

## Review of the extent to which Ofsted reports mention science

Science is a core subject alongside English and mathematics in primary and secondary schools in England - it must be studied by all until the age of 16. Evidence suggests that science has been losing status in many primary schools in recent years<sup>1</sup>. Given the influence that Ofsted has upon the behaviour of schools, and its responsibility to verify good teaching of a broad and balanced curriculum, we were interested to explore the extent to which school inspection reports comment on science.

### Primary schools

The Wellcome Trust carried out a preliminary review of Ofsted's full school inspection reports from 770 primary schools to see how many mentioned science<sup>2</sup>. **93% of reports did not mention science at all.**

This prompted a more thorough examination of recent reports, using a sample of 100 schools from 2014. **73% of these primary school inspection reports did not mention science, but 100% mentioned mathematics.** A 'mention' refers to science or mathematics being written about in any context in the report<sup>3</sup>. Table 1 shows the data from the schools sampled in 2014 broken down by Ofsted rating.

	<b>Schools that did mention science (n=27)</b>	<b>Schools that did not mention science (n=73)</b>	<b>All schools sampled (n=100)</b>
<b>Outstanding</b>	11%	9%	10%
<b>Good</b>	85%	70%	74%
<b>Requires improvement</b>	4%	25%	16%
<b>Inadequate</b>	0	0	0

We were also interested in the extent to which science was mentioned in inspection reports from other parts of the UK, noting that the inspection systems vary across them. In Northern Ireland, 10% (11 out of 115 reports) of primary school reports mentioned science, in Scotland 20% (8 out of 40) and in Wales 100% (50 out of 50) of primary school reports mentioned science (Welsh inspection guidance specifically states that inspectors should look at results and trends in science).

### Secondary schools

A review of 100 Ofsted reports of secondary schools in England was then carried out for comparison. Inspections of secondary schools are more likely to report on science than primary schools, but still fall well short of full coverage. **33% of secondary schools' full school inspection reports did not mention science, whereas 100% mentioned maths<sup>4</sup>.**

<sup>1</sup> [Maintaining Curiosity](#): A survey into science education in schools. Manchester: Ofsted; 2013; Wellcome Trust. [Primary Science Survey Report](#). London: Wellcome Trust; 2011; [Primary science: Is it missing out?](#) London: Wellcome Trust, 2014; [Tomorrows World](#): Inspiring Primary Scientists, CBI and Brunel University London, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Reports were published across a number of years, sampled by the order they were reported on the Ofsted website in August 2015. Schools that have recently become academies and not had an Ofsted inspection since then will not have been sampled.

<sup>3</sup> A search was carried out for any term containing "scien" – all of which were verified to be referencing science.

<sup>4</sup> Of the schools that did not mention science, 16% were outstanding, 33% were good, 14% were requires improvement and 2% were inadequate.