

“Stuck” schools: Can below good Ofsted inspections prevent sustainable improvement?



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Methodology: Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design (SEMMD) (Creswell and Creswell, 2017)

Phase one: quantitative

Sample: 580 'stuck' schools that consistently received less than good Ofsted inspection grades between 2005 to 2018 and their comparison

Data: secondary data (Ofsted management information records for inspections, School performance, value-added progress) and pupil demographics, School workforce teacher data (School Workforce Census (SWC)), School governance and location data from Get Information About Schools, DfE academy and sponsor pipeline and School finance data on income and expenditure.

Analysis: Propensity Score Match, Cluster analysis and Path analysis

multi-site
case study in
16 schools

Phase two: qualitative

Sample: Ten 'stuck' schools (five 'stuck' primary schools and five 'stuck' secondary schools)

- Six comparison 'un-stuck' schools (three comparison 'un-stuck' primary schools and three comparison 'un-stuck' secondary schools). 'Stuck' from 2005 to 2018; good between 2019 and 2021

Analysis: Historic document analysis of 166 documents (122 Ofsted inspection reports and 44 documents and websites provided by case study schools)

56 interviews and focus groups with headteachers, teachers, and governors analysed thematically

Main findings: quantitative



- Schools that received a series of below good Ofsted grades often end up in a cycle of challenging circumstances and limited improvement.
- After the initial negative Ofsted grade, the intake became more disadvantaged and teacher turnover increased, contributing to the difficulty in reversing the negative Ofsted judgement. The longer, the harder.
- A poor Ofsted inspection judgement is a modest contributing factor of 'stuck' schools' lack of improvement or decline over time.
- Joining a multi-academy trust showed small positive effects for secondary but not primary schools in relation to lower teacher turnover and a lower chance of remaining 'stuck.'

Main findings: qualitative



- 'Stuck' schools can get 'un-stuck' given the right time and support.
- Stakeholders raised concerns about the validity, reliability fairness of inspections.
- According to Ofsted inspection reports, case study 'stuck' schools need primarily to improve their Outcomes/achievements/quality of education.
- 'Stuck' schools received too frequent Section 5 full inspections and Section 8 monitoring inspections over the period 2005-2021. This varied from three to sixteen, with up to four consecutive monitoring inspections in two years. This translated into over-surveillance, which did not give time to implement the required changes and made more difficult to improve.
- Overall, stakeholders thought that receiving a less than good grade was not the cause of their difficulties but had a ripple effect that magnified their struggles.



<https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10149556/>

FINAL REPORT

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