

UCL Centre for
**Educational
Leadership**



Evaluation and accountability for school improvement: global and national approaches

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At a glance

1. Global scene: accountability regimes in place in high quality education systems
2. Local scene: impact of England's school inspection
3. Conclusion and recommendations



- School improvement systems can be divided into those emphasising **external evaluations, school self-evaluations or both** (Greatbach and Tate, 2019)
- **Not all top performing countries have external evaluation or inspections** (Japan and Singapore have strong school self-evaluation systems)



Six key questions about inspection (Perryman et al. 2023)

Country	Estonia	Ireland	Sweden	Netherlands	England
1. When an inspection is done?					
<i>Cyclical</i>			*	*	*
<i>Differentiated/risk-based</i>	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Thematic</i>		*	*	*	*
<i>To gain an educational licence</i>	*				
<i>On a complaint</i>	*		*	*	*
2. Who inspects schools?					
<i>Experienced teachers</i>	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Qualified non-teachers</i>			*	*	*
3. What is inspected?					
<i>Meeting legal requirements</i>	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Provision of learning, support and guidance</i>		*	*	*	*
<i>Learning outcomes</i>			*	*	*
<i>Leadership/management</i>		*	*	*	*
<i>Threshold for failure</i>	*			*	*

Six key questions about inspection (Perryman et al. 2023)



Country	Estonia	Ireland	Sweden	Netherlands	England
4. What evidence is gathered?					
<i>Review of school documentation</i>	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Review of school data</i>	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Interviews</i>	*	*	*		*
<i>Lesson observations</i>		*	*		*
5. Reporting					
<i>School is given an overall grade</i>				*	*
<i>School is graded on individual standards</i>		*	*		*
<i>Strengths and limitations of school are identified</i>		*	*	*	*
<i>Public school specific reports</i>	*	*		*	*
<i>General thematic reports</i>		*	*	*	*
6. Role of inspectorate post-inspection					
<i>Advising on sanctions</i>	*				*
<i>Imposing sanctions</i>	*		*	*	*
<i>Providing support</i>	*				
<i>Checking on progress</i>		*			*

National perspective: England's inspection system

Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) is the largest inspectorate of schools in Europe.

Ofsted was established in 1992 and have systematically conducted inspections of providers of education, training and care.

While the inspectorate is considered exemplary in many parts of the world -inspiring accountability regimes from the Middle East to Latin-America-, at home it has come under increased scrutiny, given its unintended consequences.

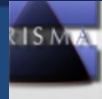
Inclusion criteria

(1) academic peer-reviewed articles indexed in ERIC, British Education Index, Scopus and Psycinfo; (2) published during the last three decades (1992-2022); (3) empirical studies; (4) primary data obtained from qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods; (5) comparative studies including England.

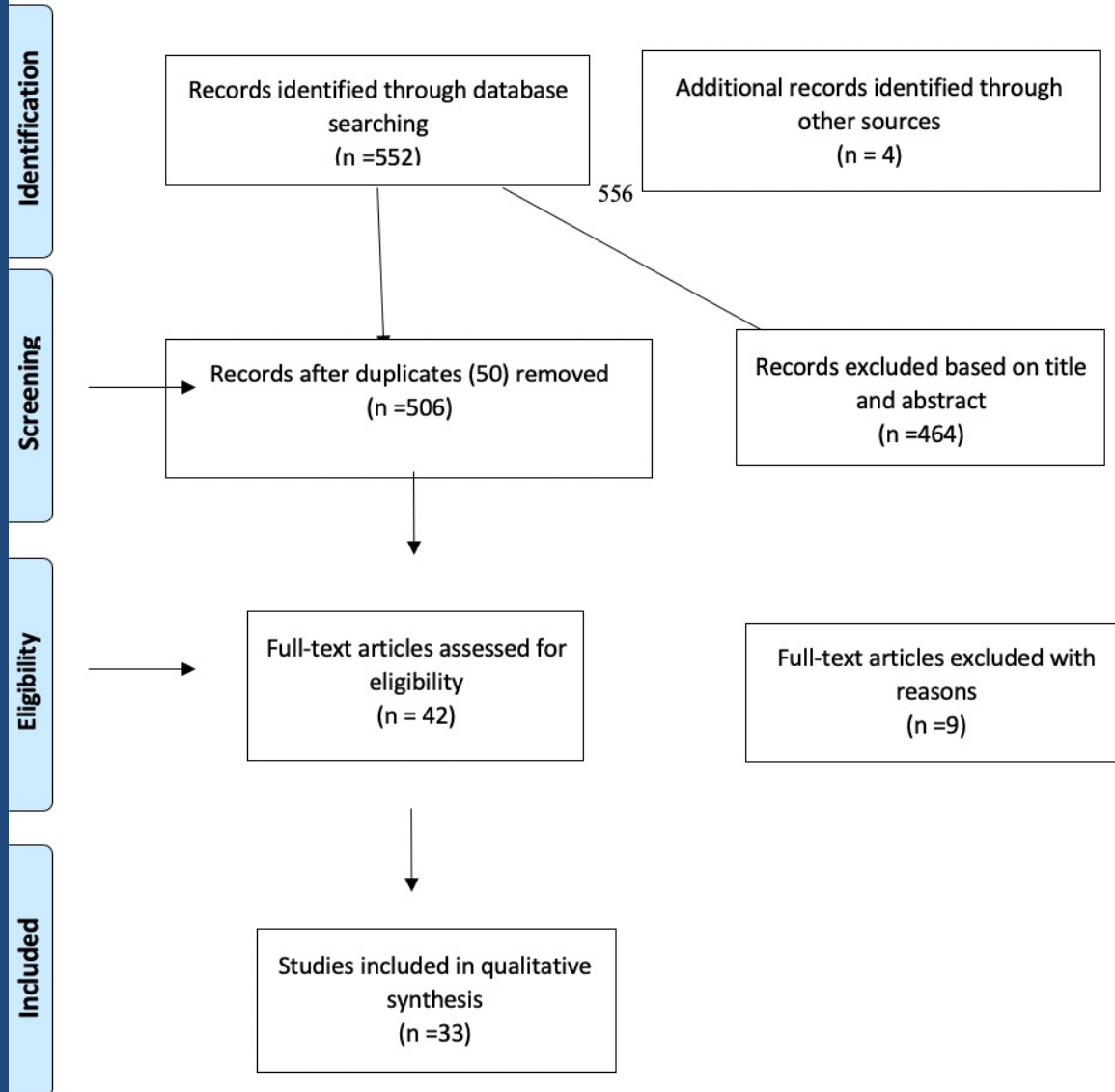
Exclusion criteria

(1) Papers published in other language different from English; (2) those that use Ofsted inspection reports as primary data; (3) policy documents published or commissioned by Ofsted; (4) policy reconstructions; (5) theoretical papers; (6) news articles; (7) research reports or working papers not peer-reviewed or not published in academic journals; (8) academic papers focusing on the impact of Ofsted inspection in other sectors (i.e Health, Secure training centres, Social Care), (9) previous reviews of the literature and, (10) academic papers focusing on the impact of Ofsted inspection in other stages of education (i.e early years, Further Education or Higher Education).





PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram



Impact of Ofsted inspections on student academic outcomes

N	Authors	Year	Country	Methodology	Design	Sample	Education phase	impact of Inspection	Main findings
1	Shaw et al.	2003	England	Quantitative	multi-level	3,000 schools	secondary	unintended consequences	Negative effect of inspection on pupils GCSEs scores in the years after inspection for the majority of schools (local education authority maintained comprehensive
2	Rosenthal	2004	England	Quantitative	regression	2,300 schools	secondary	unintended consequences	Negative effect of inspection on pupils GCSEs scores in the years after inspection
3	Matthews and Sammons	2005	England	Quantitative	regression	289 schools	secondary	positive impacts	Positive effect of inspection on pupils GCSEs scores after two years of being placed under special measures
4	Hussein	2015	England	Quantitative	OLS and Difference-in-Differences	394 schools	primary	positive impacts	Positive effect of inspection on government's mathematics performance threshold Level 4 on the age 11 Key Stage 2 test scores, in the year of and after inspection

Academic student outcomes

From the 4 studies reporting this, half (2) presented **positive outcomes** particularly in low-performing schools and for low-performing students, and half (2) found **unintended consequences**.

Teaching practices and behaviours

From the 19 studies reporting this, **most** (14) reported **unintended consequences** and a **minority** (5) reported a **mixed picture** of positive outcomes and unintended consequences.

School culture

From the 10 studies reporting this, the great **majority** (9) described **unintended consequences**, particularly in **student and staff wellbeing** and only **one study** reported **positive outcomes**.



Conclusions and recommendations:

- High degree of variation across inspection regimes, ranging from those conducted with limited consequences (soft accountability), to those that are intrusive and high stakes (England)
- There is no clear association between the type of school inspection system and school performance as measured by student achievement in (inter)national tests, so caution should be taken before recommending any inspection system
- it is necessary to explore how inspection systems are implemented at the system and school levels to ensure that each system uses the evidence gathered to drive improvement
- Ofsted appears to have mixed impact on school improvement
- The higher the stakes of school inspections, the more potential impact but also unintended consequences

References

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