



**Written Submission to the Inquiry into the Education and
Training Inspectorate (ETI)**

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to make a written submission to the Committee for Education's enquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate.
2. The NASUWT is the largest UK-wide teachers' union and the largest teaching union in Northern Ireland.

COMMENTS

3. The NASUWT recognises the need for schools to be accountable and for inspection to form a key part of the school accountability system.

The Union believes that inspection should:

- i. Help schools to improve standards and the quality of teaching and learning;
- ii. Be developmental and supportive by encouraging and supporting ongoing professional and institutional development;
- iii. Encourage co-operation and collaboration. For example, inspection should encourage schools to work together to develop and share effective practice and the inspectorate should actively promote and the sharing of best practice;
- iv. Be fair and equitable. For example, inspectors should make judgements about equality and diversity issues relating to pupils and staff. Also, inclusive schools must not be penalised because they have a challenging pupil intake or seek to meet the needs of pupils with complex needs;
- v. Help schools to deliver a broad and balanced education to all pupils;

- vi. Recognise and respect teachers' professionalism and not operate in ways that undermine teachers' professional judgement.
 - vii. Avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and workload and enable teachers and principals to spend more of their time teaching and leading teaching and learning;
 - viii. Be streamlined so that duplication and conflicts are avoided;
 - ix. Involve and take account of the views of teachers, school leaders, support staff, pupils, parents and the community; and
 - x. Have the confidence of the profession and general public.
4. The NASUWT does not believe the proposed changes as set out in the DE ***'Targeted Engagement with Stakeholders on proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process'*** document will meet the criteria outlined above.
5. The union is concerned that the proposals put forward by DE in respect of formal intervention will make the inspection process much more high-stakes and punitive in nature, leading to schools focusing narrowly on what is inspected and the inspection process.
6. In addition the NASUWT believe that the proposals set out could lead to an inappropriate politicisation of the ETI compromising their independence.
7. NASUWT believes that these changes if implemented will result in the stigmatisation of schools and the undermining teacher professionalism.
8. The NASUWT believes that the proposed changes are at odds with existing educational policies such as the Performance Review and Staff Development scheme which is based upon trusting the professionalism of teachers and supporting them in their role.

Inspection and national education policy

9. Inspection is one of the main ways in which schools are held to account. Inspection operates alongside other forms of accountability. *'Every School*

A Good School sets out the policy framework for school improvement and provides the context for inspection.

10. *'Every School A Good School'* places great emphasis on self-evaluation and self improvement. But it also stresses the importance of inspection, the need for active interventions to address poor quality educational experiences, and the use of data. The NASUWT is extremely concerned that data is driving the school improvement process and that inspectors are making disproportionate use of performance data to monitor schools and form judgements about the quality of provision. As a result, inspection is becoming high-stakes, and schools are being pressurised into disproportionately prioritising improving exam results over broader educational outcomes for pupils.

Evaluation of individual teachers

11. The Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD) scheme is underpinned by a series of principles that emphasise teacher professionalism, confidentiality, sensitivity, openness and transparency, equity and fairness, and trust and confidence. The fundamental purpose of the PRSD scheme is to promote and sustain professional development and continuous improvement in schools. It requires all those involved in the process to 'accept and support an approach to performance review which is negotiated and agreed, evidence based and professionally focused, recognising teachers' commitment, strengths and good practice'.¹ The NASUWT is extremely concerned that the increasingly high-stakes nature of inspection and school accountability threatens to undermine this developmental and supportive approach to performance management.

School self-evaluation

¹ Regional Training Unit (2005), *PRSD Handbook: A resource for governors, principals, teachers and external advisers*.

12. School self-evaluation is located within an increasingly high-stakes system of inspection and school accountability. Evidence from other parts of the UK indicates that this changes the nature of self-evaluation and leads to the introduction of bureaucratic and burdensome systems in many schools. In these instances, material is collected to show others that particular tasks have been completed and prove that judgements should be believed. It is vital that schools avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and workload and ensure that school self-evaluation starts from a position of trust, and uses only the material needed to form an effective judgement.

Lesson observation

13. The NASUWT has evidence that, in some schools, the high stakes nature of inspection and school accountability is leading to principals and school leaders seeking to undertake more lesson observations. This is usually accompanied by a shift towards a more punitive approach to performance management. The NASUWT will oppose attempts to introduce such approaches in the strongest possible terms.

Equity and inclusion

14. The NASUWT believes that inspectors often pay insufficient attention to the range of inequalities within the education system. The Union believes that inspectors need to assess schools' policies and procedures and their equality impact and outcomes. This is important because it will enable inspectors to assess whether a school's approach to identifying and addressing equality matters is strategic, the extent to which equality issues are being addressed through mainstream policy and practice, and the extent to which a school has taken steps to minimise bureaucracy and workload. Further, it will enable inspectors to look at whether the school is looking at equality matters that relate to pupils, staff, parents and the wider community.

School closures and inspection

15. The NASUWT is extremely concerned that inspection is being used to justify a decision to close a school. Some of these decisions appear to be politically motivated and do not reflect the best interests of pupils. This indicates a link between inspection and the Assembly's policy of rationalising schools.

The future of inspection

16. The NASUWT asks that the Education Committee and DE to use this opportunity to consider what would be the best model of inspection for Northern Ireland. The union is aware that the Committee has examined the inspection models in place in Scotland and England. NASUWT would urge the Committee to support the adoption of an approach similar to that in Scotland where there is a clear focus on support, professional development and trust. The merging of the former *Inspectorate for Education in Scotland* and *Learning and Teaching Scotland* to form *Education Scotland* has resulted in a body that combines both support and challenge.

17. The NASUWT acknowledge that the move to a more supportive model of inspection will be a significant challenge in an already challenging educational environment but it is important that as we establish the new structures for the delivery of education in Northern Ireland that the system of inspection is fit for purpose. The NASUWT is committed to working in partnership with the Minister, the Committee and DE to ensure we have a supportive, challenging and effective inspection regime.

Chris Keates

General Secretary

For further information on the Union's response contact:

Seamus Searson

Regional Organiser
NASUWT Northern Ireland
Ben Madigan House
Edgewater Office Park
Edgewater Road
Belfast BT3 9JQ

028 9078 4480

www.teachersunion.org.uk

rc-nireland@mail.nasuwt.org.uk