes emerging from what teachers said about inspiring teaching, such as *Positive relationships with students, Relevant teaching, Safe and stimulating classroom climate, Positive classroom management* and *Innovative teaching,* are echoed in themes from the qualitative observation data, if worded slightly differently. *Innovative teaching* as described by the teachers in their interviews, for example, may be seen as closely related to *Variety* under *Lesson activities and structure* in this chapter – both mention trying different things and using a mix of different types of lessons or approaches.

3.3 Quantitative observations findings

In this section we describe the variation in the observed classroom behaviour and practices of our sample of 17 inspiring primary and secondary teachers based on data collected using systematic observation instruments. This element of the study aims to complement the qualitative evidence obtained from teacher interviews and observers' field notes as well as the findings derived from the student survey and ranking sheet.

Systematic observations of practice were carried out using two different instruments, the International System for Teacher Observation and Feedback (ISTOF) and the Lesson Observation Form for Evaluating the Quality of Teaching (QoT). All of the teachers in our sample were rated using both instruments. The observations were conducted between June and October of 2013 for all of the participants in our sample of 17 teachers in nine schools. The lesson observations took place in different year groups ranging from Nursery up to Year 12. The observations were carried out by two researchers who were trained and had participated in a piloting process before carrying out the main fieldwork of the study. Most of the teachers in the sample (13 out of 17) were observed simultaneously by both researchers. The score for a particular lesson observed by the two researchers was obtained by calculating the mean score between the two raters. A total of 28 lessons were observed, with 11 teachers being observed in two lessons and the remaining six observed in one lesson. For more details see Appendix A2.

Results

In what follows we present the results of descriptive analyses of the observed variation in practices found in the teacher sample, and identify items where there was either little or alternatively greater variation among teachers in the sample. The variations in observed practice according to school sector (primary/secondary) and teacher characteristics (i.e. gender and career phase) are also investigated.

Descriptive analysis

The first main characteristic of the rating scores was the high mean score and small standard deviation for all of the components measured by the ISTOF and QoT instruments, as shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. Indeed, all of the lessons observed were rated in or above the scales' midpoints, indicating overall high levels and frequencies of teacher behaviours considered effective or indicating high quality in the international literature. As implied in Figures 3.2 and 3.3, the components assessed showed negatively-skewed distributions with high positive kurtosis values, suggesting that the teachers in our sample form a relatively homogeneous group in terms of showing features related to more effective and high quality teaching practices. This suggests that the headteachers who nominated teachers as inspiring also identified some of their strongest (more effective) teachers. While to be nominated as inspiring may involve additional qualities, it is not at the expense of showing strong features of effective practice.

However, there were some differences in ratings across the different components. According to the ISTOF measures, the inspiring teachers were particularly strong in creating a positive *Classroom climate*, and particularly in their *Assessment and evaluation* of students' learning, their *Classroom management* and providing *Clarity of instruction*. In line with these results, they were also rated consistently highly on the QoT components related to providing *Safe and orderly school climate, Effective classroom layout, Clear instruction* and *Effective classroom organisation*.

Where these teachers' scores were somewhat lower, though still positive, were in the ISTOF components *Promoting active learning and metacognitive skills* and *Differentiation and inclusion*. Also, the teachers showed somewhat lower mean ratings in the QoT measures for *Adaptation of teaching* and *Teaching learning strategies*. These components were also the greatest source of variation within the teacher sample and thus distinguish differences between individual teachers' behaviours.

Table 3.1: Descriptive statistics for ISTOF components

(1 = Lowest score, 5 = Highest score, N = 17)

Component	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Assessment and evaluation	4.69	0.40	3.38	5.00
Differentiation and inclusion	3.78	0.67	2.25	4.75
Clarity of instruction	4.25	0.33	3.33	4.83
Instructional skills	4.19	0.40	3.46	4.83
Promoting active learning and developing metacognitive skills	3.78	0.60	2.50	4.7
Classroom climate	4.80	0.17	4.38	5.00
Classroom management	4.43	0.29	3.83	5.00

Figure 3.2: Histograms of ISTOF observation protocol components

(1 = Lowest score, 5 = Highest score, N = 17)
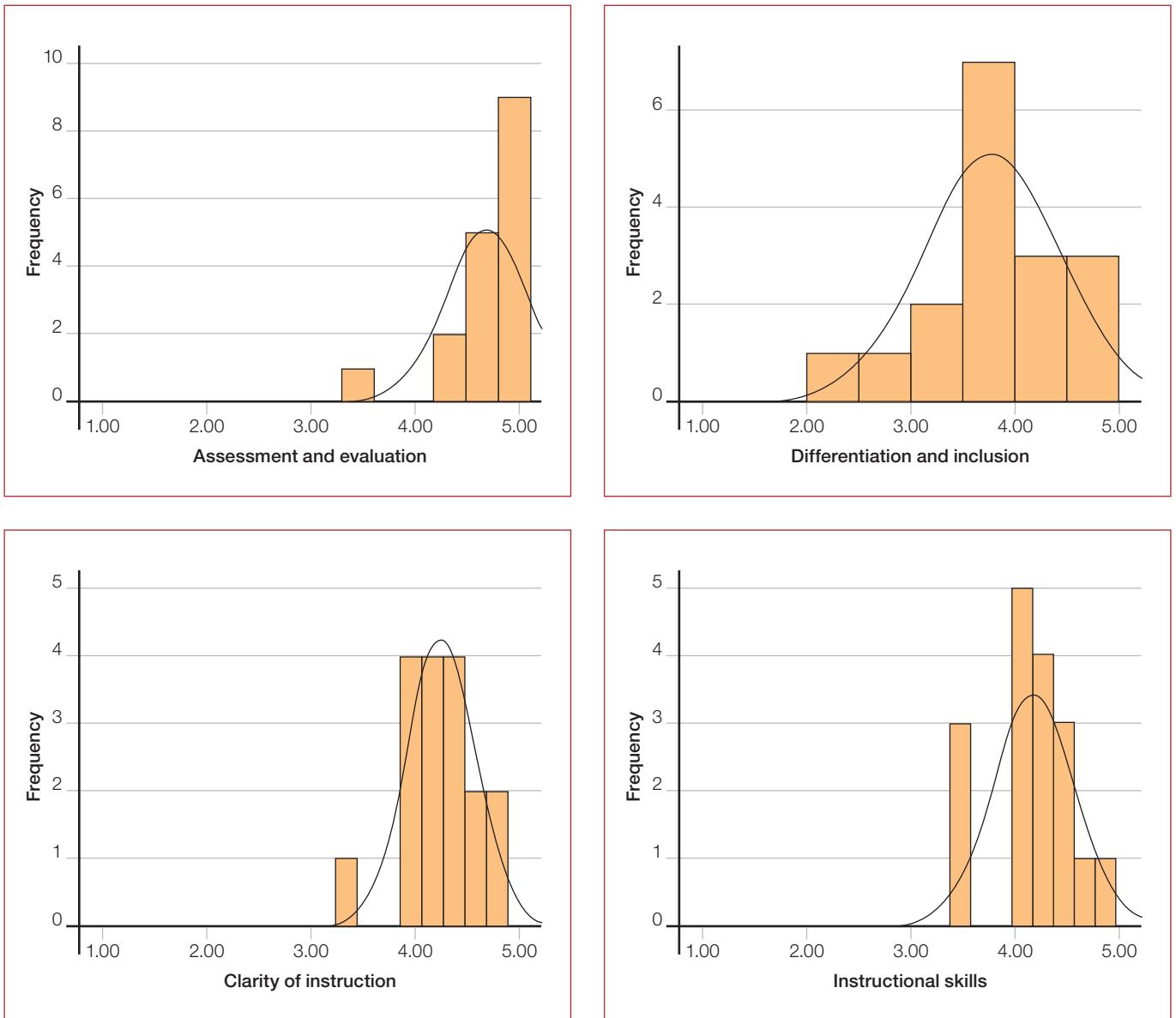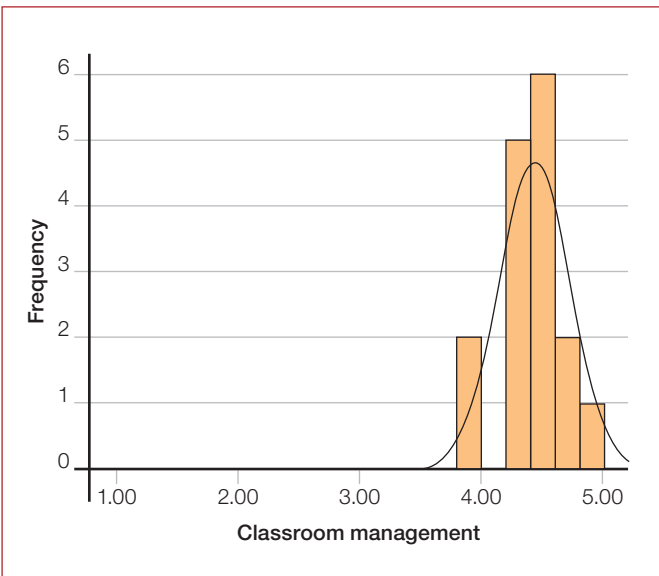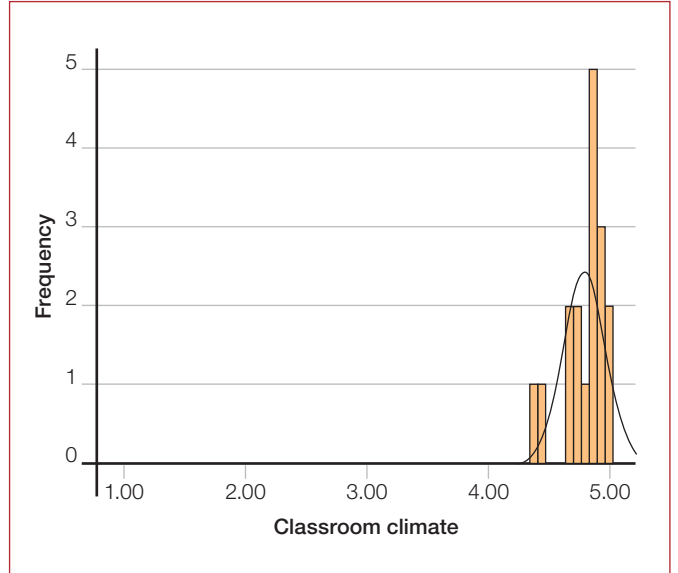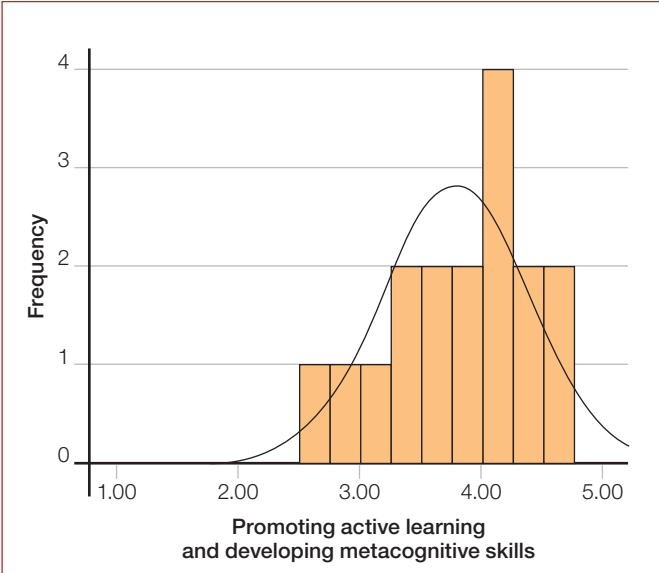
Table 3.2: Descriptive statistics for QoT components

(1 = Lowest score, 4 = Highest score, N = 17)

Component	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Safe and orderly school climate	3.98	0.04	3.88	4.00
Stimulating learning climate	3.70	0.28	3.00	4.00
Clear objectives	3.85	0.21	3.25	4.00
Clear instruction	3.95	0.10	3.67	4.00
Activating pupils	3.76	0.26	3.00	4.00
Adaptation of teaching	2.95	0.41	2.00	3.75
Teaching learning strategies	3.42	0.26	2.92	4.00
Effective classroom organisation	3.87	0.17	3.50	4.00
Effective classroom layout	3.91	0.21	3.25	4.00
Final judgement	3.99	0.06	3.75	4.00

Figure 3.3: Histograms of QoT observation protocol components
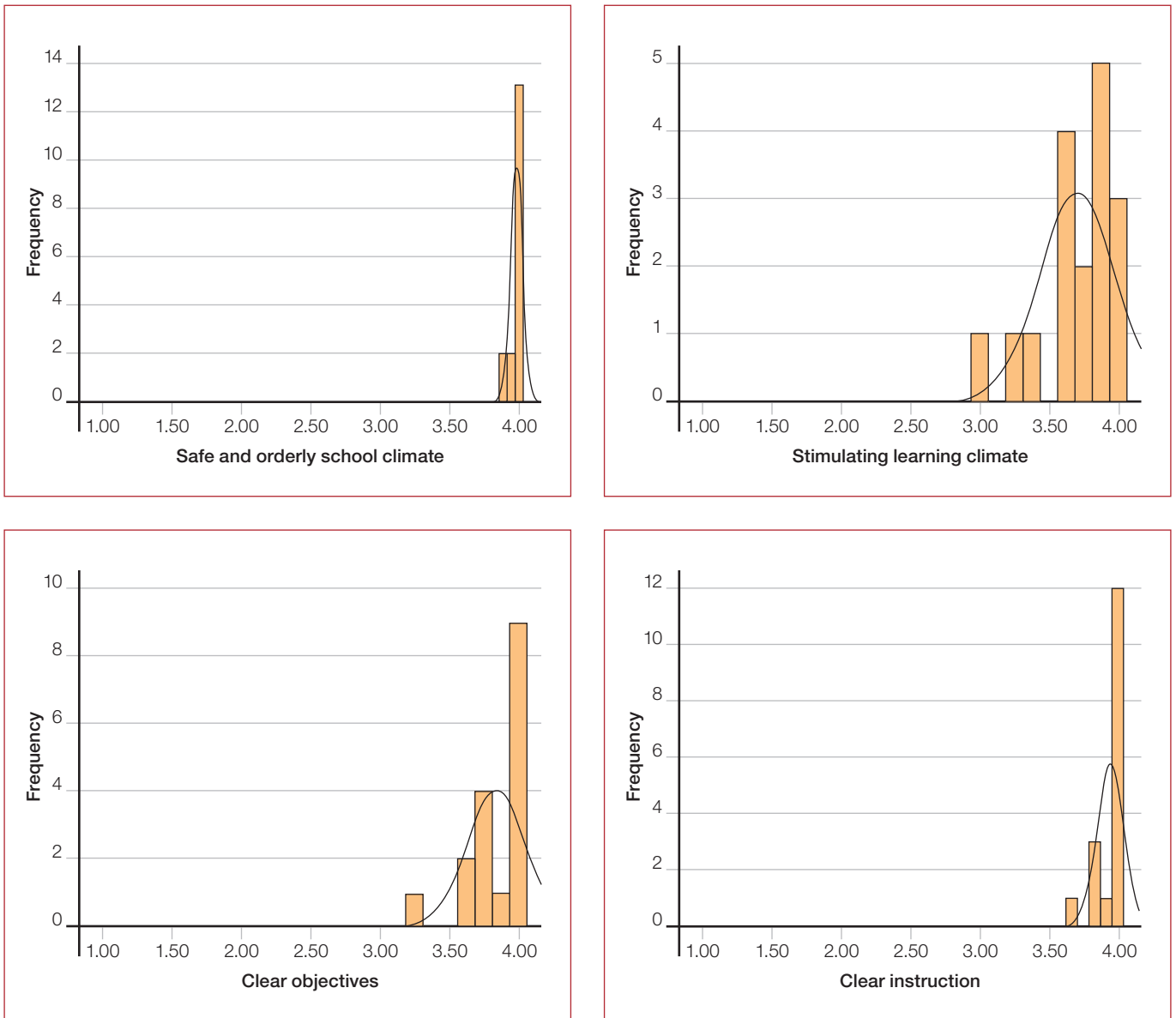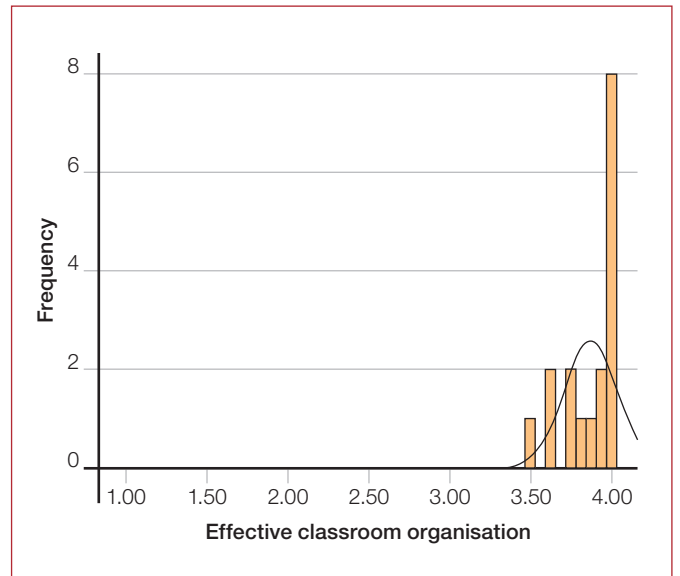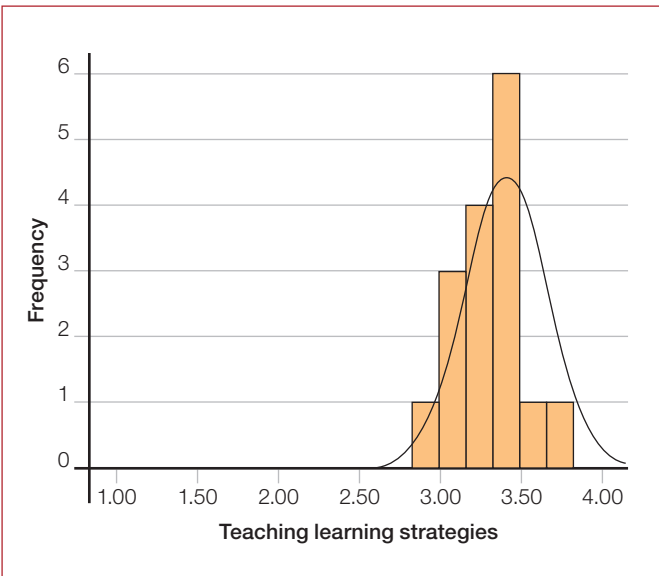
(1 = Lowest score, 4 = Highest score, N = 17)
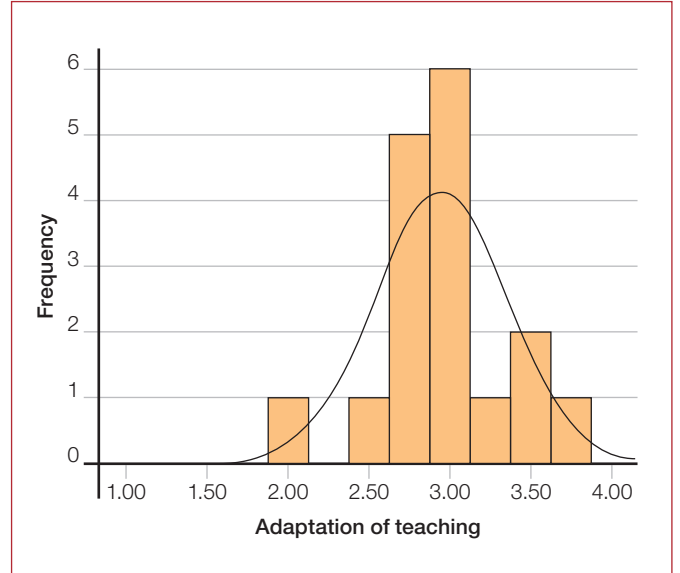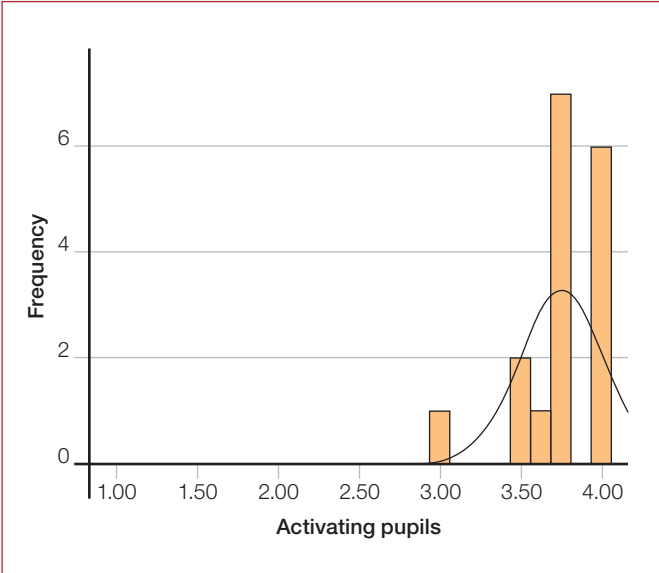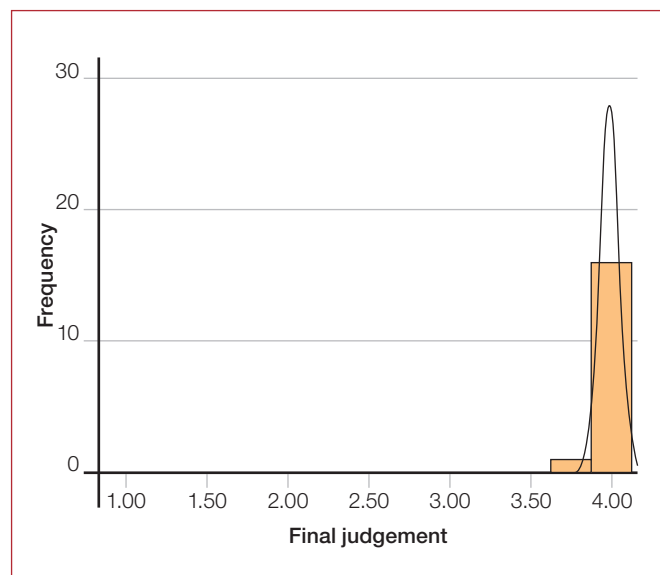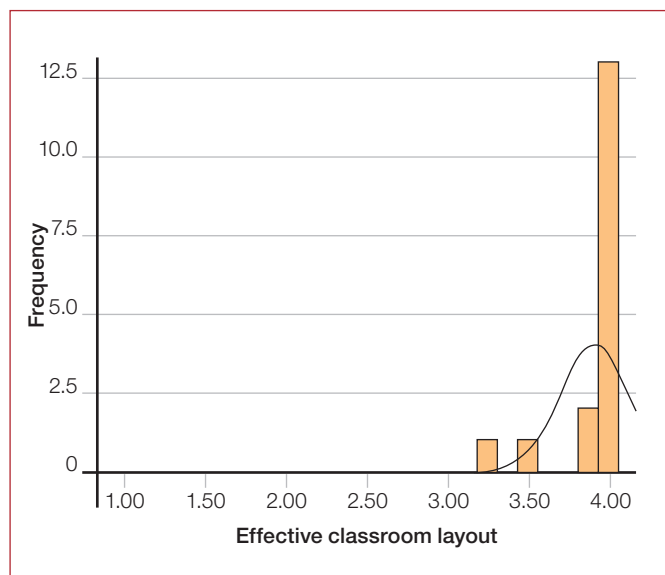
Analysis also showed that four items did not have negatively-skewed distribution (i.e. did not show very high ratings on the positive end of the scale). These items were:

• the teacher gives additional opportunities for practice to students who need them

• the teacher asks students to identify the reasons why specific activities take place in the lesson

• the teacher systematically uses material and examples from the students' daily life to illustrate the course content

• there is clarity about what options are available when the students finish their assignments.

In the QoT protocol, in turn, there were only three positively-skewed items, indicating that the majority of teachers received the higher ratings in all of the other items. These three items were:

• the teacher adapts the assignments and processing to the relevant differences between pupils

• the teacher ensures that the teaching materials are orientated towards transfer

• the teacher stimulates the use of control activities.

These items can be seen as somewhat weaker areas for teachers in the sample. However, four of these items had exceptional bimodal distribution patterns, indicating the existence of opposite teaching practices within this sample.[4]

In addition, comparing this sample of teachers with those in studies using the same classroom observation instruments provides further indications of relative strengths in their practice. Appendix B1 and B2 contain tables where the results of three other studies are compared with those of the present study. This sample of teachers was rated more favourably for most of the items than an international sample of teachers observed during the construction of the ISTOF instrument

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[4] These items were "The teacher gives additional opportunities for practice to students who need them", "There is clarity about what options are available when the students finish their assignments", "Adapts the assignments and processing to the relevant differences between pupils" and "Stimulates the use of control activities".

(Teddlie et al., 2006, as cited in Muijs, Chapman & Armstrong, 2012, pp.62–64). Indeed, this European sample of teachers only outperformed the sample of this study in a fifth (nine out of 45) of ISTOF items. When compared to teachers observed in other research projects carried out in England, this group of teachers also performed better in most of the ISTOF items (31 out of 45) than a sample of 47 Teach First teachers, that is high-achieving graduates working as new teachers, in 16 secondary schools with low SES intake but varied in terms of ethnic intake. This included comprehensive (local authority) schools, Catholic schools, Church of England schools, and academies (Muijs et al., 2012).

Finally, a sample of 81 teachers in primary and secondary schools that participated in the ECP project (Kington et al., 2011), observed using both the ISTOF and QoT schedules, provides another interesting comparison group. The ECP sample, comprising teachers identified as highly academically effective, outperformed the teachers in this study in only a third (15 of the 45) ISTOF items (Ko et al., 2008).

From a comparative point of view, the teachers that participated in this study showed several strengths in the different components measured by the observation instruments. They were particularly strong in the ISTOF component *Classroom climate*, in particular on praising children for effort, communicating high expectations, demonstrating warmth and empathy, showing respect for students and creating purposeful and engaging activities. They also were rated highly on *Assessment and evaluation*, specifically, on making clear why an answer is correct or not, providing appropriate feedback and relating assignments to what students had previously learned. With regard to the component *Differentiation and inclusion* these teachers were stronger than those in other studies in relation to how frequently students communicated with one another on task-oriented issues and the extent to which all were students actively engaged in learning. In the component *Clarity of instruction* these teachers outperformed those in other samples in terms of checking regularly for understanding, communicating in a clear and understandable manner and clarifying the lesson objectives.

There were also several strengths with regard to the *Instructional skills* dimension. Here the teachers nominated as inspiring were better at providing sufficient wait time and response strategies to involve learners, giving assignments that stimulate active involvement, posing questions which encourage thinking and elicit feedback and using a variety of instructional strategies. In terms of *Promoting active learning and developing metacognitive skills* teachers performed better at encouraging students to ask one another questions, giving students the opportunity to correct their own work and asking students to reflect on their own answers.

Finally, in relation to *Classroom management*, teachers were comparatively better at clarifying how students could get help, correcting misbehaviour and dealing with misbehaviour and disruptions by referring to the established rules of the classroom.

The teachers in our sample were somewhat weaker in certain aspects of *Clarity of instruction* related to asking students why specific activities take place and logical flow in the lesson, in *Promoting active learning and developing metacognitive skills* when referring to motivating students to think about the advantages and disadvantages of certain approaches, inviting students to give their personal opinion and using examples from students' daily life, and in *Classroom management*, in relation to starting the lesson on time, making sure that students are involved in learning activities until the end of the lesson, minimising disruption and providing clarity about options available when

students finish assignments.

Furthermore, the ECP project sample was also observed using the QoT protocol and this sample was rated lower than the sample of teachers in the present study in all of the QoT items except *Stimulates the independence of pupils*.

The findings from the descriptive analysis of the quantitative observation data lend support for both the general and the differentiated conceptualisation of teacher effectiveness, as proposed by Campbell et al. (2004) and further elaborated by Creemers and Kyriakides (2008). These authors argue against the assumption that effective teachers are likely to be more effective in all aspects of teaching. While teachers in our sample were found to be strong in most of the aspects assessed by the ISTOF and QoT protocols and can be characterised as highly effective teachers (based on observation results) they are also likely to have particular strengths in some of these dimensions.

Differences between groups

Mean scores obtained by teachers in each of the dimensions assessed by the ISTOF and QoT instruments were compared according to school sector (primary/secondary), gender and career phase. In addition, Hedges' g (unbiased) calculation of effect size was used in order to detect substantive differences across groups.

Differences by school sector

Three ISTOF constructs were found to vary substantially across school sector. These were *Differentiation and inclusion*, where primary school teachers (M = 4.17) were rated significantly higher than secondary school teachers (M = 3.50), *Instructional skills*, where primary teachers (M = 4.38) also showed an advantage compared to secondary teachers (M = 4.06), and *Clarity of instruction*, where secondary school teachers (M = 4.37) outperformed primary school teachers (M = 4.07). These constructs, for which Hedges' g is equal or higher than .8, which is indicative of a large effect size, are shown in purple in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Average score in ISTOF dimensions by school sector

(1 = Lowest score, 5 = Highest score)*
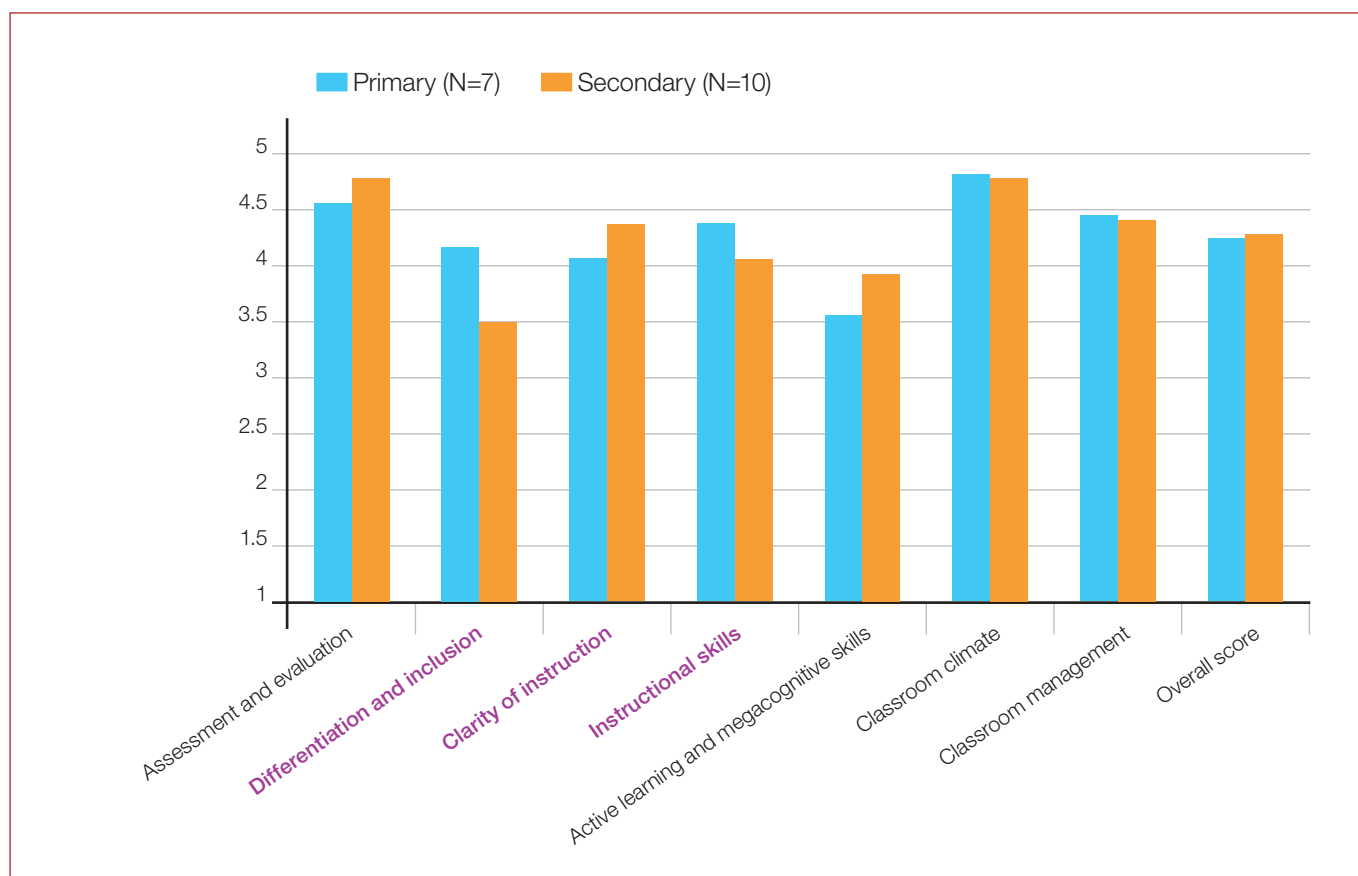
* Constructs for which the magnitude of the difference across groups is large (Hedges' g ≥. 8), are shown in purple.

Furthermore, primary and secondary school teachers differed significantly in several dimensions assessed by the QoT protocol. Primary school teachers obtained higher scores in the dimension *Safe and orderly school climate* (M = 4.00) than their peers at the secondary level (M = 3.96). An even higher advantage of primary school teachers was found in the construct *Stimulating learning climate* (M = 3.85) compared to secondary school teachers (M = 3.60). Consistently with what was found in the ISTOF scores, primary school teachers were found to use *Adaptation of teaching* (M = 3.29) more frequently than teachers in secondary school (M = 2.71). Conversely, secondary school teachers scored higher in the dimensions *Clear objectives* (with M = 3.71 for primary school teachers and M = 3.94 for secondary school teachers) and *Teaching learning strategies*, with M = 3.26 for primary school teachers and M = 3.53 for secondary school teachers. These dimensions are highlighted in purple in the following graph, Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5: Average score in QoT dimensions by school sector

(1 = Lowest score, 4 = Highest score)*

* Constructs for which the magnitude of the difference across groups is large (Hedges' g ≥. 8), are shown in purple.

The fact that secondary teachers tended to obtain lower scores than primary teachers in the sample on the *Adaptation of teaching* dimension may relate to differences in organisation, such as greater use of setting in secondary schools than in primary schools where mixed-ability classes are more prevalent and therefore there may be greater diversity in approach. Also, in primary schools a teacher tends to work with the same class and therefore will have greater knowledge of individual pupil needs.

Differences by teacher gender

When comparing teachers' ratings in QoT by gender, there were no statistically significant differences between female and male teachers for any of the components assessed by ISTOF.

Figure 3.6: Average score in ISTOF dimensions by gender

(1 = Lowest score, 5 = Highest score)
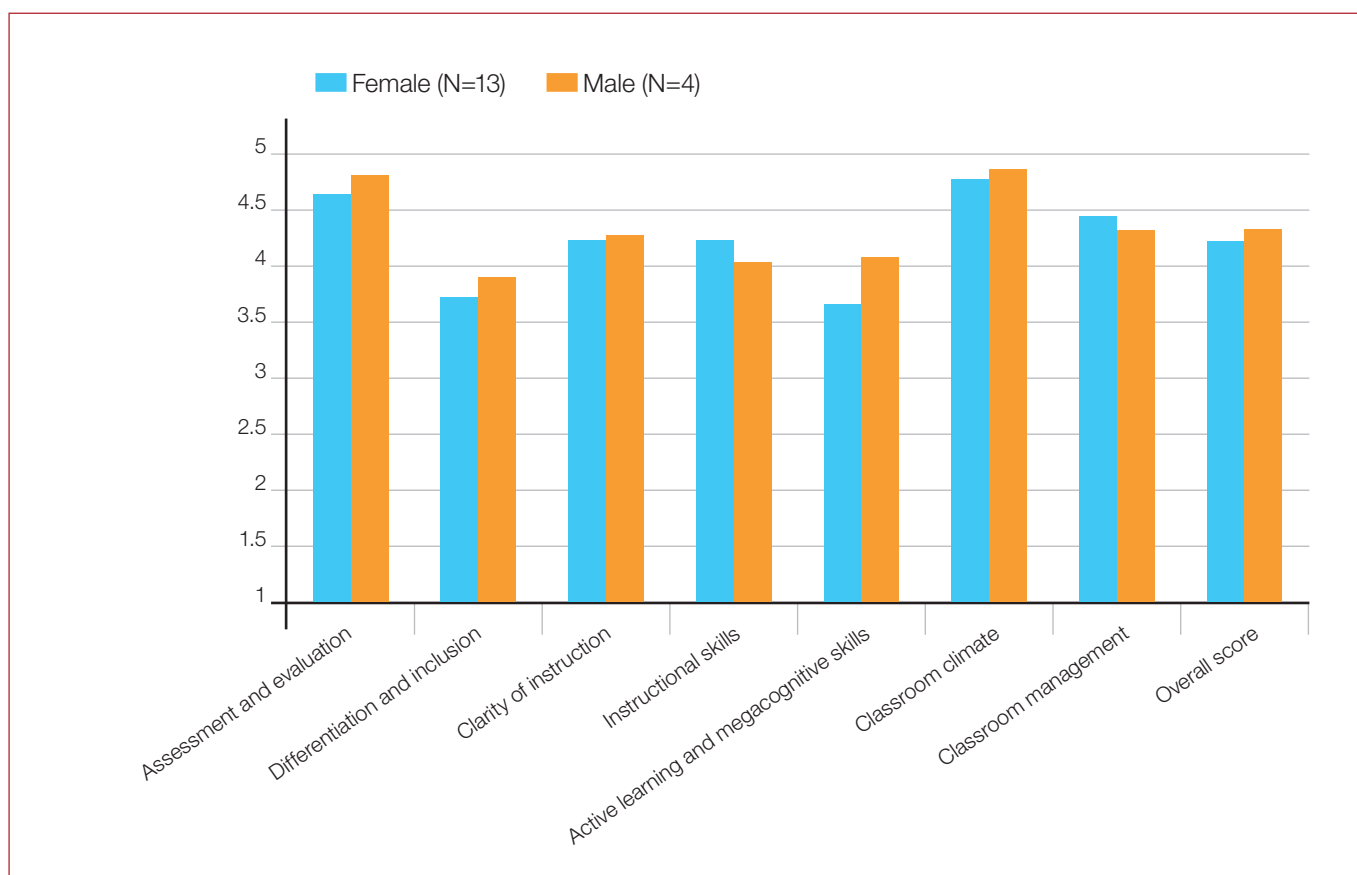
However, three QoT components differed more substantially between female and male teachers. First, in the dimension *Activating pupils*, male teachers (M = 3.94) obtained higher ratings than female teachers (M = 3.70). Similarly, in the dimension *Teaching learning strategies* male teachers (M = 3.63) showed an advantage when compared to female teachers (M = 3.35). The opposite was found in the dimension *Adaptation of teaching*, where female teachers (M = 3.05), outperformed male teachers (M = 2.63).

However, it is important to note that the school sector and teacher gender variables are confounded in our data (there are no male primary school teachers in our sample). This has implications for the extent that meaningful comparison can be drawn across subgroups of teachers based on these variables.

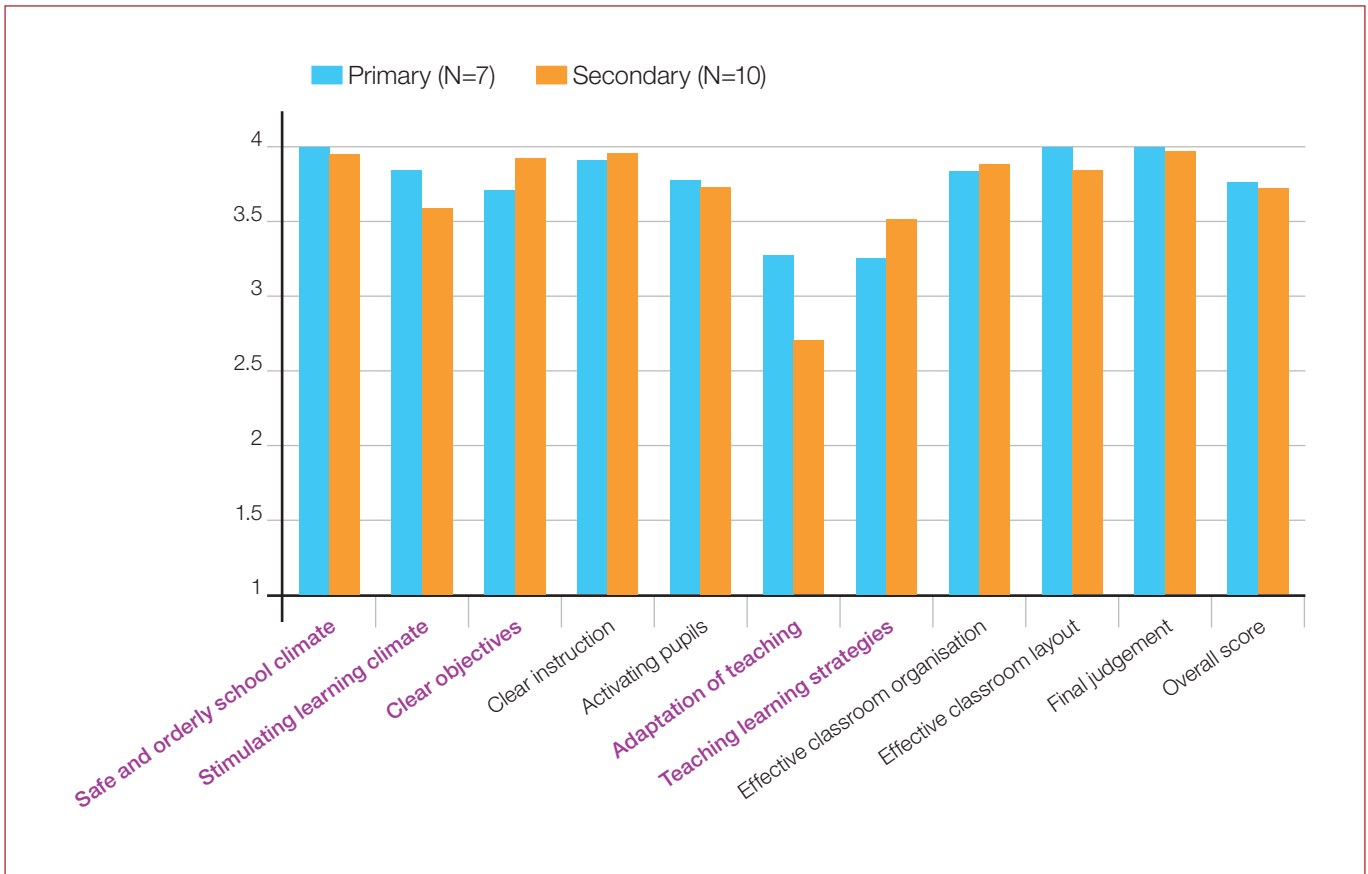**Figure 3.7:** Average score in QoT dimensions by gender

(1 = Lowest score, 4 = Highest score)*
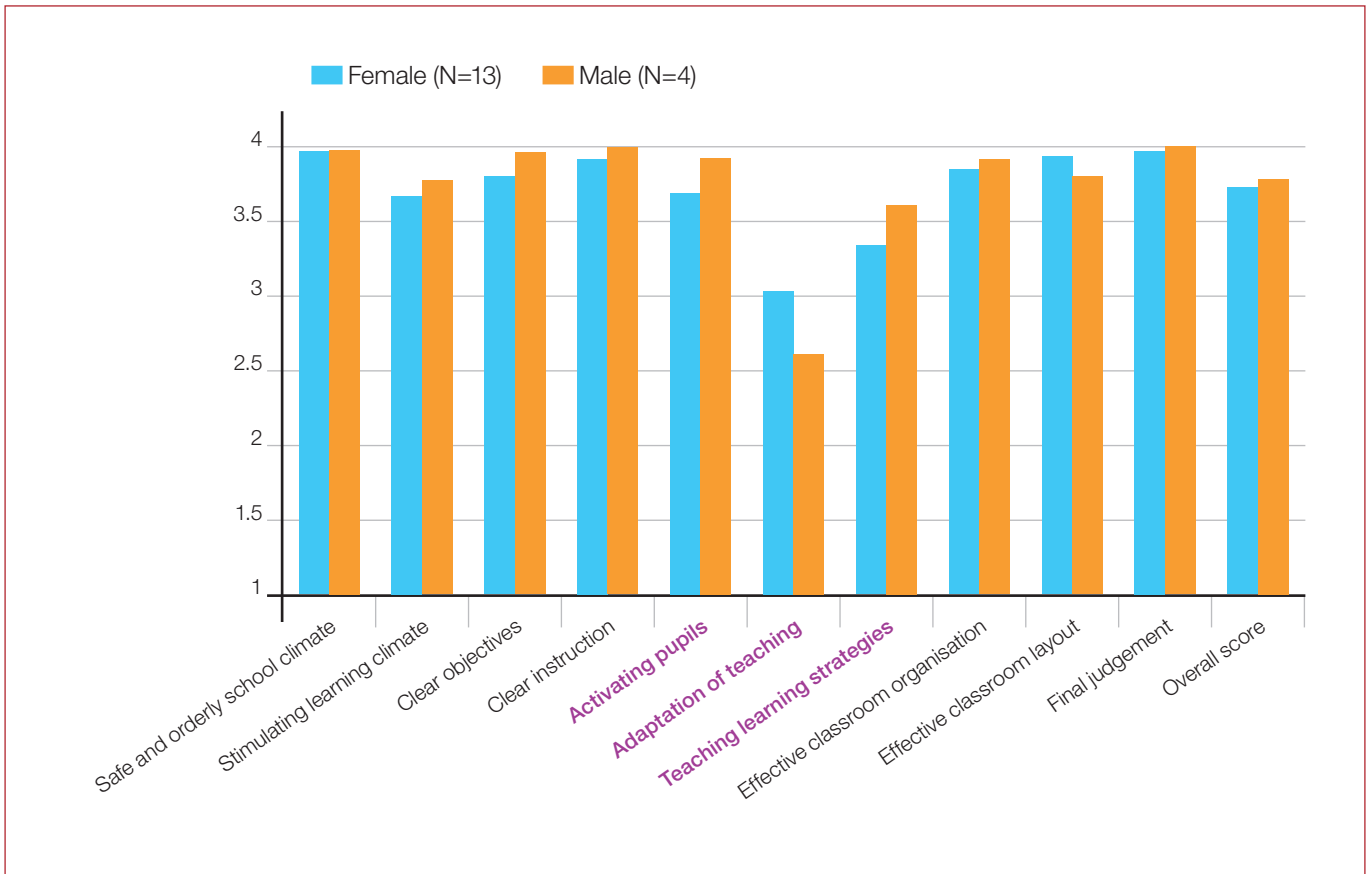
* Constructs for which the magnitude of the difference across groups is large (Hedges' g ≥. 8), are shown in purple.

Differences by career phase

Finally, teachers were grouped based on their years of teaching experience, with early-career teachers having up to seven years of experience and mid-career teachers reporting between eight and 23 years of experience. As shown in Figure 3.8, we note that these two groups differed in the ISTOF dimension *Classroom management*, where mid-career teachers (M = 4.57) were rated substantially higher than early-career teachers (M = 4.22).

Figure 3.8: Average score in ISTOF dimensions by career phase

(1 = Lowest score, 5 = Highest score)*
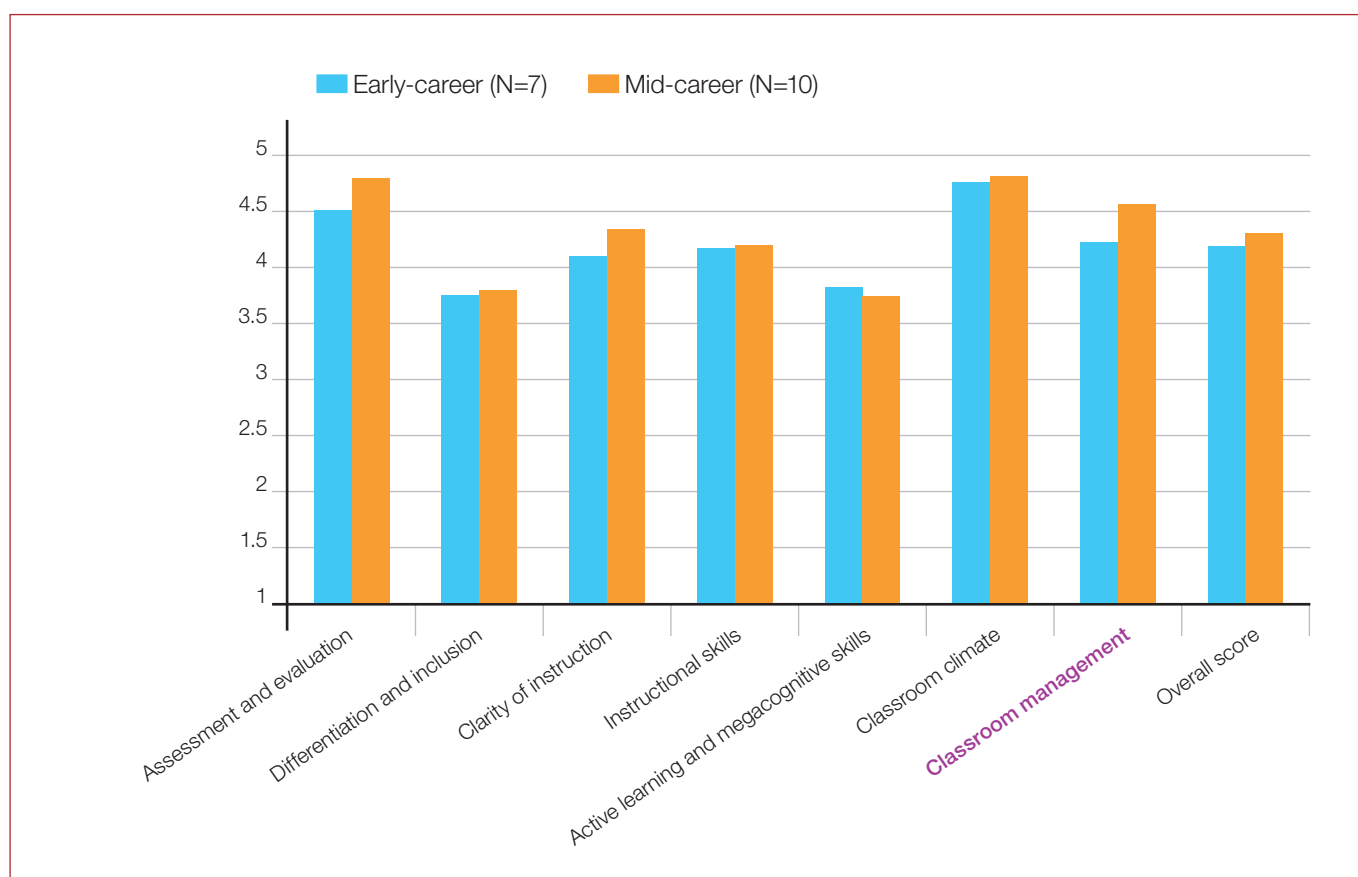
* Constructs for which the magnitude of the difference across groups is large (Hedges' g ≥. 8), are shown in purple.

However, there were no important differences in teachers' practice, as assessed by the QoT protocol, between early-career teachers and mid-career teachers.

Figure 3.9: Average score in QoT dimensions by career phase

(1 = Lowest score, 4 = Highest score)
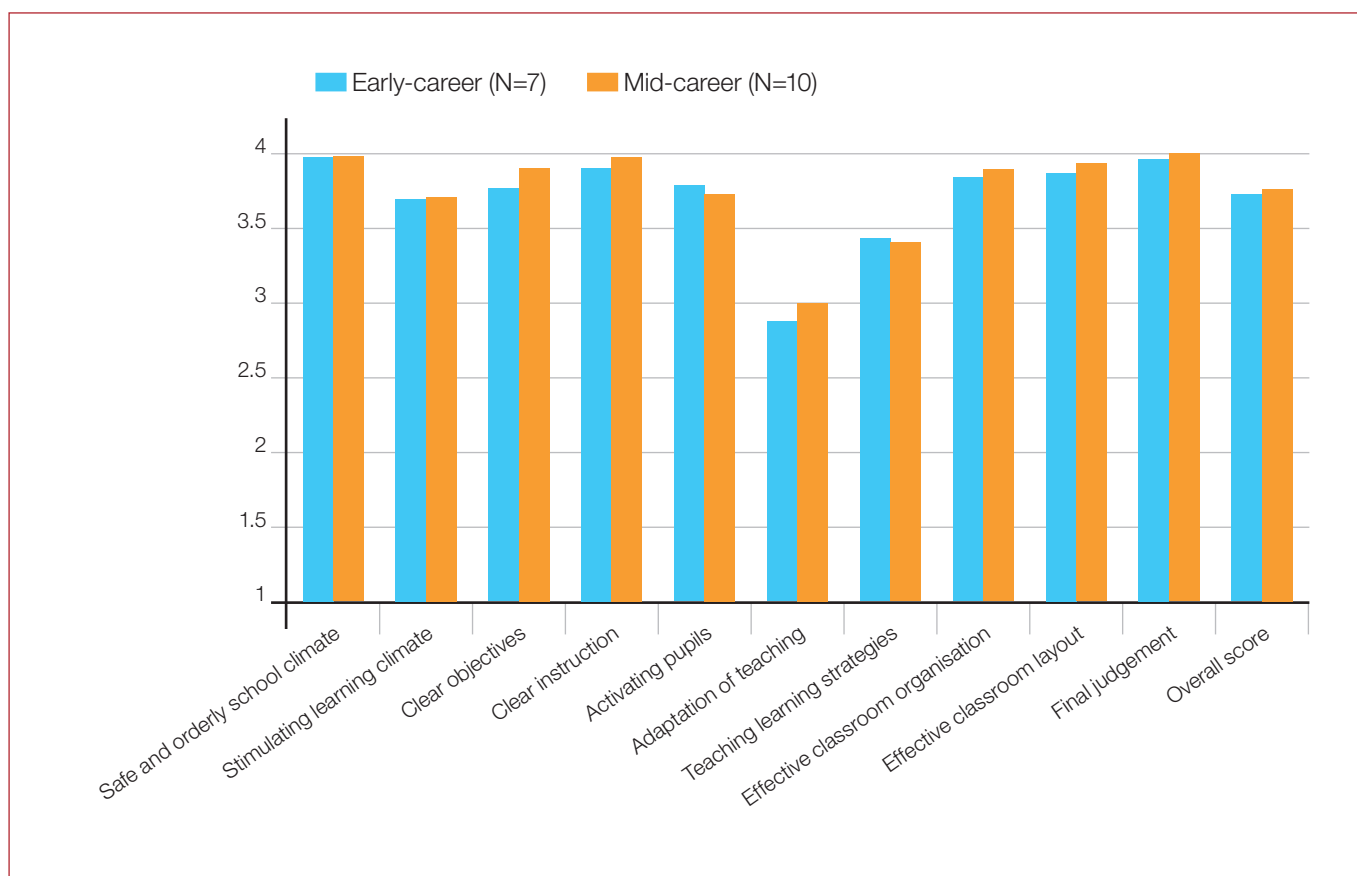
The results from the systematic observation schedules provide a valuable source of additional evidence about the consistently effective classroom practices of this purposive sample of inspiring teachers that complements the qualitative findings derived from interviews and field notes. We also identified common characteristics of these teachers' classroom practices, such as positive classroom climate and clear instruction, and distinguished them from those practices that were less characteristic of these teachers, such as differentiation strategies and the promotion of metacognitive skills. In addition, a number of significant differences in observed practice were found between teachers in different school sectors, female and male teachers, and early-career and mid-career teachers. However, given the small sample size of teachers studied, these results comparing subgroups should be treated with caution.

We found substantial consistency in teacher ratings between the ISTOF and QoT observation instruments. Although these instruments were originally developed for observation in the primary and lower secondary school sectors and for a narrower set of school subjects, they proved suitable for observation of teacher practices in the secondary school sector and in a wide range of subjects.

Finally, in this section we explored variations in teachers' observed behaviour from a quantitative perspective and identified a number of key characteristics that seem to be common to the teachers in our sample. However, they are inevitably broad descriptors, and the qualitative data analyses have already revealed that there is considerable variation in the ways in which these constructs are enacted by individual teachers in different classes and school contexts.

3.4 Links with analysis from qualitative observations

The links between quantitative and qualitative observation findings can be considered in two ways:

- Triangulation: How far do the qualitative findings align with the quantitative results?

- Elaboration: How do the qualitative findings enhance our understanding of what the quantitative results mean in context?

We turn first to the teachers' performance based on the ISTOF and QoT scales. The quantitative findings indicated that the inspiring teachers scored most highly in components related to classroom climate, classroom management, assessment and evaluation, effective classroom layout and organisation, and clear instruction. These are largely echoed in the qualitative findings, in which *Lesson activities and structure, Questioning and feedback* and *Classroom management* emerged as the most prevalent themes from the researchers' field notes. *Classroom environment* was also a prominent feature in the qualitative observation data.

Furthermore, the qualitative results offer many rich insights into what teachers did that led to high ratings on the quantitative instruments. Teachers were described as using a lot of positive feedback, interacting in friendly and relaxed ways with students, treating students as individuals, and creating a safe space to contribute, all of which may be seen as promoting a positive classroom climate. They had clear and explicit objectives, and went to the trouble to clarify directions and demonstrate skills, which contributed to clear instruction.

They also used skilful questioning and feedback that encouraged students to think and reflect, which served as informal assessment of students' understanding.

Classroom layout and organisation were typically seen as stimulating, informative and efficient; students could access the resources they needed in most of the classrooms, and teachers were able to make good use of the space.

Classroom management, in contrast to the rest of these areas, showed an absence of negative indicators. It was clear, in most of the classrooms, that routines had been established that lessened the need for teachers to manage their students. Instead, students took on roles of leadership, internalised a sense of ownership of the classroom space and resources, and often showed positive social skills and mutual respect. Many teachers did need to engage in some redirection or reminders of classroom or school norms, but this was done efficiently and without a sense of conflict. It must be remembered the observations took place in the summer term when teachers had worked with students over the academic year and this is likely to have affected the observation of such smooth routines.

On the other hand, the relatively weaker ratings of a few components from the ISTOF and QoT instruments were not necessarily reflected in the qualitative findings. *Differentiation* and *Promoting active learning and metacognitive skills* (on the ISTOF instrument) and *Adaptation of teaching* and *Teaching learning strategies* (on the QoT scale) were described positively in the qualitative field notes for the same teachers. One possible explanation is that teachers' approaches to differentiation and teaching metacognitive skills were informal, and so did not match up to the item descriptions on the quantitative schedules. For example, the qualitative findings note that most teachers offered individual support and some gave students a choice between difficulty levels or activities related to the same objective; these may be interpreted as differentiation, albeit implemented flexibly and informally. Similarly, teachers did not usually overtly teach their students' learning strategies, but they did prompt them to give peer feedback and reflect on their own learning, both of which are fundamentally metacognitive tasks.

Finally, the qualitative and quantitative findings support similar conclusions about comparisons between groups. While Section 3.1 noted some strategies and practices that were more apparent among teachers in either the primary or secondary sector, there were generally not clearly identifiable patterns across an entire theme according to gender or years of experience. The quantitative findings are roughly in accordance with this; statistically significant differences were found between primary and secondary teachers, but comparisons by gender and career phase found, at most, only a few significant differences based on ISTOF or QoT, not both. For qualitative as well as quantitative observations, a larger sample would be required to establish clearer and more trustworthy relationships between aspects of teachers' practice and their school sector, gender and career phase.

4. Students' perspectives on inspiring teaching and teachers

In this section we present the main findings obtained from the student survey. The purpose of administering this questionnaire was to gather information about students' perceptions of different aspects of their classroom experiences, including their attitudes towards their school and views of teaching. The instrument also provided further measures of classroom practice.

Eleven classes of students in total took the survey. Two of these were in primary schools (Key Stage 2), while the remaining nine were in secondary schools (Key Stages 3, 4 and 5). The entire sample for the survey consisted of 203 students: 35 primary and 168 secondary.

Students' ratings of schools, classrooms, their own involvement, and particularly teachers, were generally very favourable overall, with girls giving slightly but significantly more positive ratings than boys.

However, students' experiences and perceptions also varied substantially within the same class group.

Students' overall ratings indicate that they strongly believe their teachers:

- have high expectations for students, and positive relationships with them

- create a positive, supportive and reassuring classroom climate

- provide clear instructional goals and well-structured lessons

- are approachable, fair and helpful

- transmit their enjoyment of learning to students

- promote positive learning experiences, attitudes, engagement and motivation.

Additionally, students' written comments showed that they valued:

- group work and collaboration

- varied lesson activities, group arrangements and topics

- a range of resources, from handouts to ICT

- a prompt start and appropriate lesson pace

- a strong focus on learning and progress

- lessons attuned to student interest and enjoyment

- clarity about what to do and how to improve their work

- interactive teaching approaches and individual support

- positive relationships with their teachers

- teachers who show consistent and effective classroom management, ensuring other students' positive behaviour

- lessons that are fun

- teachers who are kind, fair and have a sense of humour

- being known and valued as individuals.

4.1 Quantitative student survey results

The data from each student questionnaire was entered into SPSS. Two forms of the questionnaire survey were administered: one for primary and one for secondary schools. The four questionnaire sections, namely *My school, My teacher, My classroom* and *About you in this class*, can be seen as indicators of the school climate, teaching practices, classroom environment, and student attitudes and engagement, respectively. Given the limited sample size, the breakdown by section was considered appropriate for the analysis. Each item consisted of a statement and a Likert scale with four possible values ranging from 1, for the response category 'Agree strongly', to 4, for the response category 'Disagree strongly'.

4.1.1 Descriptive analysis

According to the questionnaire data, the views of students involved in the study were generally positive. Indeed, as is the case in many attitude surveys, most students tended to respond with favourable ratings. Descriptive statistics for the student data, aggregated at the teacher level, are given in Table 4.1. Teachers show very positive mean scores for the four aspects included in the survey, indicating that students' views with regard to their school, their teacher, classroom and involvement were generally very favourable, with their views about the teacher being the aspect most positively evaluated and showing the smallest variation.

Caution must be exercised in interpreting the distribution of these scores, as they generally show a large positive skew. Indeed, as suggested in Figure 4.1, the average scores for each section show positively skewed and kurtotic distributions (the skewness and kurtosis coefficients for each of the student questionnaire items confirm this observation).

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics for student survey sections

(1 = Highest score, 4 = Lowest score, N = 11)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
My school	1.87	0.28	1.43	2.31
My teacher	1.41	0.19	1.15	1.68
My classroom	1.67	0.20	1.38	1.97
About you in this class	1.64	0.22	1.33	2.02

Figure 4.1: Histograms of student survey sections

(1 = Highest score, 4 = Lowest score, N = 11)
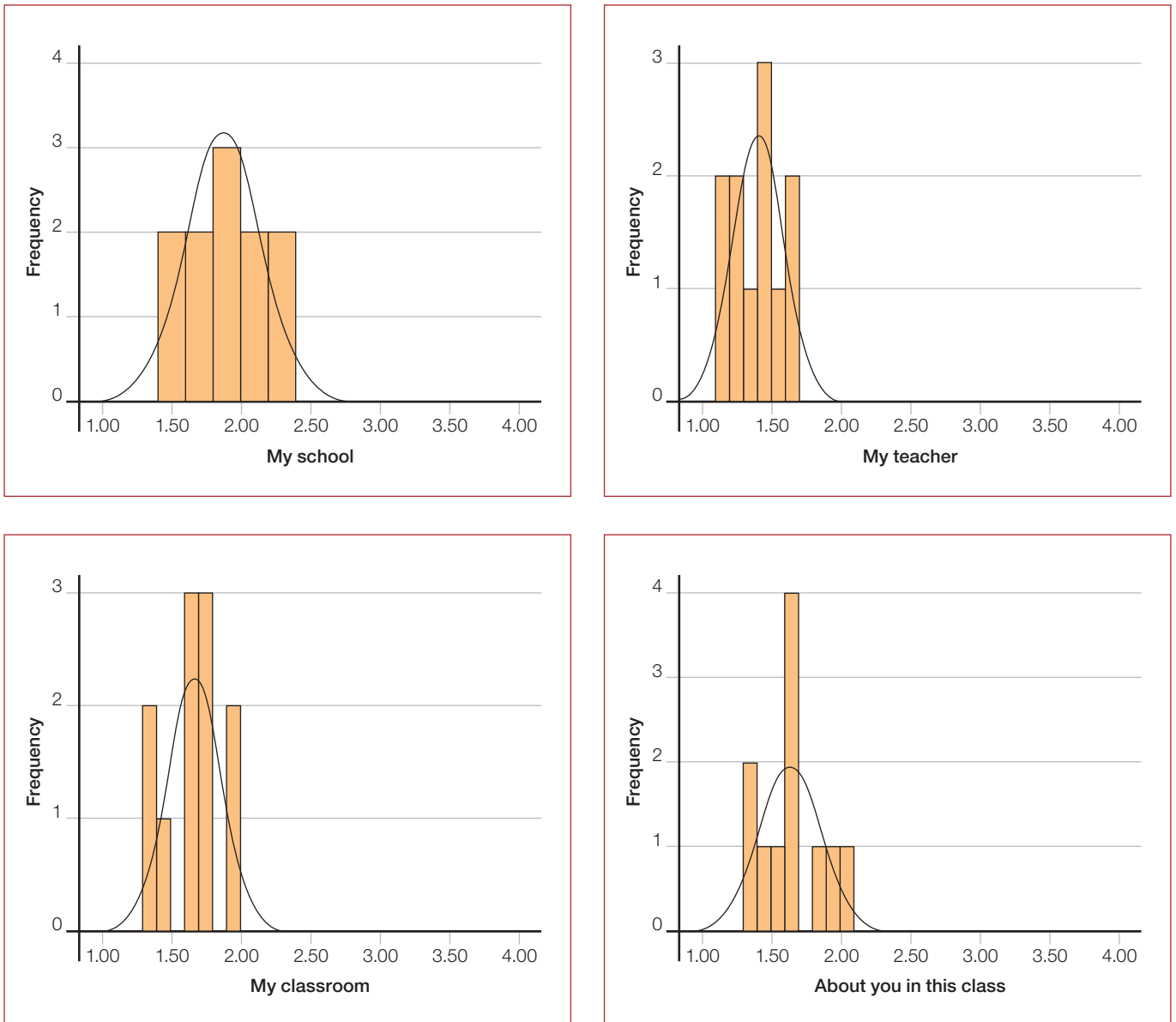
Each thematic section was analysed in detail by looking at the distribution of their corresponding items at the student level. A salient characteristic of all of the items in the questionnaire was their significantly positively-skewed and highly kurtotic distribution, a frequent feature of items using Likert scales. The frequency distribution of each of the items indicates that there was a general tendency for students in the sample to rate positively most of the aspects presented in the questionnaire. Furthermore, most of the items related to students' perceptions about their teacher have a mode,

or most frequent value, of 1, the most positive score. This is particularly the case for those items referring to the relationship between the teacher and the student. Other items, such as those referring to the school, the classroom climate and their own engagement levels, generally show a mode of 2, indicating a slightly less positive evaluation of these aspects when compared to students' perceptions about their teacher.

The following tables show the student survey items grouped by thematic section and ordered according to their mean ratings, with those items that are rated more positively presented at the top of the tables. In relation to the survey section that referred to students' perceptions about their school, as Table 4.2 shows, students report high levels of enjoyment and feelings of security as well as strong attachment to their school.

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics for items in the student survey – 'My school' section

(1 = Highest score, 4 = Lowest score, N = 199–202)

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
I feel safe in this school	1.83	0.69
I like being at this school	1.84	0.66
I feel that I belong in this school	1.89	0.69
I like most of the lessons	1.89	0.58
I really like this school	1.90	0.63
This school is a friendly place	1.93	0.73

In addition, according to students, the teachers in the sample have high expectations about their students' abilities and transmit their enjoyment for learning. There is a slightly less positive evaluation and more variation in the extent to which students feel that their teachers showed interest in students' views and contributions to the lesson.

Table 4.3: Descriptive statistics for items in the student survey – 'My teacher' section

(1 = Highest score, 4 = Lowest score, N = 199–203)

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
This teacher believes that learning is important	1.28	0.46
This teacher believes that all students can do well	1.31	0.47
This teacher expects me to do well	1.35	0.55
This teacher seems to like teaching	1.36	0.52
This teacher is interested in what the students think	1.47	0.61
My teacher is interested in my ideas in lessons	1.63	0.71

Descriptive analysis of the students' views about their classroom, reported in Table 4.4, suggests that teachers were able to develop a positive, supportive and reassuring classroom climate, with clear instructional goals and well-structured lessons. Students see their teacher as approachable, fair and helpful. Slightly less positive and more varied views were found in the areas of teacher feedback and classroom resources.

Table 4.4: Descriptive statistics for items in the student survey – 'My classroom' section

(1 = Highest score, 4 = Lowest score, N = 195–203)

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
This teacher is friendly	1.36	0.54
This class teacher is very helpful	1.42	0.56
This teacher organised the lesson well	1.42	0.54
This teacher helps me to improve my work	1.43	0.57
This teacher starts by explaining what the lesson is about	1.43	0.54
This teacher helps me learn new things	1.47	0.56
I get on well with this class teacher	1.48	0.58
I am told how I can make my work better	1.48	0.56

This teacher helps me if I make mistakes	1.50	0.55
This teacher treats me fairly	1.55	0.64
I know what happens if I misbehave in class	1.56	0.60
This teacher is easy to get to know	1.57	0.63
I feel respected by this class teacher	1.58	0.57
I usually know what I am supposed to learn	1.58	0.61
I like learning in this class	1.60	0.65
This teacher gives students time to think of answers to questions	1.61	0.62
This classroom has all the books and equipment I need for lessons	1.62	0.71
Most of these lessons are interesting	1.64	0.67
This teacher makes it clear what to do when I finish my work	1.64	0.67
This teacher seems to like all the students in the class	1.64	0.73
I usually know what to do during lessons	1.65	0.60
I always know what the lesson is about	1.69	0.68
This teacher helps me to see why what I am learning is important	1.69	0.66
What I am learning builds on what I already know	1.70	0.56
This teacher explains how new work relates to work already done	1.70	0.65
This teacher summarises what we have learned at the end of the lesson	1.71	0.70
The work that I do in class really makes me think	1.74	0.67
This teacher praises/rewards students when they work well	1.75	0.75
I feel that my contribution is valued by this teacher	1.75	0.68

This teacher really understands my learning needs	1.75	0.71
I am praised or rewarded when I work hard	1.79	0.68
This teacher makes it clear how I can get help during lessons	1.80	0.73
I find the displays in my class very helpful in my learning	1.90	0.78
Work is checked during the lesson	1.96	0.72
This teacher knows the way I learn best	1.96	0.79
All students work hard in this teacher's class	1.97	0.72
The students in my class behave well most of the time	2.00	0.58
I help to set my own learning targets	2.01	0.77
Most students spend all of the lesson working	2.03	0.70

Finally, in relation to their own levels of engagement in the classroom, most students reported they had had a positive learning experience over the academic year and indicated high levels of motivation and positive attitudes towards work.

Table 4.5: Descriptive statistics for items in the student survey – 'About you in this class' section

(1 = Highest score, 4 = Lowest score, N = 196–202)

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
I have learned a lot from this teacher	1.45	0.61
I feel I learn a lot in this class	1.50	0.61
I have enjoyed being in this class	1.52	0.66
I have worked to the best of my ability this year	1.59	0.67
I usually find the work in this class interesting	1.61	0.71
I usually work hard in this class	1.61	0.69
This teacher makes everyone feel good about their learning	1.61	0.68
I usually enjoy my work in this class	1.62	0.67
I feel confident that I can do well	1.62	0.68
I feel good about myself as a learner	1.64	0.62
This teacher makes me feel good about their teaching	1.67	0.68
I usually know my personal learning targets in this class	1.71	0.71
I have managed to meet most of my learning targets in this lesson	1.71	0.62
I feel confident to answer in this class	1.77	0.77
I feel that my teacher really knows me	1.78	0.80
I usually have time to finish my work in class	1.79	0.71

4.1.2 Differences by groups

The average scores in each thematic section for individual students were used to examine whether factors such as the students' school sector and gender and teachers' career phase and gender were related to students' attitudes. The magnitudes of the differences between these groups were compared using Hedges' g effect size. Results are presented in the following sections.

Differences by student gender

The sample of students that completed the student survey was well balanced in terms of gender, comprising 99 boys and 102 girls. However, the composition within classrooms in terms of percentage of female students was varied, ranging from zero per cent to 83 per cent, and with an average of 46 per cent.

In this data there appears to be only a modest relationship between student gender and attitudes. Indeed, as shown in Figure 4.2, girls evaluated the four thematic sections in the questionnaire more positively than boys, although the magnitudes of these differences were not large (all presenting a g value below .6).

Figure 4.2: Average score in student survey by student gender

(1 = Highest score, 4 = Lowest score)
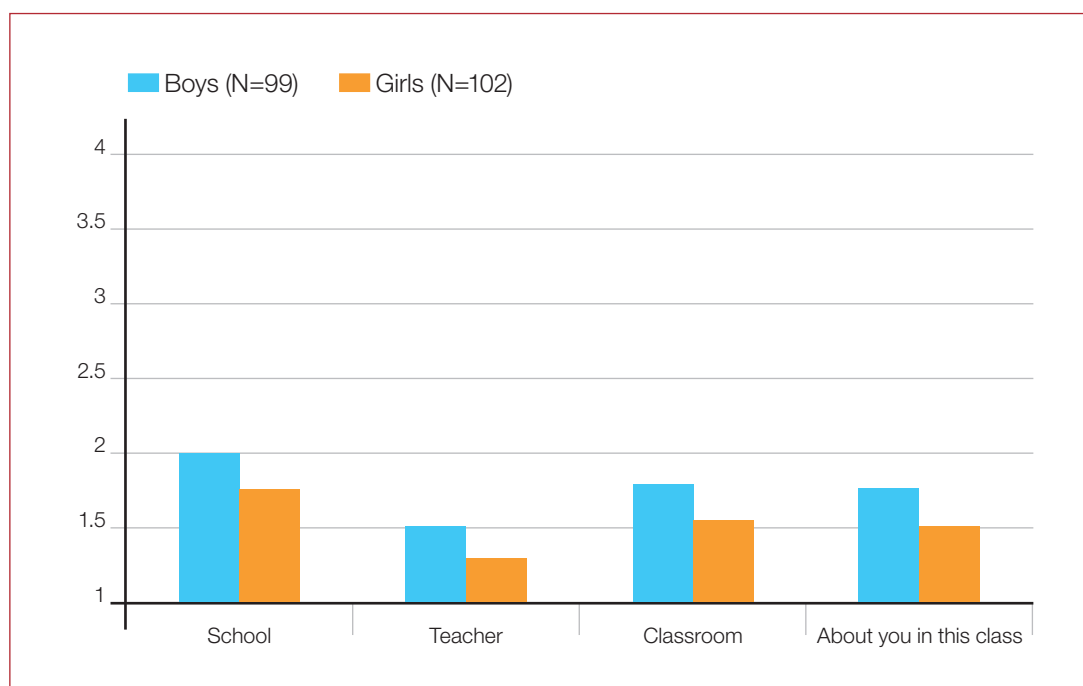
Differences by school sector

Primary students also showed clearly more positive ratings of items in the four thematic sections in the questionnaire than secondary students. These differences are depicted in Figure 4.3. In particular, primary students' views about their school (M = 1.54) were substantially more positive than those of secondary students (M = 1.96). However, these results should be treated cautiously as only 35 respondents were in primary school and these students come from only two class groups.

Figure 4.3: Average score in student survey by school sector

(1 = Highest score, 4 = Lowest score)*
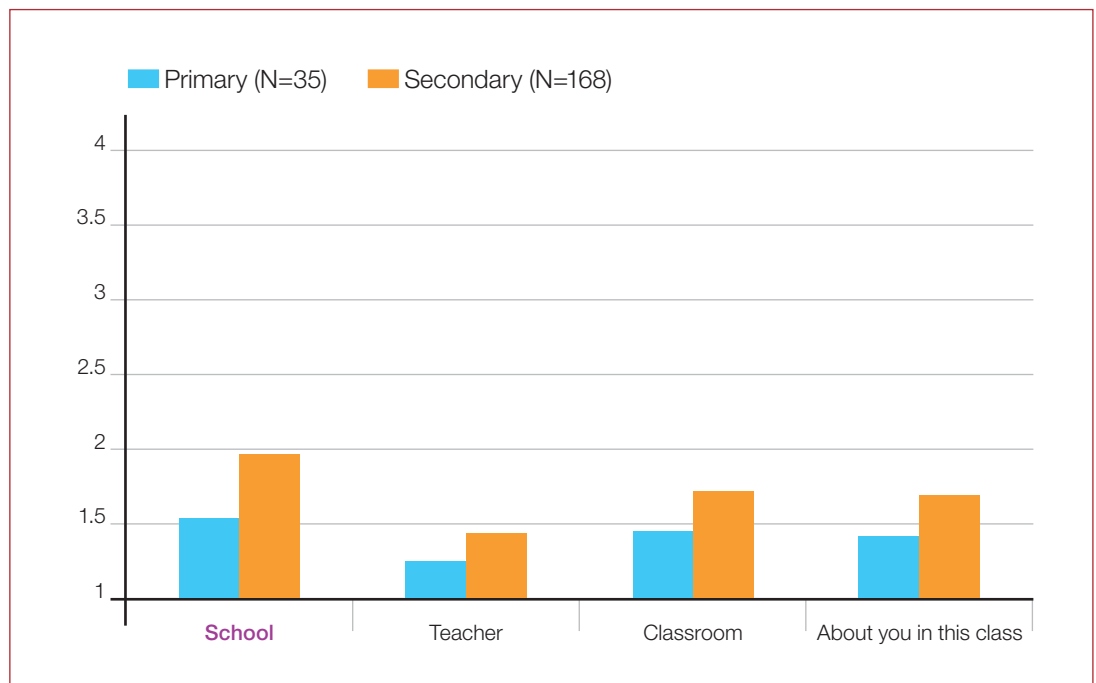
* Constructs for which the magnitude of the difference across groups is large (Hedges' g ≥. 8), are shown in purple.

Differences by teacher gender

The student questionnaire responses were also analysed according to their teacher's gender. As shown in Figure 4.4, perceptions of their teacher and their classroom climate did not differ substantially by teacher gender. Students' evaluation of their school varied somewhat between those students being taught by male teachers and those taught by female teachers, but the magnitude of this difference was not sizeable (g= .41). Furthermore, because teacher gender and school sector are confounded in the present study, it is not possible to disentangle their unique effect.

Figure 4.4: Average score in student survey by teacher gender

(1 = Highest score, 4 = Lowest score)
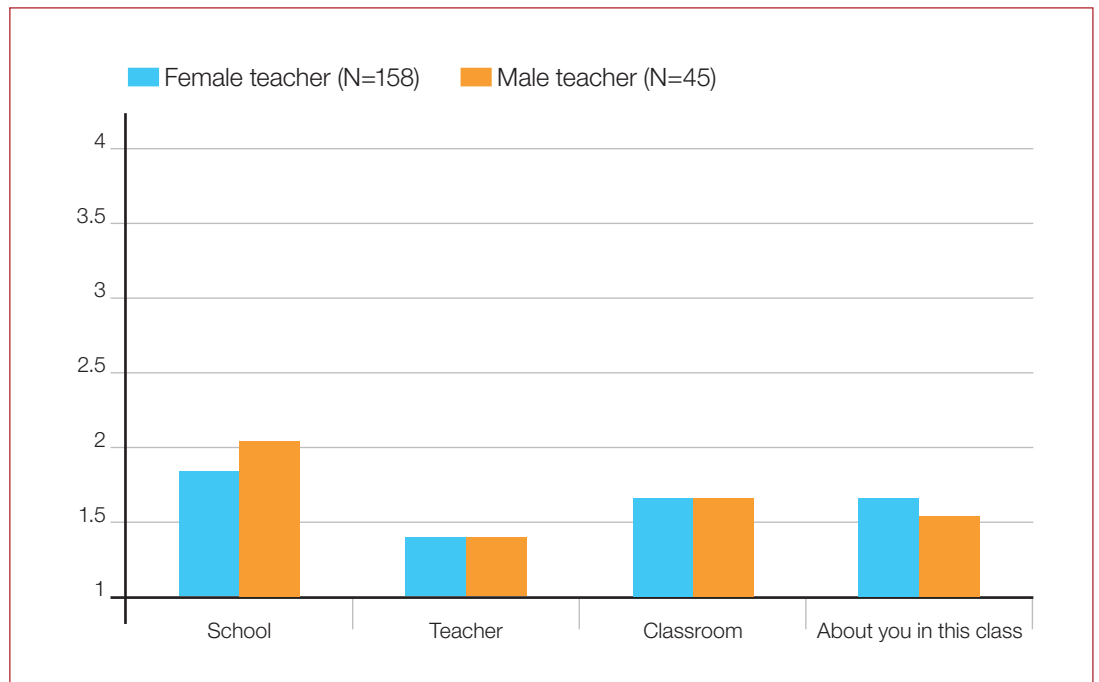
Differences by career phase

Results were also analysed according to the career phase of teachers. These findings suggests that students did not differ greatly in their rating of their schools, teachers, classroom climate and levels of engagement according to whether their teachers were in the later or early stages of their careers (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Average score in student survey by career phase

(1 = Highest score, 4 = Lowest score)
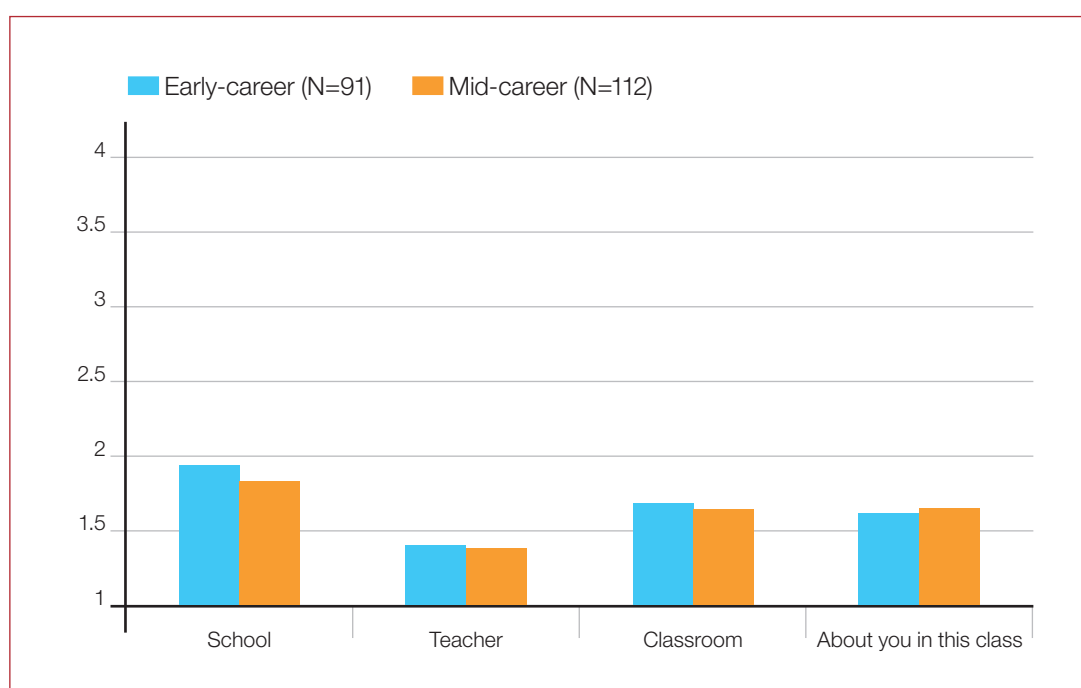
Overall, the findings reveal that students hold very positive attitudes towards their schools, classrooms, and particularly, towards their teacher. According to students' reports, the inspiring teachers in this sample hold high expectations, transmit their enjoyment for learning and develop positive relationships with students. Students also indicated that teachers were able to support their learning by providing a positive and reassuring classroom climate, clear instructional goals and well-structured lessons. Finally, substantive differences were found between students' responses, with primary students rating their school more positively than secondary students.

4.2 Qualitative results

At the end of the student questionnaires, a single open-response item was included in the versions for both primary and secondary students. This item asked students to write about what they thought helped to make a good lesson, and things they enjoyed that supported their learning.

This section presents an analysis of the responses to this question written in by students. The open-ended nature of the item allowed for an extremely wide range of responses. As a result, some topics included in students' responses were necessarily omitted from this account (if they were mentioned by only one to three students out of the entire sample).

Because this question was optional, there may be some amount of inherent bias in the results; the students who chose to write in responses may have been somewhat more likely to feel strongly about the teacher, or had better literacy skills, or both.

Figure 4.6 shows a word cloud of the most frequently used terms appearing in students' comments.

Figure 4.6: Students' open responses: word frequency

4.2.1 Response rate

Of the students who took the questionnaire survey, approximately 80 per cent answered the optional open-response item. Interestingly, the response rate was relatively balanced between school sectors (82 per cent of primary students and 80 per cent of secondary students). A slightly higher percentage of girls (83 per cent) than boys (77 per cent) gave written comments.

4.2.2 Lesson activities

The most common theme by far related to lesson activities, ranging from broader preferences about grouping and variety to highly-specific comments about types of tasks or the use of a favourite resource. Overall, more of the girls referred to lesson activities than did the boys; this is addressed in greater detail for some of the specific sub-topics described below.

Groupwork and collaboration

Many responses mentioned group or collaborative work as something that helps them learn, though this topic appeared more frequently for secondary students' (approximately 21 per cent) than for primary ones (approximately 12 per cent). Preferences about specific types of collaboration varied, but many students seemed to favour changing groupings (between some combination of groups, pairs, whole-class activities and individual work) or choosing their own partners or group mates. This highlights the importance of interaction with peers in different leaning activities that is linked to maintaining interest in and engagement with learning. It links with the teachers' comments in interviews. A few representative quotes are presented below, with the students' original grammar, spelling and punctuation (these are kept authentic to the original responses throughout the section as much as possible):

> *"Group work helps keep me interested."*
>   (Male, Key Stage 5, History)

> *"Working in groups and pairs sometimes, not working independently all the time."*
>   (Female, Key Stage 3, Art)

> *"To make a good lesson I enjoy doing work on your own or in pairs and then*
>   *coming together as a class to share ideas"*
>   (Female, Key Stage 3, Geography)

> *"Work in partners and when you have someone to help if you find it difficult."*
>   (Male, Key Stage 2, Primary)

> *"Paired work and we get to pick the groups."*
>   (Male, Key Stage 3, Mathematics)

> *"Working (not chatting) with our friends"*
>   (Female, Key Stage 3, Modern Foreign Languages)

It is worthwhile to note the distribution of references to group work across class groups. In particular, 35 per cent of all mentions of group work and collaboration came from students in one of the 11 classes included in the questionnaire sample. By contrast, the responses from each of six other class groups included two or fewer comments about group work and collaboration. This might indicate some considerable variation, in terms of emphasis on collaborative work in lessons, between teachers or class groups or that the class in question had perhaps discussed the role of group work before.

Variety

Some of the students (approximately 16 per cent) cited variety as a way of keeping them interested and addressing their learning needs. In some instances the notion of variety was linked to the use of varied groups. Almost three-quarters of the responses that mentioned variety were written by girls. A few of the comments on this theme were quite general, emphasising a preference for change or difference:

> *"The teacher makes the lesson interesting. I don't usually find this lesson boring because she has many different ideas for what we can do in class."*
> (Female, Key Stage 3, English)

> *"Something new."*
> (Male, Key Stage 2, Primary)

> *"If the teacher makes the lesson interesting by using different learning methods"*
> (Female, Key Stage 5, History)

Other students wrote about more specific kinds of variety. The most commonly mentioned topics in this area related to the topics being taught and the working arrangements or groups:

> *"… Something we learn not everyday"*
> (Female, Key Stage 3, English)

> *"Interesting topics different tasks"*
> (Female, Key Stage 3, Modern Foreign Languages)

> *"Do more work in groups and pairs but work with different people"*
> (Male, Key Stage 2, Art)

> *"Working individually, in pairs and as a group makes the lessons more varied and interesting, everyone is involved."*
> (Female, Key Stage 3, Geography)

A handful of responses also mentioned taking learning beyond the classroom:

> *"School trips. Lessons outside in nice weather."*
> (Female, Key Stage 4, Modern Foreign Languages)

> *"I would like to work outside of the classroom more"*
> (Female, Key Stage 3, Geography)

4.2.3 Specific resources

A substantial number of students (approximately 14 per cent) mentioned specific resources that they felt were particularly effective or useful. Nearly two-thirds of these comments on specific resources came from girls.

The most common among these was video; a selection of primary and secondary students spread across six different classes all mentioned this as a resource that they liked or thought worked well to enhance a lesson.

"The teacher shows video clips…"
 (Male, Key Stage 3, Geography)

"… Class videos about the subject that is being taught helps me learn"
 (Male, Key Stage 5, History)

"I think we could do things like watching clips e.c.t. because it helps people learn"
 (Female, Key Stage 3, English)

"… Videos, books, posters, working wall"
 (Female, Key Stage 2, Primary)

A few students were more specific about how they thought video should be used to make it educational:

"I think watching or reading things really helps me to learn then after we had read or watched we write a paragraph about what we think will happen next."
 (Female, Key Stage 3, English)

Not all of the students expressed a preference for high-tech resources. Some, all of them in secondary schools, argued that they favoured handouts, and explained their reasons:

"Written worksheets help me to learn as they have the key information"
 (Female, Key Stage 3, Geography)

"Maybe to be given a worksheet if you are stuck on something to help you get better at that one thing."
 (Male, Key Stage 3, English)

A very small number of students (n=4) cited the use of ICT in the classroom. The technology mentioned included:

"… Interactive whiteboard activities"
 (Male, Key Stage 3, Geography)

"… Powerpoints"
 (Female, Key Stage 2, Primary)

"… laptops, iPads"
 (Male, Key Stage 4, English)

Additional topics
Learning games were mentioned as an element of a good lesson by some of the students (approximately eight per cent). Of those who commented on this theme, primary students more commonly referred to specific games they had played in class:

"Some word hunts."
 (Male, Key Stage 2, Primary)

"I enjoy fun lessons like solving the murder mystery in maths"
(Female, Key Stage 2, Primary)

For the most part, secondary students referred to games or competition in a more general way:

"Small games/activities/contests which help our learning"
(Female, Key Stage 3, Modern Foreign Languages)

"Games to do with what we are learning."
(Male, Key Stage 3, Mathematics)

"Games about the learning"
(Male, Key Stage 2, Primary)

A small but still notable number (n=13, six per cent) of students called attention to the pacing and structure of lessons. The majority of these mentioned lesson components or features of teacher planning and organisation in what makes a good lesson:

"Starter intro. Main task. Conclusion summary"
(Male, Key Stage 3, Modern Foreign Languages)

"Preparation and organisation"
(Female, Key Stage 3, Geography)

"Everything goes well in a lesson when it is well planned."
(Female, Key Stage 4, Modern Foreign Languages)

"The morning starters usually helps me with SATs and gets my brain going."
(Female, Key Stage 2, Primary)

Other related comments mentioned pacing, sometimes hypothetically and sometimes in direct criticism of a current class. In this connection timetable issues may be problematic as the PE teacher had noted the need for longer lessons, due to practical aspects such as time to change and walk to the outside school courts and playing fields:

"Don't talk as much. Have more time."
(Male, Key Stage 3, Physical Education)

"I think it makes a good lesson when we start quite quickly so we can get lots done"
(Female, Key Stage 3, Art)

"A good lesson is fast paced and interesting."
(Male, Key Stage 4, Modern Foreign Languages)

In the observations of inspiring teachers a good pace was frequently evident with prompt starts and efficient smooth transitions typical, again features of effective practice cited in the research in this area.

There were several additional themes that, while being mentioned less frequently than those described above, were nonetheless repeated in enough of the responses to merit some mention here. These can be loosely grouped together as broader aspects of lesson activities that were seen by students as helpful or important. They are addressed here in descending order according to the number of references associated with each.

First, several students claimed to prefer practical activities. In some cases this held a more specific meaning for a particular subject, while in some of the responses 'practical' was clearly meant in a more general sense of the word:

"Do a practical and then talk about it."
  (Male, Key Stage 3, Physical Education)

"Practical exercises to engage the brain"
  (Male, Key Stage 3, Geography)

Kinaesthetic activity was also mentioned by multiple students as a key aspect of a good lesson, or as something they preferred or enjoyed. This also links with the notions of active rather than passive learning involving variety and engagement:

"… Getting up and involved."
  (Male, Key Stage 3, Mathematics)

"Fun activities moving around the class."
  (Male, Key Stage 3, Geography)

Finally, a few students signalled that they preferred lesson tasks and activities to be challenging:

"When it's hard but not too hard."
  (Male, Key Stage 2, Primary)

"Hard work"
  (Male, Key Stage 3, Modern Foreign Languages)

"Challenges, not easy things"
  (Female, Key Stage 3, English)

4.2.4 Teaching methods or approaches
This theme was only slightly less frequently referenced in students' responses than lesson activities. Girls were again more likely than boys to address this theme in their responses.

Student interest and enjoyment
Although a wide range of approaches and methods were mentioned, the largest number of comments (representing approximately 15 per cent of the respondents) related to interest, enjoyment and choice. This also resonates well with the findings from the teacher interviews and qualitative observation notes.

The comments about interest and enjoyment were often rather general, citing the importance of these as features of a good lesson without much elaboration:

"… Enjoyable lesson"
(Female, Key Stage 3, Art)

"… Teacher tries to do something that everyone likes."
(Male, Key Stage 3, Physical Education)

"Make the class work interesting."
(Male, Key Stage 3, Modern Foreign Languages)

A few students did illustrate what they personally found interesting or enjoyable:

"I think I enjoy number work…"
(Female, Key Stage 2, Primary)

"Also, connecting with what the children enjoy (art, gardening, etc.) and putting that into the lesson"
(Female, Key Stage 2, Primary)

"A lesson is enjoyable if there can be a bit of fun but work at the same time, so a bit of a laugh to start the day, especially on Monday morning"
(Female, Key Stage 3, Geography)

Some of the secondary students were especially concerned about student choice in lessons. This was mentioned with regard to choice of group mates, topic being taught, and lesson activities:

"Tell the teacher what to do for next subject…"
(Male, Key Stage 3, Art)

"Where we get a choice of what to do"
(Female, Key Stage 3, Geography)

"That we get to pick our pairs like we do…"
(Male, Key Stage 3, Physical Education)

Clarity

Clarity was seen by some students (approximately 11 per cent) as crucial for a good lesson. Most of the comments about clarity related to lesson tasks, objectives and expectations. Some also addressed clarity of targets and clarity about how to improve, which can be seen to reflect formative teacher feedback:

"Activities and examples help me learning because it shows me what sort of work my teacher expects of me and what it's supposed to include."
(Female, Key Stage 3, English)

"We know exactly how we will do the work."
(Male, Key Stage 3, Geography)

*"… To tell the pupils what they are doing, make sure they know what it is
and make sure they understand it"*
(Female, Key Stage 4, Modern Foreign Languages)

"… She always helps us and tells us ways we could improve our work to get a higher level."
(Female, Key Stage 3, Art)

Interaction

Just under 10 per cent of the students mentioned interaction in their responses. Many of these comments were general and brief:

"More interactive work!"
(Male, Key Stage 4, Modern Foreign Languages)

"Getting to interact during the lesson"
(Female, Key Stage 5, History)

A few students offered more descriptive ways to emphasise interaction:

"Communication between both students and students, and teacher to students"
(Male, Key Stage 3, Modern Foreign Languages)

"Team work games – interactive"
(Female, Key Stage 2, Primary)

Individual support

Approximately eight per cent of the student responses referenced the teacher offering individual support as a feature of a good lesson. Some mentioned this more generally, while a few were more specific about the ways in which their teachers helped them (or the ways in which they liked to be helped):

"… If we don't understand miss will help us."
(Gender not specified, Key Stage 3, Mathematics)

"One on one conversations."
(Male, Key Stage 5, History)

"… Help from my teachers."
(Female, Key Stage 2, Primary)

"Maybe to help around the class and working with individual pupils"
(Male, Key Stage 3, Modern Foreign Languages)

Questioning and feedback

Comments on this topic were mainly from secondary students, and the majority of references were also from girls. Overall, approximately seven per cent of students who took the survey mentioned questioning and feedback.

Some of the responses that emphasised questioning were quite clear about what kind of questioning they meant, or when it would happen in the lesson:

"Quick fire questions to end the lesson"
(Female, Key Stage 3, Geography)

*"Sometimes she stops half way through the lesson to see how we are doing.
Some days she gets us a piece of paper and we write down what we find difficult"*
(Female, Key Stage 2, Primary)

This also resonates with a strong emphasis on interaction, and the use of questions to check students' understanding and extend their learning, seen in the observations and raised by teachers in the interviews.

Similarly, there were student responses about feedback that were equally specific about type, tone or timing, including the feeling that the atmosphere was relaxed about making mistakes and that teachers corrected work and gave feedback:

"She gets everyone involved and she doesn't tell people off when they get answers wrong"
(Female, Key Stage 4, Modern Foreign Languages)

"… Correcting my work"
(Male, Key Stage 2, Primary)

"… If you get it right she praises you, if you don't then she corrects you."
(Female, Key Stage 3, English)

"Regular book marking."
(Female, Key Stage 3, Geography)

For the most part, the students' comments about questioning and feedback seemed overwhelmingly to indicate a preference for a lot of questions from teachers during lessons, and frequent, consistent and constructive feedback (whether verbal or written). These aspects suggest students highly valued interactive teaching approaches.

Additional topics

A small number of around five per cent of the students – interestingly all of them male – expressed a desire for the teacher to do less talking during lessons so they could get on with work. In such responses, this was written bluntly and clearly:

*"Setting the task for us to do, but not the teacher talking too much,
and not calling us in every 5 seconds."*
(Male, Key Stage 3, Physical Education)

"I think a quick talking about the lesson and get on with it"
(Male, Key Stage 3, Art)

These comments were limited to two of the class groups included in the questionnaire sample, which might suggest some relationship to distinct teaching styles or subject areas. It is at variance with the positive comments made about teacher questioning and feedback linked to interactive teaching that were noted by larger numbers of students. This points to variations among students, as well as perhaps among teachers.

A handful of students (approximately three per cent, all secondary) mentioned relevance. This took a variety of forms, depending in part on the specific subject area that the participating class studied with the participating teacher:

> *"When he uses real life situations to get maths"*
> (Female, Key Stage 4, Mathematics)

> *"Focusing on the task but also referring to other things that connect.*
> *Eg the French revolution and Europe's reaction even today"*
> (Female, Key Stage 5, History)

4.2.5 Climate
Students typically did not mention the climate for learning explicitly. However, there were 39 references to lessons being "fun", which strongly suggests a possible aspect of classroom climate and a clear link with student engagement and enjoyment (also features strongly raised by teachers at interview):

> *"I like how fun the lessons are"*
> (Male, Key Stage 2, Primary)

> *"A good lesson is when there is a fun lesson…"*
> (Female, Key Stage 3, Geography)

Many of the students also combined references to fun with mentions of productivity, which paints a fuller picture of the climate for learning indirectly described in the responses:

> *"It makes a good lesson by making something fun but at the same time, we learn."*
> (Male, Key Stage 3, Physical Education)

> *"That you combine fun with learning."*
> (Female, Key Stage 2, Primary)

Nonetheless, a very few students (under three per cent) wrote more negatively about classroom climate, describing lessons as "boring":

> *"… To be honest this class is usually boring."*
> (Male, Key Stage 3, Mathematics)

Other more positive terms used by students that evoked a sense of climate for learning included "entertaining", "relaxed atmosphere" and "calm". These comments found echoes in the qualitative field notes from observations.

4.2.6 Relationships

A substantial number of responses (approximately 18 per cent) mentioned the nature of relationships between teachers and their students. These relationships were described in a variety of different way; the only obvious theme was that they were overwhelmingly referred to in positive terms. Again, this was a feature of their practice that was strongly emphasised by the inspiring teacher sample at interview.

Some of the descriptions focused on teachers' personalities or attitudes. Students most frequently used words including "friendly", "nice" and "kind". A few also mentioned humour, e.g. *"teachers having a joke"* (Male, Key Stage 4, Modern Foreign Languages):

> *"I have learnt many things from this teacher – he is very friendly and helpful"*
> (Female, Key Stage 4, Mathematics)

> *"The teacher has to be good and kind, or it puts people off the work."*
> (Male, Key Stage 3, English)

> *"… My teacher always is KIND."*
> (Female, Key Stage 2, Primary)

A number of the students commented on respect between teachers and students. A couple of related references also noted the importance of fair and equal treatment as part of that respect:

> *"Be a fair teacher, don't take a side even if they are dumb or clever"*
> (Female, Key Stage 4, Mathematics)

> *"Where a teacher treats a student with the same level of respect as we respect them"*
> (Male, Key Stage 3, Geography)

A few responses also mentioned how relationships might depend on recognition of a student's work or progress:

> *"To make a good lesson would be to be nice and kind to each other and the teacher be nice to us, but so we are pushed to get our work to a high standard…"*
> (Female, Key Stage 3, English)

> *"The teacher needs to be a nice teacher to students who work hard but should be strict to students who don't work well."*
> (Male, Key Stage 3, Geography)

Knowing students well seemed to be an important element of teacher-student relationships, according to a few of the respondents:

> *"Also the teacher should try to find out about the student and try to know them"*
> (Female, Key Stage 3, Art)

Finally, some of the students emphasised that teachers were or should be understanding, and should listen to students and their thinking:

> *"An understanding teacher that helps when needed but understands how the pupil feels and that respect you in the learning"*
> (Male, Key Stage 3, Geography)

> *"A good lesson is when the teacher listens to your ideas"*
> (Female, Key Stage 3, English)

4.2.7 Classroom management

Approximately nine per cent of students referred to classroom management in their responses. Of these, only one reference was made by a primary student. About one-third of those who mentioned classroom management were referring to extrinsic rewards or prizes:

> *"Get given sweets and chocolate"*
> (Male, Key Stage 4, Modern Foreign Languages)

> *"… Being rewarded more often helps good lessons"*
> (Male, Key Stage 3, Geography)

A very few students (under three per cent) took the focus away from the teacher to discuss student behaviours as contributors to a good lesson. Students tended to understand 'good' behaviour as listening and being quiet when required, and also to appropriate behaviour and not stopping others working:

> *"A good lesson is when people shut up when they're supposed to"*
> (Female, Key Stage 4, Modern Foreign Languages)

> *"When everyone is listening and no talking."*
> (Male, Key Stage 3, Geography)

> *"I find that if everyone works together and there is no stopping of people being silly the lesson is good."*
> (Female, Key Stage 4, Modern Foreign Languages)

4.3 Discussion and synthesis

As may be seen from the phrasings of quotes included as examples in the above sections, students did not all interpret the question in the same way, despite being given the same basic directions and question wording. Some answered the question as if about an imaginary ideal teacher or lesson, others took it as an opportunity to criticise some of the practices of the current teacher or teachers in general, and still others wrote in highly specific terms about the reasons why they felt their current teacher's lessons were good or effective.

Because of these different interpretations, it is not possible to systematically compare the themes from the open-ended item with the ratings of the items using a Likert scale. There is an overall similarity, however, in that the vast majority of students tended to write positively about their teachers, just as the quantitative questionnaire analysis showed that students' views were very favourable about their teacher's practice (items being positively skewed in the results). Both sets of findings indicate that most students thought or felt positively about their teachers.

Comparisons between groups could not be made in the same way for the qualitative student response data as for the quantitative data. The analysis in Section 4.1 compared how positively the four dimensions of the questionnaire ('My school', 'My teacher', 'My classroom' and 'About me in this class') were rated. The qualitative response data does not correspond to these four dimensions, nor does it contain a scale of positive to negative responses. Rather it focuses on what made a good or enjoyable lesson. However, Section 4.2 was able to outline a few emerging patterns by group by looking at numbers of references according to attribute values. For example, girls were slightly more likely to respond to the item in general, and much more likely to mention either lesson activities or teaching approaches in their responses. In Section 4.1, the survey data indicated that girls rated all four categories more positively than boys. The qualitative findings might suggest one tentative explanation of this result. Specifically, the girls might have tended to focus on different aspects of their schooling while completing the questionnaire, affecting the relative positivity of their ratings. There may well be links, potentially reciprocal, with learning and attainment, as we know that on average girls attain better results in both primary and secondary school up to Key Stage 4 in England in national assessments and public examinations. Their more positive views may support their learning, while better attainment may also lead to more favourable views of teaching and learning.

No distinct patterns emerged in the students' qualitative responses according to teacher gender or career phase. A few topics were noted in Section 4.2 for which primary and secondary responses differed, but because there were only two primary and nine secondary class groups in the sample, this makes for cautious comparisons at best. Overall, these comparisons align well with those made in the quantitative analysis, which found significant differences according to student gender, tentative differences according to school sector mitigated by the unbalanced nature of the sample, and almost no significant difference according to teacher gender or career phase amongst this sample of inspiring and exemplary practitioners.

5. Summary

This phase of the *Inspiring teachers* study represents an innovative collaboration between practitioners, CfBT and academics. The research used a mixed-methods case study approach because its focus was on learning from a purposive sample of teachers who are viewed as exemplars of good practice in their schools, chosen because they and their practice are regarded as 'inspiring' for other colleagues and students.

Our report has collected evidence from three main sources:

- teachers' voices (based on interviews)

- observations of classroom practice (both qualitative and based on systematic observation schedules)

- students' perspectives (responses to a questionnaire survey).

It has also explored variations related to three teacher characteristics: gender, career phase (based on years of experience) and sector (primary or secondary).

The main aim of the research is to provide robust new evidence from different perspectives about both inspiring teachers and inspiring teaching, to increase understanding of these widely used but elusive and often poorly defined concepts. The view that inspiration is a key feature of good or outstanding teaching has received much attention during the last decade, as our brief review of relevant literature has revealed. Nonetheless the term is often used in a variety of ways and definitions are frequently unclear. In England, official sources including both the DfE and Ofsted have drawn attention to the notion, arguing that teachers should "inspire, motivate, and challenge pupils". But what does this mean in practice? Some common themes are identified in the literature:

- inspiring teaching is typically described by adjectives such as exciting, innovative, or creative

- evidence of inspiration is typically seen to have positive consequences for students, with promotion of both immediate and longer-term outcomes including student engagement in the classroom, a lasting effect on students' aspirations and self-concepts, or interest in a particular subject

- specific features of teaching are identified that can be linked to notions of more 'effective' practice.

This in-depth study of the 17 teachers provides new evidence that supports these three broad themes, but it allows us to expand on them to increase understanding of the key features of inspirational teaching, how teachers view their work and how their intentions link with what we saw going on in their classes. It also takes note of the responses and views of their students.

5.1 Are inspiring teachers also more effective?

Inspirational teachers set ambitious standards for themselves and their students; they have high expectations and a strong sense of self-efficacy as they believe that they can make a difference to student learning and achievement. The results reveal strong links between the features of more effective teaching and the practice of these inspirational teachers.

Both the quantitative and the qualitative observation findings identify much overlap between the features of effective teaching that have been identified in past research and the practices we observed in these teachers' classes. There is a strong tradition of judgements of effective teaching based on studies of student outcomes (for example student value-added progress), and wider research evidence has identified features of teaching and classroom practice that are associated with greater effectiveness in fostering better outcomes for students (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005; Ko et al., 2013). This study used two systematic observation schedules to study classroom practice and establish how far the inspiring teachers also demonstrated the key features of more effective practice. Although the term 'inspiring' is a looser concept with broader connotations and strong links with emotions, the research results indicate that the inspiring teachers in this study were first and foremost highly effective practitioners. It is notable that the sample scored highly overall and on average most teachers showed high scores on most aspects of the two international systematic classroom observation schedules we used, showing particularly high scores in certain components.

Moreover, the qualitative observation evidence also supported this conclusion. Interestingly, when defining inspiring teaching, these teachers also touched on the relationship of this concept to others that are more commonly used to describe teachers and their practice, such as effective and outstanding teaching. Indeed, several teachers strongly expressed the belief that being inspiring and being effective were two related and mutually dependent aspects of teaching. To use effective practices does not seem to constrain these teachers, or inhibit them from being inspiring. Indeed the evidence suggests that the two concepts are complementary, though some additional and important distinctive features are also linked with inspirational practice.

5.2 Strengths of inspiring teachers' effective practice

Inspiring teachers scored highly in terms of all the various components and indicators of both ISTOF and QoT and there was relatively little variation in ratings among the 17 teachers we observed, despite differences in sector and subject taught. Thus the teachers were relatively homogeneous in these key features of their observed behaviour. They also scored more highly than samples of teachers in other studies and evaluations, suggesting they were indeed exemplary in terms of these characteristics of effectiveness. Being effective may be an important and necessary prerequisite but not a sufficient condition for being identified as an inspiring practitioner.

The inspiring teachers were particularly strong in creating a positive *Classroom climate*, and particularly in their *Assessment and evaluation* of students' learning, their *Classroom management* and providing *Clarity of instruction*. In line with these results, the teachers were also rated consistently highly on the QoT components that measured *Safe and orderly school climate, Effective classroom layout, Clear instruction* and *Effective classroom organisation*.

There were also several strengths with regard to the *Instructional skills* dimension. Here the teachers nominated as inspiring showed high scores for providing *sufficient wait time and response strategies to involve learners*, giving *assignments that stimulate active involvement*, posing *questions which encourage thinking and elicit feedback* and using a *variety of instructional strategies*. In terms of *Promoting active learning and developing metacognitive skills* the 17 teachers showed strengths in *encouraging students to ask one another questions*, giving them *opportunities to correct their own work* and asking them to *reflect on their own answers*.

Finally, when examining *Classroom management*, teachers also scored highly in aspects such as clarifying *how students could get help, correcting misbehaviour* and dealing with misbehaviour and disruptions by referring to the *established rules of the classroom*.

From a comparative point of view, the teachers who participated in this study showed several strengths in the different components measured by the observation instruments. As noted above, they were particularly strong in the ISTOF component *Classroom climate*, in particular on:

• praising pupils for effort

• communicating high expectations

• demonstrating warmth and empathy

• showing respect for students

• creating purposeful and engaging activities.

They also were rated highly on *Assessment and evaluation*, specifically on:

• making clear why an answer is correct or not

• providing appropriate feedback and relating assignments to what students
  had previously learned.

With regard to the component *Differentiation and inclusion* these teachers' scores were stronger than those in other studies in relation to:

• how frequently learners communicated with one another on task-oriented issues

• the extent to which all were actively engaged in learning.

In the component *Clarity of instruction* these teachers outperformed those in others samples, in terms of:

• checking regularly for pupils' understanding

• communicating in a clear and understandable manner

• clarifying the lesson objectives.

5.3 Features of inspiring practice

Our semi-structured qualitative observations provided deeper insights into the teachers' classroom practice, and offered an opportunity to make notes about specific aspects of lessons, dynamics, practices and behaviours that go beyond the scope of the quantitative observation instruments, and provide greater detail about aspects related to the particularities of individual classroom contexts. The vignettes show examples of how teachers worked in everyday classroom contexts to provide inspiring learning opportunities and promote engagement. This evidence complements but also extends the quantitative observation findings.

5.3.1 Lesson structure and activities
Timing and transitions

All of the field notes included mentions of lesson timing, with references to features linked to the lesson introduction, transitions between lesson components and lesson closure. Most lessons included a distinct introduction component – which often included engaging, exciting or interactive warm-up activities – followed by an overview of the lesson objectives and tasks. Many teachers explicitly communicated and enforced specific timeframes for lesson activities. Most of the observed lessons included smooth transitions between activities or parts of the lesson.

Lesson closures were more variable than introductions. Most dismissals were calm and orderly. Many teachers ended with a whole-class discussion; there were also many who used structured debriefing to engage students actively in the lesson closure. Some used formal written assessments to check for understanding. In several classes, often because of an ongoing assignment to be continued in the following lesson, the lesson closure consisted of tidying-up routines and announcements (e.g. homework) instead of assessment. Regardless of the specific strategies adopted by teachers to facilitate lesson closure, most sought to prompt students to reflect on their learning (either aloud or on paper).

Differentiation

Formal types of differentiation (explicitly different activities or versions of a task) were not very common in most of the observed lessons. Nonetheless, teachers did make frequent use of informal approaches to meet students' individual needs, such as circulating to provide individual support during independent or small-group work, or using additional adults in the room to support struggling individuals or groups.

Making connections

All of the teachers incorporated links between lesson content and examination standards and performance, students' daily lives beyond the classroom, popular culture, or novel or exciting events likely to engage students' interest and attention. It was quite common for the teachers to engage students actively in the process of making these connections.

Clarification

In many of the lessons observed, teachers engaged in frequent clarification of task instructions and lesson objectives, eliciting explanations, questions and reworded instructions from the students themselves, and checking on a one-to-one basis to make sure students were on track and understanding.

Student input and choice

Student input was actively sought and valued, although this was done in a wide variety of ways and with respect to different aspects of the lessons. Teachers allowed students to choose between activities, to select their own partners or groups, or (particularly at Key Stage 2 and above) to select from levels of difficulty or define their own targets.

Variety

Activities were varied in almost all of the lessons observed, except in instances where students were continuing with an ongoing assignment or activity. This variety was especially striking in primary classrooms, where students often physically changed configurations or groupings to transition between activities involving different materials and modes of instruction.

In secondary classes it was more common for this variety to involve working with different partners during the lesson, switching from whole-class discussions to group or individual activities or vice versa, and alternating between spoken and written tasks. Some teachers also provided variety by introducing novel activities or materials to their lessons.

Use of technology

Almost all of the classrooms contained smart-boards. The vast majority of teachers presented parts of their lessons using this technology, but only in some cases did students interact with the board or other technology tools. Some teachers used technology in creative or unusual ways, which seemed to be particularly popular with students. Nonetheless, using technology in unusual ways did not seem to be a major feature of inspiring teachers' practice.

5.3.2 Questioning and feedback

The inspiring teachers' classes were highly interactive. Teachers laid great emphasis on questioning and feedback to support learning.

Positive feedback

All of the teachers used positive feedback, in whole-class discussions as well as conversations with small groups and individual students. Many responded to every contribution with positivity, using phrases such as "Brilliant effort" (while still providing clear feedback) when students offered incorrect or partial answers. Interestingly, many teachers frequently offered more general words of praise without making the reason explicit, although some gave explanations for their pleasure. This may have been to create a generally positive atmosphere, something stressed in the teacher interviews. In primary lessons, teachers were more likely to offer explicit positive feedback about pupils' behaviours as well as their academic efforts and progress.

Circulation

In almost all of the lessons observed, teachers circulated while students were working. This looked different from classroom to classroom. Most teachers used probing questions while circulating to check for understanding, and many also used questioning to support collaboration and communication between students.

Open-ended questions

All of the teachers used at least some open-ended questions during their lessons and in many instances skilfully chosen open-ended questions proved a valuable way to engage students as more active participants in their own learning. When these questions were academically oriented, they often involved asking students to make their own connections to real-world situations, draw on prior knowledge or explain how they found a solution or arrived at an answer.

A different type of open-ended question involved prompting students to reflect on their own learning or on the work and ideas of their peers. It was common for students to be asked to engage explicitly with these metacognitive types of questions in secondary lessons. Primary teachers also invited students to reflect and offer feedback, but usually in simpler terms.

All students encouraged to contribute

Nearly every observed teacher made some attempt to make lessons and interactions as inclusive as possible. The majority of teachers used cold-calling and informal monitoring (i.e. attempting not to call on the same individuals too much, actively encouraging reluctant or shy students, and ignoring or redirecting students who spoke out of turn) to accomplish this.

5.3.3 Classroom management
Evidence of routines

There was clear evidence of well understood routines enabling classes to work smoothly. Students had internalised these – this fostered independence and self-regulation and helped maximise learning time. The most commonly observed routines involved:

- students knowing what to do at the beginnings and endings of lessons without being reminded

- rules and consequences

- ways of communicating in the classroom (particularly knowing when and to whom it was appropriate to speak during the lesson)

- the handling of resources and materials.

Responding to disruptions

No major disruptions were seen in any of the lessons. Minor disruptions that did occur in some classrooms were swiftly and appropriately handled. Many teachers, especially in secondary schools, strategically ignored minor disruptions (such as occasional whispering out of turn) and only responded to more serious infractions like disrespectful language.

When responding to minor disruptions, most teachers avoided role-confirming remarks in favour of gentle reminders and quick comments with an emphasis on promoting productive use of time.

Student responsibility for classroom space and resources

In almost all of the classrooms students were given responsibility and ownership for the classroom space and resources. Some teachers accomplished this by assigning specific temporary duties; others seemed to have established routines that encouraged students to voluntarily claim responsibility for resource distribution or tidying-up tasks.

Student leadership roles

In several classes, students were given a variety of leadership roles and responsibilities (not just related to classroom space and resources), which served as a classroom management tool in multiple ways. In some cases, students who exhibited challenging behaviours were chosen for leadership roles in order to occupy them and give them a reason to behave constructively. On the other hand, some teachers also selected students with exceptionally strong academic skills or exemplary behaviour to lead their peers by example.

Expectation to help each other

Based on student behaviour, and in some cases explicit teacher feedback (e.g. "Help each other out!"), there was an expectation in many of the observed classrooms that students should help one another with assignments and tasks. This was sometimes facilitated by teachers, but quite frequently students helped each other spontaneously without having been directed to do so. It shows that teachers had a commitment to fostering collaboration and teamwork as well as promoting individual learning.

5.3.4 Student behaviours

Engagement

Either all or very nearly all students were engaged during all of the lessons observed, though in a few cases this engagement fluctuated depending on the specific activity over the course of the lesson. This observation, combined with the interview evidence, suggests that inspiring teachers lay a strong emphasis on promoting engagement and see it as a key component in promoting learning. This was also linked to task-focused communication.

Task-focused communication

Students communicated frequently with their peers about the activity or task at hand. Classes were highly interactive, providing opportunities for students to work together collaboratively. Sometimes this was formalised and built into the instructions for a particular activity, but often it appeared to be an expectation that required little prompting, forming part of the classroom norms established by the teacher.

Enthusiasm

Students showed enthusiasm in many of the observed lessons. This was often prompted by a particularly stimulating activity or the prospect of some small reward, but sometimes there appeared to be a pervasive student enthusiasm for the class or subject in general. The lessons where student enthusiasm was most overt were often those which were observed to be particularly interactive and lively.

Groupwork and communication skills

In almost all of the lessons students demonstrated productive group work or communication skills. Even when teachers did not seem to be directly initiating or facilitating this, the observations hinted at the strong possibility that teachers had previously established guidelines or best practices for collaborative work and constructive communication skills. Again the interview data supported this interpretation.

Independence

Similarly, many of the activities observed required students (sometimes pairs or groups of students) to work quite independently, with minimal guidance from their teachers. The independent behaviours exhibited by students suggested teachers had encouraged this over time and designed lessons to provide opportunities for student independence.

Peer feedback

In quite a few classes, students were encouraged to give feedback to one another as a formal or informal part of the lesson, essentially marking one another's work or providing constructive criticism for a peer's verbal contribution. Many of the teachers guided students in this process when it was done in a whole-class format, and circulated to listen to students' conversation when feedback was exchanged in pairs or small groups. Most teachers were thus actively engaged in the process.

5.3.5 Relationships and interactions

Relationships between teachers and students were characterised most often as "relaxed", "warm" and "friendly". As noted in the interviews, teachers said they laid a strong emphasis on positive relationships with students, and the observation data strongly support these claims.

High expectations

Teachers expressed high expectations for their students. This was usually observed through some combination of providing encouraging formative feedback to individual students, clearly-expressed expectations that students would be able to complete challenging tasks, and setting targets expressly designed to move each student to the next level. Most teachers did not allow students to take breaks if they finished a task early; instead, they used further questioning to help students to extend their thinking.

Safe and supportive space to learn

Teachers were seen as creating safe spaces for students to contribute and also to make mistakes. This was reflected in the feedback given when students gave erroneous answers, and also in other students' positive and constructive responses in those instances.

Humour

Many teachers used humour at some point during the lesson. In most cases, this was not so much a matter of actually telling jokes as being willing to laugh with students or to say unexpected things to surprise them. This helped to create a positive climate, support classroom management and promote student engagement and enthusiasm.

Treating students as individuals

In the interactions between teachers and students, it was clear that teachers made many efforts to know and refer to students as individuals. Some merely called on students by name, others greeted each student individually at the door before the lesson began, while still others made comments that showed awareness of students' lives and interests beyond the classroom.

Awareness of individual targets/needs

Closely related to the above, teachers demonstrated awareness of the students' individual learning needs and targets both explicitly (by directly discussing their targets) and implicitly (by offering extra support to a struggling student or extension opportunities to students with stronger skills).

Enthusiasm and mutual liking

Students were seen, in the majority of observed classes, as appearing to like their teachers, while teachers were generally seen to show enthusiasm and enjoyment in their dealings with students. These findings from the observations were also much evident in the teacher interviews and student survey.

Sense of authority

In some lessons, there was a more pointed sense of teacher authority. This may have been a feature of some teachers' individual style of lesson delivery, or a response to context in classes that had previously exhibited challenging behaviours. Whatever the reasons behind it, this sense of strong teacher authority was a prominent feature in some classrooms and not at all in others.

5.3.6 Classroom environment

Every classroom had some academic reference material on display. The vast majority also included colourful and stimulating decoration, many examples of students' work, and information about classroom and school norms or rules on display. Most primary classrooms also prominently featured behaviour or reward charts, suggesting that extrinsic reward and recognition systems were viewed as important. Some classrooms also featured furniture that was relatively easy to rearrange for different types of activities; this appeared to be of more importance for some lessons than others.

5.3.7 Climate for learning

Researchers made comments on the classroom climate for learning as they perceived it. In this context, the term most commonly used was "relaxed". There were also references to evident mutual respect, productivity, fun, energy, calm and sense of common purpose. There was much overlap of this theme with others in the observation notes. For example, in classes where the climate was described as relaxed or friendly, the teachers' relationship to and interactions with students were also often described in the same or similar terms. In other words, while climate for learning was included explicitly in the qualitative observation notes, it was also closely tied to and influenced by a combination of more specific features of the lessons observed, especially the relationships and interactions between teacher and students.

5.3.8 Teacher subject knowledge

Teacher subject knowledge was referred to in the majority of the field notes, but only very briefly. This is not to say that subject knowledge is unimportant or unrelated to inspirational teaching. On the contrary, in a sample of teachers who had all been nominated as inspiring, it is likely that strong subject knowledge was a prerequisite, and did not stand out because there may have been little variation in this respect between individual teachers. Notably, hardly any subject knowledge errors were observed (only two, very minor, instances).

References to subject knowledge most commonly related to teachers' use of accessible language and explanations. In some cases, when students struggled to understand a concept based on an initial explanation, teachers demonstrated the depth of their subject knowledge by finding another way to explain the same concept so that students could better understand.

Teachers' subject knowledge was also evident in their awareness of common misconceptions, or of solution strategies and approaches that would work well for students to succeed at a particular task.

5.4 Inspiring teachers' perspectives

The interviews allowed the in-depth probing of issues relating to the teachers' understanding and definition of inspiring teaching. The interviews also provided teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their work and their schools, which many seemed to enjoy and value. Teachers showed the ability to reflect on their practice and their roles in school, suggesting that being a reflective practitioner was associated with both highly effective and inspiring practice.

5.4.1 Who are inspiring teachers?

Teachers' reasons for entering the teaching profession varied but three general pathways were identified in this group. Firstly, several had been attracted to teaching from a very young age and started to develop confidence; they knew they wanted to work with children or young people and they had a strong sense of vocation. Another group indicated they had not considered becoming a teacher until after they finished their university degree; often they wanted to use their degree subject, having a strong interest in their subject, but found that teaching was something they enjoyed. Some only came to teaching after working in a different profession for several years or after specialising in a particular subject. These teachers were driven by the thought of the new challenge that teaching represented.

All the teachers we interviewed showed a strong enthusiasm for teaching, while acknowledging its stresses, the hard work and demands in terms of time and emotional labour. They also found it exciting and intrinsically rewarding. All seemed to greatly enjoy working with children or adolescents and had a strong commitment to their chosen profession and a clear sense of professional identity.

5.4.2 Who inspired inspiring teachers?

Over half our sample referred to particular teachers who had taught them when they were at school. Interestingly, most referred to teachers who taught them the same subject they went on to specialise in, or teachers who had taught them in similar year levels to the ones they were currently teaching. Nearly half (eight) also cited inspirational colleagues at the schools where they had worked, including both teachers and headteachers.

Other less common examples came from mentors during teacher training, and teachers among their own families and friends who had motivated them. In just a few instances the experience of a 'poor' teacher had also spurred them to enter the profession to do better. In all cases the participants viewed teaching as very important and felt that inspiring teaching could make a difference to children and young people. They demonstrated a high level of self-efficacy.

5.4.3 What do teachers see as essential to being an inspiring teacher?

Our interviews revealed some distinctive features of our sample's understanding of what it means to be an inspiring teacher.

The two characteristics most frequently mentioned were *Enthusiasm for teaching* and *Positive relationships with students*. These two main features both reflect the nature of teaching as an interactive and social activity that engages the emotions. They are followed by less commonly identified characteristics such as *Flexibility, Relevant teaching, Safe and stimulating classroom climate, Positive classroom management, Reflectiveness* and *Innovative teaching*.

Enthusiasm for teaching

According to the interviewees, perhaps the key aspect of being an inspiring teacher is having a passion for the profession and being able to transmit that enthusiasm, either for learning or for a particular subject, to their students. This, teachers stressed, is closely associated with creating a stimulating learning climate and making lessons enjoyable.

Teachers also linked this sense of enthusiasm and passion for the profession with constantly looking for opportunities for professional development and improvement.

This trait was considered equally important by practitioners across school sectors (primary/secondary), gender and career phase. In relation to their own teaching, interviewees felt very positively about this aspect. The majority of them believed they were very enthusiastic and able to motivate students.

Positive relationships with students

Participants also strongly indicated that inspiring teachers prioritise building and maintaining positive relationships with all students. This aspect seems to go hand-in-hand with getting to know individual students both as learners and as people, as well as being aware of their family situation and social context. These interview findings support and confirm the observational evidence we have presented. They also stressed that their relationships with students are dynamic and that building up this relationship requires effort and an important period of adaptation through which teachers get to know the students and vice versa. Other aspects identified as crucial for developing good relationships were promoting mutual respect among teachers and students and consistency. The ability to develop good relationships was also something that the participants had recognised in the examples of teachers or others who had inspired them in the past.

Most of the teachers in the sample reported having positive relationships with their students and also liking children/young people, and this did not differ by their gender, school sector or career phase. In general, these teachers felt they were able to develop and maintain positive relationships with their students and this was a priority in their practice. Creating positive relationships with students seem to be central to these teachers' sense of self-efficacy and ability to teach well.

Nonetheless, some teachers made explicit the need to be very careful about boundaries, especially with respect to contact outside school and avoiding links via social media such as Facebook.

Positive classroom management

Linked to the theme of positive relationships but distinct in its own right, most teachers referred to positive classroom management as an aspect that enabled inspiring teaching. Having good control of the class and being fair, firm and consistent were stressed as prerequisites for successful teaching and learning. Teachers also argued that good classroom management was linked with their clear academic and behavioural expectations, as well as consistency across the school and fairness across students. They strongly emphasised the need for a positive approach in behaviour management.

Flexibility

Around a third of the teachers suggested that a characteristic feature of inspiring teachers is that they are flexible and adapt their teaching according to their learners' needs. Secondary school teachers in the sample spoke more explicitly than primary teachers about the need to adapt instruction to individual student needs. Indeed, these teachers said that adaptability was vital and that often plans could change throughout a lesson depending on the needs or interests of the class. These teachers also commented on their confidence in being able to adapt lesson plans to respond appropriately to broader learning needs as they arose, and felt this had a positive effect on student engagement and learning.

Safe and stimulating classroom climate

Some teachers also argued that inspiring teachers create a positive learning climate for students, encouraging an open and trusting environment where students can feel happy, calm, relaxed and safe. This again emphasises the socio-emotional component of inspiring teaching combined with the more practical aspects of activities and planning.

Purposeful and relevant teaching

Several teachers stressed the connection between inspiring teaching and linking learning experiences to students' own lives, and of making learning purposeful. Teachers generally felt confident that they could make their teaching relevant to students' lives, although this was perceived as being more difficult in certain subjects.

Reflectiveness and collaboration

A number of the interviewees made clear they felt inspiring teachers are consciously reflective about their practice and constantly look for ways to develop their practice further. Participants also stressed that an important aspect of inspiring teachers' ability to reflect on their practice was to be able to do it collaboratively and thus contribute to the professional development of colleagues in their teams. Quite a number were in various leadership roles such as head of department that may have shaped their emphasis.

Innovative teaching

A number also suggested that inspiring teachers, as well as being knowledgeable, also bring innovation into their practice and use new, modern approaches to teaching. They exploit their creativity and are willing to take some risks. This approach is associated with using a rich variety of instructional activities to create stimulating lessons.

5.4.4 Career aspirations

Teachers were asked about their plans for the future and whether they would like to take on other responsibilities within the school. Many already had additional roles, some in middle leadership and a few in senior leadership positions. Nonetheless, a large number of interviewees (12 out of 17) said they preferred to continue with their prime role as classroom teachers, a position in which they felt comfortable and had developed a strong sense of efficacy. These teachers stressed that they wanted to remain working inside the classroom with students, or in areas closely related to teaching and learning. Some of the interviewees had reduced contact hours with students in the classroom due to their other roles in school, but while valuing their leadership roles they also felt they missed the full-time teaching role. However, a few saw leadership positions as offering an attractive opportunity to have a greater impact on their schools in the future. A tension was identified – especially by male teachers – between their desire to remain in the classroom and career development to achieve better working conditions. Finally, despite general satisfaction with their current schools, a few teachers were considering changing schools in the future, in order to experience and influence other settings.

5.4.5 Job satisfaction, motivation and commitment

Job satisfaction, motivation and commitment were also explored during the interviews. These aspects have particular relevance in the context of this study, as they tend to influence one of the most important aspects these teachers commented on in defining inspiring teaching: enthusiasm.

The vast majority of teachers in the study indicated that their current motivation as a teacher was high and they were generally sustaining their commitment and engagement. Phrases such as *"It's a vocation for some"*, *"I love my job"* and *"I'm dedicated"* were used. Taken together, primary school teachers typically expressed higher levels of motivation than the secondary teachers in our sample. Teachers were particularly satisfied with the aspects of their jobs that involved being in contact with students.

Only one of the teachers was becoming disillusioned with work, reflecting disquiet at current education reforms (interviewed in 2013) that were seen as greatly reducing teacher autonomy and working conditions, increasing workloads and distracting from classroom work. However, many teachers drew attention to their worries in this area and expressed concern and disagreement with what they saw as external interference by central government. The majority had strong and negative views about recent changes in national curriculum, national assessments and examinations. They saw these changes as highly political and felt they produced great confusion, work overload and lacked clarity. This was seen to have shifted the focus from engaging students and innovating in teaching to managing change and achieving targets with too much focus on tests and examination results. Teachers felt they had to put in more time and that their past efforts in developing their resources and planning were being wasted, including the need to replace expensive texts and materials because of the curriculum and examination changes.

Teachers' well-being and motivation at work were affected by several personal, professional and work-based circumstances. Some of the most commonly emerging factors were: workload negatively affecting work-life balance, adapting to new roles within their school, external pressures related to student and teacher assessment, the benefits of school support, student behaviour and interest, as well as personal and health factors. In general, participants believed teaching was an extremely demanding profession in terms of time. The issues of excessive workload and difficulties in achieving and sustaining a satisfactory work-life balance appeared very frequently in the interviews and were more commonly referred to by female teachers. Teachers also suggested that the issue of work-life balance impacts differently at particular points of teachers' lives.

Starting to teach for the first time and adapting to the demands of a new position were often cited as challenging events that affected teachers' sense of efficacy and levels of satisfaction. Being successful and obtaining recognition and respect from colleagues and school leaders were also noted as important positives. A supportive school culture was noted as a key factor in sustaining teachers' job satisfaction, motivation and commitment. In particular, aspects such as the quality of leadership, relationships with colleagues, relevant opportunities for continuing professional development and a shared behaviour management policy are, according to teachers, important factors that enhanced their daily practice and self-efficacy.

The most frequently mentioned school factor affecting teacher practice was the support coming from the school leadership. Over half explicitly drew attention to this factor and most of them valued leadership that was approachable and participative. They also preferred school leaders who set clear, aspirational and realistic expectations for teachers, and who provided them with relevant and constructive feedback. The evidence strongly suggests that being effective and inspirational is at least in part shaped by features of the schools in which teachers work. Feeling supported was closely linked to motivation, satisfaction and morale.

5.4.5 Collaboration and CPD

The degree to which the school ethos is one that promotes positive and collaborative relationships among teachers was also considered a very important factor, noted by approximately half of the interviewees. The motivation from collaboration and the role of mentoring were also highlighted by some.

Most teachers reported that their school had some type of professional development programme in place, such as breakfast training sessions, INSET days, etc. A number of teachers considered collaborative and personalised learning, with colleagues within their school, to be their preferred form of professional development.

Teachers were asked about their professional development needs. The areas that they identified for further development were highly diverse but the three most common areas teachers wanted to improve were:

• subject knowledge

• differentiation

• IT skills.

The inspiring teachers in our sample were typically highly proactive in managing their professional development, participating actively in teachers' communities and using social networks in order to find and share new ideas to improve their practice.

5.5 Students' views and experiences

The classroom observations provided rich evidence about students' classroom activities and responses to teaching, drawing particular attention to the inspiring teachers' skills in behaviour management and in fostering a positive climate and relationships with and between students. However, questionnaire data were also collected for a class taught by 11 of the 17 teachers. The results indicate that the vast majority of students had very positive ratings for their teachers and their learning experiences.

Students' ratings of schools, classrooms, their own involvement, and particularly teachers, were generally very favourable overall, with girls giving slightly but significantly more positive ratings than boys.

Students' overall ratings indicate that they strongly believe their teachers:

• have high expectations for pupils, and positive relationships with them

• create a positive, supportive, and reassuring classroom climate

• have clear instructional goals and well-structured lessons

• are approachable, fair, and helpful

• transmit their enjoyment of learning to pupils

• promote positive learning experiences, attitudes, engagement and motivation.

Additionally, students' written comments were analysed and showed that they valued:

• group work and collaboration

• varied lesson activities, group arrangements, and topics

• a range of resources, from handouts to ICT

• a prompt start and appropriate lesson pace

• a strong focus on learning and progress

• lessons attuned to student interest and enjoyment

• clarity about what to do and how to improve their work

• interactive teaching approaches and individual support

• positive relationships with their teachers

- teachers who show consistent and effective classroom management, ensuring other students' positive behaviour

- lessons that are fun

- teachers who are kind, fair and have a sense of humour

- being known and valued as individuals.

The students' views obtained through surveys provide additional evidence about what inspiring teachers do and how they are successful at promoting student learning and engagement through their skilful use of highly effective teaching practices, a strong commitment to and liking for their students and their aim to promote positive relationships and make learning activities varied, fun and memorable.

5.6 Final comment

This project has sought to understand what is meant by inspiring practice by drawing on different perspectives and sources of evidence. The main evidence is a triangulation based on teachers' voices expressed through interviews, what we saw in the classroom (from both quantitative observation schedules and qualitative field notes) and students' views (from a questionnaire survey). Each source offers rich information and some unique contributions. Nonetheless there are strong overlaps that add to the robustness of our conclusions. In Figure 5.1 we show the overlap between these various sources and perspectives. We have already noted that first and foremost the teachers showed strongly the characteristics of more effective teaching. In terms of inspiring practice at the core we can highlight:

- positive relationships

- good classroom/behaviour management

- positive and supportive climate

- formative feedback

- high quality learning experiences

- enjoyment.

These teachers show a high degree of engagement with their students, they are effective, organised and knowledgeable practitioners who exhibit a continued passion for teaching and for promoting the well-being of students. They are highly professional, confident and reflective practitioners. Despite external challenges, nearly all want to continue in their teaching careers, they genuinely like students, they enjoy teaching, and they show resilience in the stressful and fast-changing education environment. Their classes revealed a strong emphasis on making learning enjoyable and engaging, activating students' own motivation, and providing classroom experiences that were typically varied, imaginative and 'fun'. These inspiring teachers value the support they receive from leaders and colleagues in their schools. They are keen to work with and support colleagues, often through their particular leadership roles in their schools. Overall, they are committed professionals who continue

to learn and improve their own practice and seek out opportunities and networks for professional development aligned to their needs and interests. This report has sought to highlight what we can learn from their inspiring practice.

Figure 5.1: Synthesis of common themes and emphases

Teachers' voices

- Having and transmitting enthusiasm
- Innovation and variety

- Positive relationships
- Good classroom/behaviour management
- Positive and supportive climate
- Formative feedback
- High quality learning experiences
- Enjoyment

- Purpose/relevance of learning
- Strong links between effective and inspiring teaching
- High expectations
- Commitment to teaching

Pupils' perspectives

- Instructional clarity
- Interactive learning
- Varied activities
- Good lesson pace
- Knowing and caring for pupils
- Pupil choice and input
- Engagement and motivation

Observations of classroom practice

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Appendix A. Methodology and methods

A1. Characteristics of the sample

As noted in the Introduction, the teachers who participated in this study were nominated by their headteachers for being particularly inspiring in their practice. The headteachers are likely to have used a range of criteria in selecting staff, reflecting their own understandings of the term 'inspiring' because the intention of the research was to go beyond current concepts of 'outstanding' teaching focused on in Ofsted inspections in England. In this section we describe the composition of this purposive sample of teachers. The study collected information from 17 teachers working in nine CfBT schools. The numbers of teachers in primary and secondary schools were not equal. As shown in Table A1, there were seven teachers in the former and 10 in the latter. While primary teachers typically taught only one year group, secondary teachers generally taught several year groups. The sample included four male and 13 female teachers. All of the male teachers that participated in the study taught in secondary schools. All teachers were voluntary participants and assured of anonymity and confidentiality as part of the project's ethical procedures.

Table A1: Composition of the sample by school level and gender

	Female	Male	Total
Primary	7	0	**7**
Secondary	6	4	**10**
Total	**13**	**4**	**17**

While most teachers in the primary sample taught all subjects in general primary education, at the secondary level the subjects taught varied widely, including English, Mathematics, History, Geography, Modern Foreign Languages, Art and Physical Education. This makes it clear that secondary headteachers found examples of inspiring teachers with different subject specialisms. The number of teachers specialising in each subject is presented in Table A2.

Table A2: Composition of the sample by subject taught

Subject	Number of teachers
English	2
Mathematics	2
History	1
Geography	1
Modern Foreign Languages	2
Art	1
Physical Education	1
General Primary	7
Total	**17**

The year groups that participants taught also varied greatly, ranging from Nursery to Year 12. The following table, Table A3, shows the number of teachers by key stage level when the fieldwork for this study was carried out.

Table A3: Composition of the sample by key stage taught

Key Stage	Number of teachers
Key Stage 0	3
Key Stage 1	2
Key Stage 2	2
Key Stage 3	6
Key Stage 4	2
Key Stage 5	2
Total	**17**

Table A4 characterises the sample in terms of the career phase (based on years of experience) that teachers were in when the study took place. It can be seen that the majority of participants (11) were early- and mid-career teachers. In addition, 12 of the teachers had experience of working in more than one school and a minority (four) had worked in other fields unrelated to teaching, either before their teaching careers started or in between teaching posts.

Table A4: Composition of the sample by years of teaching experience

Years of experience	Number of teachers
0–5	5
6–10	6
11–15	4
16–20	2
Total	17

Finally, most participants (14 out of 17) indicated they held additional responsibilities in their school apart from their class teaching. Some of the roles undertaken by these teachers included key stage manager, subject department head, assistant headteacher, deputy headteacher and advanced skills teacher.

A2. Methods of data collection

This section introduces each of the methods adopted and instruments designed for the purposes of this study. Although the focus of this research was on the teacher as the main unit of analysis, information about the perceptions of the headteacher and classes of students taught by each teacher was also collected. Most of the instruments used in this study had been generated and/or validated in the English context by a previous ESRC-funded study, the Effective Classroom Practice project (ECP) (Kington et al., 2012), a two-year mixed-methods study, that built on and extended a previous DfES-funded longitudinal research project into teachers' work, lives and effectiveness (VITAE; Day et al., 2006; Day et al., 2007; Sammons et al., 2007). The instruments used in the present study included interviews, international systematic classroom observation protocols, classroom qualitative observations notes, ranking sheets and student questionnaire surveys. The number of returns for each instrument is shown in Table A5. In what follows we describe the main features of each of these instruments.

Table A5: Summary of the sample size by instrument

	Interview	Quantitative observation	Qualitative observation	Ranking sheet	Student survey
Teachers	17	45	28	16	-
Headteachers	-	-	-	8	-
Students	-	-	-	-	203

- = Not applicable.

A2.1 Interviews

Teachers' views and perceptions were collected through a semi-structured, face-to-face interview. These interviews explored issues such as professional trajectory, identification of inspiring teachers, definition of inspiring teaching and factors affecting practice and levels of job satisfaction, motivation and commitment. Interviews lasted between 25 and 60 minutes.

A2.2 Classroom systematic observations

In the field of teacher effectiveness research, systematic observation of teachers working with their classes is an important tool used with the aim of comparing teachers in terms of certain pre-determined and agreed categories of behaviour and practice (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005). Two observational instruments were used in the present study, namely the International System of Teacher Observation and Feedback (ISTOF) and the Lesson Observation Form for Evaluating the Quality of Teaching (QoT). The main purpose in using these instruments was to investigate whether the participating teachers identified as 'inspiring' also show behaviours typically associated with teacher effectiveness and to explore the extent of variations amongst the sample in their observed classroom practice.

The ISTOF protocol was initially derived from reviews of school and teacher effectiveness research and drew on expert opinion involving teams from 21 countries, using an iterative, multiple-step, internet-based modified Delphi technique (Teddlie et al., 2006). The ISTOF scale consists of 45 items, with two to three items representing one indicator and two to three indicators forming one component, making up 21 indicators and seven components in total. For each item, teachers were rated on a five point Likert-type scale with values ranging from five to one. A higher value indicates more of the behaviour described by the item that has been observed. The components assessed by ISTOF are:

- Assessment and evaluation

- Differentiation and inclusion

- Clarity of instruction

- Instructional skills

- Promoting active learning and developing metacognitive skills

- Classroom climate

- Classroom management.

The QoT protocol, in turn, was elaborated in the context of an international collaboration between the Dutch and English inspectorate (van de Grift et al., 2004) and is a higher inference instrument that uses professional judgement of strengths and weaknesses by trained observers rather than frequency of observed behaviours. It has also been tested in research in seven European countries. The QoT instrument comprises a detailed checklist of 26 indicators, covering nine components for evaluating the quality of teaching. Each component is supported by two to four indicators. For each indicator, teachers are rated on a four-point Likert-type scale where a higher value indicates a stronger classroom practice seen in regard to the indicator of interest. The areas covered by the nine QoT components are:

- Safe and orderly school climate

- Stimulating learning climate

- Clear objectives

- Clear instruction

- Activating pupils

- Adaptation of teaching

- Teaching learning strategies

- Effective classroom organisation

- Effective classroom layout.

Observers also generate a final global judgement of *Overall quality of teaching* for the QoT (van de Grift, 2007). Ratings of each lesson using these two instruments were carried out immediately after the observation had taken place rather than during the lesson, in order that the researcher could focus on observing the activities and making qualitative field notes while observing in the classes.

While ISTOF and QoT are similar in some features of their applications, structures and some of their theoretical components, the two scales differ in their relative degree of standardisation and explicit operationalisation, with QoT requiring stronger inferential evaluations. Although relative frequency (as used in ISTOF) and relative strength (as used in QoT) of a particular teaching behaviour are associated, they are conceptually and practically very different types of measure and it is of interest to analyse how both scales apply in studying the classroom work of our inspiring teacher sample.

It was hypothesised that teachers in our sample might be more likely to show behaviours associated with teacher effectiveness as they were purposely selected by headteachers for being particularly inspiring teachers and, given that the definition of what constitutes an inspiring teacher was left to headteachers' discretion, it was considered highly possible that they might have based their decision on existing criteria such as their own observations, inspection-based assessments of what counts

as 'good' or 'outstanding' teaching or students' academic progress (value added measures), test or examination results as well as teachers' reputations with colleagues and students.

A2.3 Classroom qualitative notes

The qualitative component of the observation of classroom practice comprised rich descriptive field notes to describe the lesson, which included detail on the structure, organisation and flow of the lesson, nature of lesson activities, interactions between students and teachers, classroom climate and comments on the teachers' persona.

A2.4 Ranking sheets

In order to explore the relative importance that teachers and headteachers in the study assigned to different teacher attributes and with the aim of providing data triangulation, the teachers in our sample, as well as the headteachers of the schools in which they worked, were asked to complete a structured ranking sheet. The constructs listed in the ranking sheet for the present study emerged from a semi-structured repertory grid interview with teachers carried out in the context of the ECP project (Kington, Reed & Sammons, 2013). Participants in our study were asked to rank these 17 constructs in order of priority to them.[5] These 17 aspects included several professional and personal skills related to effective teaching practice. Asking participants to rank-order the constructs provided useful information as participants are compelled to choose between competing attributes, all or most of which are probably important to them.

A2.5 Student survey

A questionnaire was administered to students in some of the classes taught by the participating teachers with the aim of providing evidence on students' engagement with school and their perceptions about their teacher and classroom climate. Unfortunately it was not possible to schedule times to administer the survey in classes taught by all the teachers in the sample due to practical constraints.

The questionnaire developed for use on the *Inspiring teachers* project was informed by reviews of the literature and previous survey instruments such as ECP (Kington et al., 2012), VITAE (Day et al., 2007), PISA (OECD, 2005) and RAPA (Levačić, 2002; Malmberg, 2002). There were two versions of the questionnaire survey (i.e. primary school and secondary school versions), although most of the items were the same across questionnaires. Items on the questionnaire were organised into four sections, namely, *My school, My teacher, My classroom* and *About you in this class*.

Whenever possible, the questionnaires were administered during the research team's school visits so that researchers could be present to answer any questions from the students about the items or about the research. This was not always possible, mainly because of scheduling complications in schools where a greater number of teachers were being observed and interviewed, so by necessity in some instances questionnaires were administered after the researchers had left. In such circumstances, teachers were provided with the questionnaire materials as well as individual envelopes for students to enclose and seal their responses for the sake of confidentiality and anonymity.

The numbers of student, class and school returns are shown in Table A6. In total, questionnaire responses from 203 students from 11 of the participating teachers' classes were collected.

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[3] The original instrument contained 18 constructs. However, after piloting the instrument and based on the suggestion of some teachers, the decision was taken to exclude the dimension "Being an effective teacher", as this category was considered broader and qualitatively different from the other constructs. Teachers in the pilot suggested that this underpinned all their work and the other constructs in the list.

Table A6: Student questionnaire data returns

	Number of students	Number of classes/teachers	Number of schools
Primary school questionnaire	35	2	2
Secondary school questionnaire	168	9	5
Total	**203**	**11**	**7**

A2.6 Piloting

Instruments were piloted before starting the data collection with the nominated teachers. The first stage of the piloting process involved researchers watching videoed lessons in order to train them in the use of the observation schedules and gain inter-rater reliability (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). This was followed by piloting of the observation, interview and ranking sheet instruments in one of the participant schools, and rating a different group of teachers (also nominated by headteachers) from those identified to participate in the project. After piloting, the team met to discuss issues that had arisen and made revisions to all relevant instruments.

A3. Approach to analysis

A key feature of this study is its mixed-methods design, incorporating and integrating multiple quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection as well as analytical approaches.

A3.1 Qualitative analysis
A3.1.1 Interviews

The interviews conducted with teachers were digitally recorded, transcribed and saved as anonymised, uniquely identified files. An initial coding system, based on the interview schedule, was developed containing organisational themes for the analysis. This coding system was subsequently expanded as new themes emerged from the interviews during the coding process. Coding of a sub-sample of interviews was carried out simultaneously by three researchers with the aim of enhancing the validity of the findings via analyst triangulation (Patton, 1999). The interview data were managed using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013) and analysed using content analytic methods. Teacher attributes were added to NVivo, including the school sector in which the teacher was working as well as their career phase and gender, and were used to produce groupings and explore the data across groups.

A3.1.2 Observation notes

The researchers took detailed narrative field notes while observing each lesson. The notes were loosely guided by a semi-structured observation guide, but researchers were encouraged to include details beyond the scope of this guide as well.

Field notes were transcribed digitally and saved using anonymised identifiers corresponding to those used for the interview files. Coding was undertaken in NVivo in several passes. First, preliminary coding was conducted according to categories from the observation guide. Second, fine-grained

coding was used to identify in more depth the practices, interactions, behaviours and characteristics of teachers, students, activities and classrooms. Finally, these codes were further discussed and regrouped into general themes and sub-categories within those themes. Teacher attributes were added, which were identical to those described for the interviews, and a similar analysis strategy explored patterns across the qualitative data.

A3.1.3 Students' open-ended answers

The student questionnaire survey included one optional write-in item, asking students to write about what they thought makes a good lesson, and things they enjoy that help them to learn.

The responses to this item were digitally transcribed and listed with anonymised identifiers by teacher (matched to the other forms of data). After importing into NVivo, the student responses were analysed using an approach similar to those implemented for the interviews and observations. Initial codes were fine-grained and highly specific, and were subsequently regrouped thematically into meaningful themes.

A3.2 Quantitative analysis

A3.2.1 Ranking sheet

Data from the sheets containing the 17 construct themes sent out to teachers and headteachers were entered in Excel and then analysed using SPSS. Frequency and descriptive analyses were conducted. In addition, we compared mean ratings of teachers and headteachers and mean ratings between subgroups of teachers based on school sector (primary/secondary).

A3.2.2 Observation data

Following the lesson observations using ISTOF and QoT schedules, the resulting data were entered in Excel spreadsheets and exported to SPSS where a range of descriptive analyses were carried out. After assessing inter-rater reliability using the specialised software AGREESTAT (Advanced Analytics, 2011), the internal consistency for each component of the scales was explored. Correlation analysis was also performed within and across instruments. Finally, teacher overall ratings in each of the components were compared across school sectors (primary/secondary), gender and career phases.

A3.2.3 Student survey

The data from each student questionnaire were entered in Excel. Quality control of the data entering process was carried out by means of developing a validated dataset where only valid values could be entered in order to prevent errors and by having a subsample of the questionnaire data double-entered and checked by the analyst in the research team. Subsequently, the dataset was exported to SPSS where descriptive analyses were carried out. Principal component analysis was used to reduce the data from each section of the questionnaire into a robust and meaningful underlying factor. Mean scores for each section were then compared by student gender, school sector, teacher gender and career phase.

Principal components analysis was carried out within each of the four questionnaire sections in order to detect items that did not contribute substantially to the four theoretically defined sections. These items were excluded from the analysis.

Scores were created for each of the 203 students who completed the survey by calculating a mean value from each item in the thematic sections. Then, scores means were generated for each of the 10 teachers whose students completed the survey.

After describing the distribution of several items and factors, the mean scores for each of these sections were analysed by student gender and school sector in order to explore any relationships between these variables and the thematic sections scores. Mean comparisons between students' responses by teacher groups (i.e. according to career phase and gender) were also carried out.

Internal consistency and correlation between factors on student survey

When performing principal components analysis (PCA) within each section of the student questionnaire we examined the factor loadings for each item after extraction. Stevens' cut-off criterion of .40 for a substantive factor loading was employed to assess the sizes of the factor loadings for each item (Stevens, 2002). Eight (out of 75) items with factor loadings lower that this cut-off value were excluded from the analyses.

Subsequently to PCA, the internal consistency of each scale was tested, using Cronbach's Alpha criterion (α). As shown in Table A7, each of the four thematic sections of the questionnaire presented high internal consistency with most α values well above .80.

Table A7: Number of items and Cronbach's Alpha by student survey section

(N = 203)

	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
My school	6	0.87
My teacher	6	0.81
My classroom	39	0.96
About you in this class	16	0.94
Total	**67**	**0.98**

Furthermore, the associations between the different sections of the survey were explored and moderate-to-strong statistically significant correlations were found for most of the pairs of sections (ranging from rs = .33 to .87).

Table A8: Correlations among thematic sections of the student survey

(Spearman's rho, N = 203)

	School	Teacher	Classroom	About you in this class
My school	1			
My teacher	.33**	1		
My classroom	.46**	.66**	1	
About you in this class	.39**	.57**	.87**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A3.3 Integration of qualitative and quantitative data

Integration took place at various stages of analysis. Initial organisational themes for the qualitative coding were compared to quantitative items from the observation schedules; qualitative analysis also involved various amounts of 'quantising' (for the observation data, this mainly involved an ordering of codes and themes according to per cent coverage of sources, and for student survey open responses, frequencies were also calculated).

Quantitative data were also 'qualitised', through the process of finding and describing a discrete set of dimensions or components which could then be compared to the qualitative themes.

For the classroom observations, qualitative and quantitative findings were compared to see how the results aligned as a form of triangulation, and also to explore how the qualitative findings helped to explain (in a non-statistical sense) or elaborate upon some aspects of the quantitative findings.

A3.4 ISTOF and QoT analysis

Each lesson was coded separately and, when a teacher was observed in more than one lesson, the mean score between the two lessons was calculated to obtain the final ratings in each component for that teacher.

A3.4.1 Inter-rater reliability

Inter-rater reliability between the researchers was assessed for 15 lessons rated simultaneously by both of them. Given that the ISTOF and the QoT instruments consist of ordinal scales, the most appropriate indicator to assess inter-rater reliability is Weighted Kappa (Cohen, 1960; Bakeman & Gottman, 1997). The inter-rater reliability achieved in this study is statistically significant and generally sound considering the number of lessons rated, raters and response categories in the instruments (Gwet, 2012), although higher agreement was achieved in the ISTOF protocol (mean Weighted Kappa Quadratic = .65) than in the higher inference QoT instrument (mean Weighted Kappa Quadratic = .43). This might be due to the more inferential perspective of the QoT protocol, which includes judgements of quality.

A3.4.2 Internal consistency and correlation within and between instruments

The small sample size of teachers in the present study prevented us from carrying out factor analysis to identify or confirm underlying dimensions of teacher behaviour measured by these instruments. Instead, we guided our analyses using the theoretical distinctions proposed by the authors of the two protocols and examined how teachers are rated on the basis of these dimensions, which have been internationally validated (e.g. van de Grift, 2013; Teddlie et al., 2006).

The reliability of the two observation instruments was assessed. The reliability of the total ISTOF scale in this sample was .85 (Cronbach's Alpha (α)), indicating high internal consistency; however, reliability varied among individual components covered with the components *Promoting active learning and developing metacognitive skills* and *Differentiation and inclusion* showing the highest internal consistency (α = .78 and .76, respectively). In turn, the overall reliability statistic for the QoT protocol was considerably lower (α =.69) although some components, such as *Adaptation of teaching* and *Stimulating learning climate*, were highly internally consistent (α =.75 and .66, respectively). All in all, these are satisfactory reliable test results.

The average association found between ISTOF components, calculated using Spearman correlation (rs), was moderate (rs = 0.33) indicating that the instrument distinguished different features of practice. The highest correlation was found between the components *Instructional skills* and *Classroom climate* (rs = .70, p< .01) and between the components *Clarity of instruction* and *Assessment and evaluation* (rs = .65, p< .01). Non-statistically significant correlation coefficients were found for 16 (76 per cent) out of the 28 possible pairs of components. This suggests that although many of the dimensions are related to each other, they are also capturing independent aspects of 'teacher effectiveness' and that teacher effectiveness cannot be seen as a single construct but is multi-dimensional.

The associations between the various QoT components were not as strong as those found for the ISTOF protocol. On average, the correlations between the components assessed by the QoT was low (rs =.17). The strongest associations were found between the dimensions *Adaptation of teaching* and *Stimulating learning climate* (rs = .62, p< .01) and between *Teaching learning strategies* and *Effective classroom organisation* (rs = .58, p< .05). All of the other 34 pairs of components (94 per cent, of a total of 36) showed non-significant correlation coefficients. The field researchers' overall judgement of the quality of teaching made at the end of the QoT observation was only significantly correlated with one dimension, *Safe and orderly school climate*. Thus, this dimension appeared to contribute most to the field researchers' overall judgement with a moderate positive correlation (rs = .52, p< .05) suggesting this is an important feature relevant to both effective and inspiring teaching.

Ratings across instruments were also compared in order to explore whether those teachers rated highly in ISTOF were also rated highly in QoT. The correlation between the total mean scores of both instruments was found to be strong, positive and statistically significant (rs = .73, p< .01). Of the sixty-three possible correlations between components of the two scales, there were only twelve significant correlations, although all of them suggested moderate to strong associations. The strongest significant associations were found between the QoT *Effective classroom organisation* and the ISTOF *Assessment and evaluation* (rs = .85, p< .01). Other substantive associations were found, for example, between the QoT *Adaptation of teaching* and the ISTOF *Differentiation and inclusion* (rs = .78, p< .01), between the QoT *Teaching learning strategies* and the ISTOF *Promoting active learning and developing metacognitive skills* (rs = .77, p< .01) and among the QoT *Stimulating learning climate* and the ISTOF *Classroom climate* (rs = .53, p< .01).

These results suggest that there is a fair degree of overlap between some of the measures of the ISTOF and QoT instruments. For example, both seek to measure features of classroom climate, differentiation practices and instructional qualities. When presenting the two instruments in previous sections of this report, similarities in terms of content were highlighted. The positive correlations found between features of the small sample of inspiring teachers' observed practices measured by the two instruments confirm these similarities.

Appendix B. Comparison with other studies using the ISTOF and QoT observation instruments

B1. ISTOF mean scores by item and project

(1 = Lowest score, 5 = Highest score)*

Component / Item	Inspiring teachers project mean	Teach First mean	European studies mean	ECP project mean
Assessment and evaluation				
The teacher makes explicitly clear why an answer is correct or not	4.6	4.3	4.2	4.1
The teacher provides appropriate feedback to the answers given by the students	4.8	4.4	4.2	4.5
Assignments given by the teacher are clearly related to what students learned	4.9	3.5	3.3	4.8
The teacher explains how assignments are aligned to the learning goals of the lesson	4.4	3.2	2.9	4.5

Component / Item	Inspiring teachers project mean	Teach First mean	European studies mean	ECP project mean
Differentiation and inclusion				
Students communicate frequently with one another on task-oriented issues	4.7	3.8	3.7	4.2
All students are actively engaged in learning	4.7	4.2	4.0	4.4
The teacher makes a distinction in the scope of the assignments for different groups of students	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.1
The teacher gives additional opportunities for practice to students who need them	2.3	3.4	3.5	3.8

* Items where sample of the *Inspiring teachers* project shows a lower mean than the comparison group are shown in a tint of orange.

Component / Item	Inspiring teachers project mean	Teach First mean	European studies mean	ECP project mean
Clarity of instruction				
The teacher regularly checks for understanding	4.9	4.4	4.5	4.6
The teacher communicates in a clear and understandable manner	5.0	4.6	4.3	4.9
The teacher clarifies the lesson objectives at the start of the lesson	4.6	4.0	3.4	4.6
The teacher asks students to identify the reasons why specific activities take place in the lesson	2.0	3.4	2.9	2.8
The teacher presents the lesson with a logical flow that moves from simple to more complex concepts	4.2	4.7	4.5	4.6
The teacher implements the lesson smoothly moving from one stage to another with well-managed transition points	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.6

Component / Item	Inspiring teachers project mean	Teach First mean	European studies mean	ECP project mean
Instructional skills				
The teacher provides sufficient wait time and response strategies to involve all types of learners	4.5	3.7	4.0	4.2
The teacher gives assignments that stimulate all students to active involvement	5.0	4.1	4.0	4.3
The teacher poses questions which encourage thinking and elicit feedback	4.8	3.5	3.6	4.6
The length of the pause following questions varies according to the difficulty level of questions	3.6	3.9	3.6	3.8
The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies during the class period	4.4	4.0	3.7	4.3
The teacher uses different, appropriate instructional strategies for different groups of students	3.0	3.2	3.3	2.7

Component / Item	Inspiring teachers project mean	Teach First mean	European studies mean	ECP project mean
Promoting active learning and developing metacognitive skills				
The teacher invites students to use strategies which can help them solve different types of problems	3.8	3.6	3.5	4.3
The teacher invites students to explain the different steps of the problem solving strategy which they are using	3.7	3.3	3.5	4.1
The teacher explicitly provides instruction in problem-solving strategies	4.0	3.1	3.0	4.5
The teacher encourages students to ask one another questions and to explain their understanding of topics to one other	4.3	3.4	3.7	3.7
The teacher gives students the opportunity to correct their own work	4.8	3.4	3.3	3.3
The teacher motivates the students to think about the advantages and disadvantages of certain approaches	3.3	4.2	3.8	3.5
The teacher asks the students to reflect on the solutions/answers they gave to problems or questions	4.4	3.6	3.5	3.9
The teacher invites the students to give their personal opinion on certain issues	2.7	3.2	3.5	4.2
The teacher systematically uses material and examples from the students' daily life to illustrate the course content	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.9
Students are invited to give their own examples	3.9	3.8	3.4	4.1

Component / Item	Inspiring teachers project mean	Teach First mean	European studies mean	ECP project mean
Classroom climate				
The teacher demonstrates genuine warmth and empathy towards all students in the classroom	4.9	4.4	4.5	4.7
The teacher shows respect for the students in both in his/her behaviour and use of language	5.0	4.6	4.7	4.8
The teacher creates purposeful activities that engage every student in productive work	4.9	4.7	4.6	4.4
The teacher's instruction is interactive (lots of questions and answers)	4.8	4.3	4.7	4.7
The teacher gives turns to and/or involves those students who do not voluntarily participate in classroom activities	4.3	4.5	4.4	4.5
The teacher seeks to engage all students in classroom activities	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.5
The teacher praises children for effort towards realising their potential	5.0	4.5	4.4	4.5
The teacher makes clear that all students know that he/she expects their best efforts in the classroom	4.9	4.6	4.4	4.1

Component / Item	Inspiring teachers project mean	Teach First mean	European studies mean	ECP project mean
Classroom management				
Teacher starts lesson on time	4.6	5.0	4.6	4.7
Teacher makes sure that students are involved in learning activities until the end of the lesson	4.6	4.7	4.3	4.6
Actions are taken to minimise disruption	4.8	4.9	4.5	4.3
There is clarity about when and how students can get help to do their work in class	4.7	4.4	4.4	4.3
There is clarity about what options are available when the students finish their assignments	2.7	3.3	3.8	3.8
The teacher corrects misbehaviour with measures that fit the seriousness of the misconduct (e.g. he/she does not overreact)	4.9	4.7	4.6	4.4
The teacher deals with misbehaviour and disruptions by referring to the established rules of the classroom	4.9	4.1	3.8	3.8

Sources: Muijs, Chapman and Armstrong (2012); Ko, Sammons, Kington, Regan, Day and Gunraj (2008).

B2. QoT mean scores by item and project

(1 = Lowest score, 4 = Highest score)*

Component / Item	Inspiring teachers project mean	ECP project mean
Safe and orderly school climate		
Ensures a relaxed atmosphere	4	3.7
Promotes mutual respect	4	3.7
Supports the self-confidence of pupils	4	3.8
Shows respect for the pupils in behaviour and language use	4	3.8
Stimulating learning climate		
Ensures cohesion	4	3.7
Stimulates the independence of pupils	3.4	3.5
Promotes cooperation between pupils	3.7	3.4
There is good individual involvement by the pupils	3.8	3.6
Clear objectives		
Clarifies the lesson objectives at the start of the lesson	3.8	3.6
Evaluates whether the objectives have been achieved at the end of the lesson	3.9	3.3
Clear instruction		
Gives clear instructions and explanations	3.9	3.8
Gives clear explanations of the learning materials and the assignments	4	3.7
Gives feedback to pupils	3.9	3.8

* Items where sample of the *Inspiring teachers* project shows a lower mean than the comparison group are shown in a tint of orange.

Component / Item	Inspiring teachers project mean	ECP project mean
Activating pupils		
Involves all pupils in the lesson	3.7	3.7
Makes use of teaching methods that activate the pupils	3.8	3.4
Adaptation of teaching		
Adapts the instruction to the relevant differences between pupils	3.2	2.9
Adapts the assignments and processing to the relevant differences between pupils	2.7	2.7
Teaching learning strategies		
Ensures that the teaching materials are orientated towards transfer	3.1	2.9
Stimulates the use of control activities	3.4	2.7
Provides interactive instruction and activities	3.8	3.7
Effective classroom organisation		
Gives a well structured lesson	3.9	3.7
Ensures the orderly progression of the lesson	3.9	3.7
Uses learning time efficiently	3.8	3.7
Ensures effective classroom management	4	3.6

Component / Item	Inspiring teachers project mean	ECP project mean
Effective classroom layout		
Ensures that classroom layout supports the pupil activities	4	3.7
The teaching environment is educational and contemporary	3.9	3.7

Final judgement		
I judge the overall quality of teaching as	4	3.7

Source: Ko, Sammons, Kington, Regan, Day and Gunraj (2008).