Analysis

What do results from attitude surveys tell us about likely ratings from Ofsted?

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1. Introduction

Since early 2010 the NFER has been working with both primary and secondary schools to allow them to survey their own pupils and parents. With over 500 primary schools having taken part it is now of interest to explore the relationship between the results of these surveys and the ratings given to these schools by Ofsted in their most recent inspections.

Our analysis indicates that:

- Results from pupil and parent surveys within primary schools are both strongly associated with the ratings given to schools by Ofsted. This provides strong support for the validity of attitude surveys as an additional tool for measuring school quality.
- Results from parent surveys within primary schools are particularly strongly associated with Ofsted ratings; more so than results from pupil surveys.
- Results from the question asking parents whether they are “satisfied with the school’s test results” are more strongly related to Ofsted ratings than test results themselves.

Taken together these findings indicate that results from attitude surveys can provide some indication of how well a school is likely to perform in an inspection. An example of the possible link between the two is given at the end of this paper. There are obviously some caveats to predictions of this nature including the gap between when a survey is administered and when an inspection takes place, changes to the criteria used by Ofsted over time and the proportion of pupils and parents within a school who take part in surveys. We would however hope that such predictions may be useful to schools in helping them to benchmark their results.

2. Details of analysis

The data from pupil and parent surveys within this analysis comes from surveys conducted between January 2010 and July 2011. For each school that took part in a survey we identified their most recent published Ofsted rating. This was based on published Ofsted data covering inspections between September 2006 and April 2011. Matching data for parent surveys was found for 536 primary schools[1] and matching data for pupil surveys was found for 500 primary schools[2].

Some simple statistical analysis using correlations[3] has been done to find out whether there was any association between Ofsted ratings and the views of pupils and parents within a school.

The vast majority of statements from the pupil and parent questionnaire showed a significant correlation with Ofsted ratings. The top five statements from the pupil questionnaire showing the strongest correlation with Ofsted ratings were:

1. I have been picked on or bullied at school (correlation = -0.255[4])
2. I feel happy (0.250)
3. I am friendly to people (0.245)
4. It is important to recycle (0.244)
5. I eat takeaway food (-0.234)

From the above it is clear that positive behaviour from children both within and outside school alongside reported positive experiences of school are associated with improved ratings from Ofsted.
The top five statements from the parent questionnaire showing the strongest correlation with Ofsted ratings were:

1. I am satisfied with the school's test results (correlation = 0.518)
2. Overall I am satisfied with my child's school (0.401)
3. I am satisfied with the school's pupil behaviour and discipline (0.395)
4. The school is teaching my child skills he/she will need for the future (0.394)
5. The school's approaches to the following are effective - Behaviour and discipline (0.367)

We can see that results from the parent survey are even more strongly related to Ofsted ratings than those from the pupil survey[5]. In fact these results compare

[1] Results within these schools were based upon a total of 40,724 parents.
[2] Results within these schools were based upon a total of 68,596 pupils in years 3 to 6.
[3] In order to compute correlations it was necessary to convert survey responses to scores. This was done in a variety of ways, most typically by converting responses on a five point scale from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree" into scores from 1 to 5 and then taking the average of these scores within a school.
[4] The negative correlation in this case indicates that a larger percentage of pupils indicating they are bullied is associated with lower Ofsted ratings.

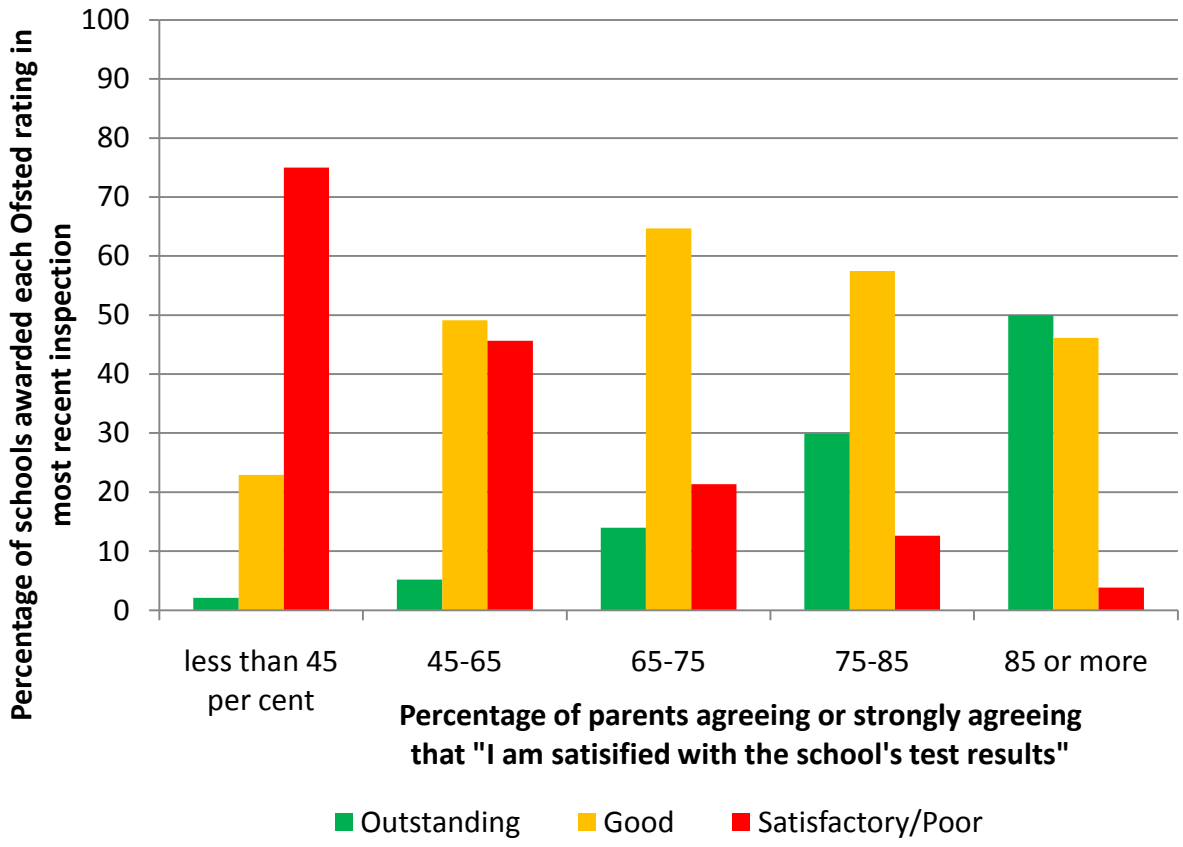
favourably with the correlations that can be found between Ofsted ratings and school test results. For example, within our sample of schools the correlations between Ofsted ratings and the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above in key stage 2 maths and English were 0.455 and 0.421 respectively[6]. In interpreting the correlation between results from the parent survey and Ofsted ratings it is worth noting that there was potentially a substantial time gap between the two. If the two were closer together in time it seems reasonable to expect that the correlations would be even higher.

[5] This may be related to the fact that Ofsted themselves conduct a survey of parents as part of inspections.
[6] These correlations are based upon published school results from summer 2009. Results from this year were used as they were close to the centre of the time period of the Ofsted inspections used for analysis.

3. Example of possible link

The above analysis shows the question most strongly associated with Ofsted ratings is the statement from the parent questionnaire "I am satisfied with the school's test results". It may be of interest to schools to see what their own results for this question suggest about their likely Ofsted rating.

A potential way of doing this is shown in the chart below. For the purposes of this chart schools have been split into four groups depending upon the percentage of parents who agree or strongly agree with the above statement. As can be seen, as the percentage of parents agreeing with this statement increases, the chance of a school having been given a rating of satisfactory or poor decreases from around 75 per cent for those schools in the lowest category[7] to less than 5 per cent for those schools in the highest category[8]. In contrast the chances of a school having been awarded an outstanding rating increase from around 2 percent for schools in the lowest category to almost 50 per cent in the highest.



[7] That is, schools where less than 45 per cent of parents agree or strongly agree with the statement "I am satisfied with the school's test results"

[8] That is, schools where at least 85 per cent of parents agree or strongly agree with the statement "I am satisfied with the school's test results"

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