John Freeman
Consulting

The Role of the Local Authority in School Quality Assurance

Preparing for Inspection – Second Edition

Annex 2 - Analysis of LASI Inspection Letters – The Use of Data

The 13 LASI inspections letters published by Ofsted between 24 July 2013 and 8 August 2014 have been analysed for judgments made on the use of educational performance data by local authorities.

Each sentence mentioning data has been extracted, and assigned to one of the following categories derived from a process of reverse engineering. Each sentence has been assigned red, amber or green according to the usual meanings. In some cases a sentence could have been assigned to more than one category, in which case this is noted thus: [Duplicate].

The categories and RAG ratings are *post facto* analyses of all the LASI Inspection letters, and are *not* official Ofsted judgments.

Categories of judgments

1.   Collection and analysis of data

2.   Quality of data

3.   Timeliness of intervention based upon data

4.   Use of data for school improvement

5.   Use of data by LA to provide appropriate support and challenge to schools

6.   Sharing of data between the LA and schools

7.   Comparison of data against regional and national averages

8.   Governors

9.   Specific issues revealed by data

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22 November 2014

1. Collection and analysis of data

"The local authority collects and analyses ample data about the attainment and progress of pupils at individual schools. Many academies utilise the local authority's data package because of the level and quality of detail provided." (Bournemouth)

"The authority's data team offers a sophisticated range of analysis tools to schools to enable them to track the progress of every pupil at the end of each term and each key stage. All primary mainstream and special schools use this package or buy into it if they are academies. Primary schools have also agreed a protocol for sharing data with each other and are working towards doing so on a termly basis." (Middlesbrough) [Duplicate]

"The local authority has a robust system for the collection and analysis of school data. All schools, including academies, use this service to support their own improvement strategies." (Norfolk II) [Duplicate]

"Pupil level data is required every six weeks by the local authority from each school identified as underachieving. This regular data collection and analysis is used to make accurate decisions about the risk assessments for schools." (Norfolk II)

"…systems for collecting and analysing schools' performance data are not fit for purpose." (Doncaster)

"To improve achievement and ensure that all pupils in Doncaster attend a good or better school, the local authority should … improve its systems for the collection and analysis of school performance data, including in-year data, to ensure a more focused analysis as part of the risk assessment, support and challenge for schools" (Doncaster)

"The plans for school improvement include clear targets for the next three years. There are well-defined milestones for checking progress towards those goals on an annual basis. However, there is no system for collecting and analysing data on the performance of pupils, or groups of pupils, at key points during the year." (Isle of Wight II) [Duplicate]

"To improve achievement, and ensure that all pupils on The Isle of Wight attend a good or better school, the local authority should work with school leaders to … refine the processes for gathering and analysing data, so that the local authority has an up-to date and accurate view of pupils' achievement at key points during the year and can identify any gaps in performance between groups of pupils" (Isle of Wight II)

"The plans for school improvement are clear, ambitious and firmly based on a detailed analysis of local circumstances and national priorities. They include clear targets for improvement over the next three years. There are well-defined milestones for checking progress towards those goals on an annual basis. However, the

2.   Quality of data

"By ensuring a greater reliability of pupil performance data and gaining the agreement of schools and academies to share this, the authority is able to focus its attention on the schools most in need of support." (Isle of Wight II) [Duplicate]

"Officers make good use of accurate, rigorously moderated annual performance data to categorise schools and to direct support where it is needed most. This process is greatly assisted by their success in securing the agreement of all schools, including academies, to the sharing of pupil performance data. This is done in a timely way, so that schools can compare their own performance with that found in similar areas and across the country." (Isle of Wight II) [Duplicate]

"Wakefield and its partners have some clear areas of strength. These include … the good quality of outcome data which schools receive" (Wakefield)

"The local authority provides schools with comprehensive sets of data that enable early comparison with other schools in the area. However, the local authority does not collect data that provide an accurate indication of future results. This affects officers' ability to make timely decisions on the allocation of resources in response to emerging need. While the data packs provide a detailed view of how well different groups of pupils are doing, higher-attaining pupils are not tracked closely enough." (Blackpool) [Duplicate]

"The performance data available to monitor and challenge schools is not fit for purpose. In the past, there have been some difficulties in collecting performance data from academy schools. This has not helped the local authority to establish an accurate picture of how well provision is meeting the needs of the borough's children and young people. It has also led to difficulties in responding quickly when standards in academy schools have declined." (Doncaster)[Duplicate]

"Support for schools from StEPs is hampered by the lack of up-to-date, consistent and reliable data." (Doncaster)

"A lack of rigour in monitoring and challenge, mostly due to poor use of performance data, means that the local authority neither knows the schools well nor intervenes early enough." (Isle of Wight I) [Duplicate]

"The local authority does not know the Isle of Wight schools well, particularly at secondary school level. A lack of high quality detailed data about school performance results in inability to challenge schools or commission support effectively. The local authority does not have an accurate view of the likely trajectory of school performance." (Isle of Wight I)

"Beyond summary discussion with the schools, based on limited data, there is little knowledge or analysis of variation in school performance across the island. Where it does exist it is too broad in nature and is not focused enough on specific cohorts of pupils. Although this is partly a consequence of the poor quality of data, it is also because of the inconsistent nature of school level conversations." (Isle of Wight I)

"The local authority does not hold comprehensive information about the progress children and young people are making on a termly basis or the targets they are expected to achieve. Its use of retrospective data delays the necessary intervention and help." (Walsall) [Duplicate]

3. Timeliness of intervention based upon data

"Officers make good use of accurate, rigorously moderated annual performance data to categorise schools and to direct support where it is needed most. This process is greatly assisted by their success in securing the agreement of all schools, including academies, to the sharing of pupil performance data. This is done in a timely way, so that schools can compare their own performance with that found in similar areas and across the country." (Isle of Wight II) [Duplicate]

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"A lack of rigour in monitoring and challenge, mostly due to poor use of performance data, means that the local authority neither knows the schools well nor intervenes early enough." (Isle of Wight I) [Duplicate]

"Officers have not consistently used the wide-ranging information available about schools well enough. This lack of a targeted and forensic use of the data means that trends of decline have not been identified consistently. Intervention has generally been too slow to improve standards." (Suffolk) [Duplicate]

"The local authority does not hold comprehensive information about the progress children and young people are making on a termly basis or the targets they are

expected to achieve. Its use of retrospective data delays the necessary intervention and help." (Walsall) [Duplicate]

4. Use of data for school improvement

"Primary schools have access to an extensive programme of continuing professional development. This is based on the areas for improvement identified through data analysis, Ofsted letters and reports and feedback from Leadership and Learning Partners." (Isle of Wight II)

"The local authority has a robust system for the collection and analysis of school data. All schools, including academies, use this service to support their own improvement strategies." (Norfolk II) [Duplicate]

"The local authority agreed a data-sharing protocol with schools in 2004/5 and the information available is detailed and wide ranging. Annual risk assessments of all schools take place and these are monitored. However, this information has not been used incisively to improve achievement and increase the proportion of good or better schools." (Wakefield) [Duplicate]

"The authority's use of data to plan improvement is weak." (Blackpool)

"The local authority should take swift and decisive action to ensure that pupils and students have equal access to a school that is good or better. In particular, it should … translate its ambition for schools into a rigorous action plan, supported by robust data and evidence, which has challenging targets and interim objectives for improvement in leadership, teaching, behaviour and achievement" (Blackpool)

"The plans for school improvement include clear targets for the next three years. There are well-defined milestones for checking progress towards those goals on an annual basis. However, there is no system for collecting and analysing data on the performance of pupils, or groups of pupils, at key points during the year." (Isle of Wight II) [Duplicate]

"The plans for school improvement are clear, ambitious and firmly based on a detailed analysis of local circumstances and national priorities. They include clear targets for improvement over the next three years. There are well-defined milestones for checking progress towards those goals on an annual basis. However, the authority has not yet established systems for collecting and analysing data on pupils' achievement across all schools at key points during the year." (Isle of Wight II) [Duplicate]

"The leadership from elected members is weak. … They do not have sufficient understanding of data and other information to identify the most serious weaknesses and to determine the key priorities for improvement." (Middlesbrough)

5. Use of data by LA to provide appropriate support and challenge to schools

"By ensuring a greater reliability of pupil performance data and gaining the agreement of schools and academies to share this, the authority is able to focus its attention on the schools most in need of support." (Isle of Wight II) [Duplicate]

"Through the scrutiny panels and the regular examination of Ofsted reports and school performance data, elected members are able to gain a clear picture of the performance of schools and they are beginning to offer appropriate challenge to officers and school leaders." (Isle of Wight II)

"Officers make good use of accurate, rigorously moderated annual performance data to categorise schools and to direct support where it is needed most. This process is greatly assisted by their success in securing the agreement of all schools, including academies, to the sharing of pupil performance data. This is done in a timely way, so that schools can compare their own performance with that found in similar areas and across the country." (Isle of Wight II) [Duplicate]

"The local authority's improvement strategy is based on the forensic use of accurate outcomes data to provide intensive support and challenge for schools." (Norfolk II)

"Headteachers and governors believe that there is now a more effective system for supporting schools across the local authority, especially through much more robust data analysis which has led to greater challenge." (Norfolk II)

"Improvement advisers know schools well. A wide range of data and other local intelligence are used to identify strengths as well as underachievement and to eliminate potential barriers to raising standards. Most academies purchase local authority services, including data management and adviser support, because they trust the quality of what is offered." (Peterborough)

"The local authority uses individual school performance data, including information about finance, human resources and governance, to form a view of the level of challenge required for schools. Despite this, the local authority view of the performance of schools is generous." (Norfolk I)

"The local authority's use of data to inform its work is weak." (Blackpool)

"Key priorities for the local authority and its schools are well known. However, there is a lack of detailed understanding of why performance at Key Stage 2 is weaker than

in other key stages. …Schools must examine their data forensically to understand what is happening at this stage." (Bournemouth)

"To improve achievement, and ensure that all pupils on the Isle of Wight attend a good or better school, the local authority should … make effective use of performance data when evaluating school performance so that rigorous challenge and coherent support can be given to all school leaders and governors, and in secondary schools in particular" (Isle of Wight I)

"The local authority should take swift action to … ensure that school improvement services make rigorous use of data and information, so that they have a clearer understanding of the specific challenges faced by individual schools and can target resources and personnel more effectively" (Middlesbrough)

"Officers have not consistently used the wide-ranging information available about schools well enough. This lack of a targeted and forensic use of the data means that trends of decline have not been identified consistently. Intervention has generally been too slow to improve standards." (Suffolk) [Duplicate]

"The local authority does not forensically analyse attendance and exclusion data to identify trends that need to be addressed. For instance, a rising trend in fixed-term exclusions for primary-aged pupils has not been identified or addressed." (Walsall)

6. Sharing of data between the LA and schools

"The local authority works in partnership with the teaching school to share school data and advise upon deployment." (Blackpool)

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"The authority's data team offers a sophisticated range of analysis tools to schools to enable them to track the progress of every pupil at the end of each term and each key stage. All primary mainstream and special schools use this package or buy into it if they are academies. Primary schools have also agreed a protocol for sharing data with each other and are working towards doing so on a termly basis." (Middlesbrough) [Duplicate]

"The local authority agreed a data-sharing protocol with schools in 2004/5 and the information available is detailed and wide ranging. Annual risk assessments of all schools take place and these are monitored. However, this information has not been used incisively to improve achievement and increase the proportion of good or better schools." (Wakefield) [Duplicate]

"The lack of clear systems and protocols for sharing data between the authority and schools, particularly secondary schools, means that declining performance is not identified early enough for intervention to be timely and effective." (Middlesbrough) [Duplicate]

"Secondary schools have their own data management systems but only some share the end-of-key-stage data with the local authority." (Middlesbrough)

"The local authority fails to engage with all schools. For instance, a significant minority of schools do not share their most recent achievement data with the local authority. This severely undermines the local authority's ability to bring about improvements." (Walsall) [Duplicate]

7. Comparison of data against regional and national averages

"The local authority's Challenge and Review meetings offer only superficial challenge to school leaders and governors. Discussions are not informed by detailed achievement and attendance data that are benchmarked against national averages." (Isle of Wight I)

"The lack of clear systems and protocols for sharing data between the authority and schools, particularly secondary schools, means that declining performance is not identified early enough for intervention to be timely and effective." (Middlesbrough) [Duplicate]

"…what is missing is a focused evaluation of the impact of this extra funding and a clear comparison with regional and national data." (Wakefield)

8. Governors

"There is an expectation that all governing bodies take part in annual self- evaluation, which includes an analysis of the school's performance data, finance and quality of teaching. This is supported by the local authority's training programme, which now includes evaluation of performance data. This is making some difference to the quality and impact of governance but attendance at some key training events is low." (Norfolk I)

9. Specific issues revealed by data

"School data for this year identify a six percentage point increase in the proportion of pupils expected to gain five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics." (Norfolk II)

"Local authority data show that a significant proportion of 17- and 18-year-old students, particularly those with additional needs and those from minority ethnic

backgrounds, drop out of their chosen courses before accreditation. This data is supported by officers' local knowledge." (Peterborough)

"Performance data related to pupil outcomes at Key Stages 2 and 4 do not indicate that interventions or resources have been used effectively to improve standards or pupils' achievement compared with national averages." (Middlesbrough)