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## Pocket Watch – Ofsted Annual Report 2013-14

### Introduction

Anyone looking for a simple summary of this year's **Annual Report** from Ofsted published this week, can pretty much find it in the Chief Inspector's opening remarks. *"Primarys continue to improve...improvement in secondary schools has stalled...the FE sector has made modest gains."* There's a lot more of course in a Report which draws on inspection evidence from over the last year along with extensive sector and regional data but it's these three headline messages that set the context and tone of a Report that was more downbeat this year than last. Here's some of the detail behind each of those three headlines.

### Performing Primarys

The bald facts are these: leadership and management good or outstanding in 84% of schools inspected, and teaching, good or outstanding in 82%, (a notable increase over the last two years.) On top of that, if further proof were needed, more pupils are now reaching the expected L4 standard let alone the more challenging L4b standard according to KS2 test figures published by the government the day after. So what's the recipe? The Report lists six factors including: the quality of governance and leadership; teaching focused on the essentials; and a continuing emphasis on stretch and challenge, all of which, according to the Chief Inspector largely boils down to a sustained focus on the basics: *"good primary head teachers, according to our inspectors, are concentrating on fostering the things that matter most: excellent teaching; significant pupil progress and a culture that refuses to tolerate bad behaviour."*

### Stalling Secondarys

It's the failure to concentrate on such basics that seems to lie behind reported weaknesses in some secondarys. Ofsted cite these as: weak governance and oversight; poor leadership at senior and middle-management levels; too much low level classroom disruption, highlighted as a particular concern this year; and a failure to secure progressive transfer at KS3, so much so that the Chief Inspector has commissioned a special investigation, to report back next year, on where things go wrong at this stage. Pitch in continuing concerns about the attainment gap, particularly for *"white British pupils on free school meals,"* about patterns of teacher recruitment and about a lack of clarity about who to turn to for help, and a dispiriting picture emerges. This isn't the picture for all and not everyone recognises it: *"Ofsted has failed to recognise that overall attainment by 16 year olds is effectively capped by the current GCSE awarding process,"* according to ASCL Gen Sec Brian Lightman but with *"some 170,000 pupils now in secondary schools rated inadequate,"* up 70,000 on a couple of years ago, it's obviously a worry.

### Functioning FE

For FE, as indicated, it's an in between picture: improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and more good or outstanding providers but concerns remaining particularly in four areas. These include: *"the lamentable quality of careers guidance"* (although the government has since announced steps to help ; ) continuing concerns about teaching, learning and standards in English and maths; a lack of a clear line of sight or of an employer in some vocational provision (*"too many colleges still put on classroom-based vocational courses that do not incorporate work experience;"*) and a lack of alignment with labour market needs.



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