

**Mr David Lutton**

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you as a teacher working in a school that has been inspected by ETI twice in the last 18 months. When I read that you were inviting responses as part of your inquiry into ETI I wasn't sure if I would be considered a 'stakeholder' or not but I think I am well placed to comment on the inspection process having experienced it twice recently.

As a teacher I have found the inspection process demoralizing to the point of considering leaving a profession I love. I am in no way against the idea of having inspections, in fact I welcome the opportunity to improve as a school and as teachers in any way we can. Unfortunately the way ETI judge schools has the opposite effect in many cases.

Our school has been described as 'inadequate', which is a label I find offensive. The reason we have been deemed inadequate is because our GCSE results are below the NI average. ETI's obsession with results and their use of averages means that a school like ours will probably always be deemed 'inadequate'.

It seems that no matter what is happening in a school the approach of ETI is that if your results are below average you are failing the children. Of course a basic understanding of maths would tell them that even if every school in the country was 'outstanding' there would still be a proportion who were below average.

We have reliable statistics that show our intake is well below average in terms of ability. ETI have refused to recognise this and insist that our results must improve. As a staff we have renamed their document 'every school a good school' as 'every school above average'. The truth is that even with the best teaching possible there are schools who have children that will perform below average. As a school we provide an excellent education for children who come to us struggling with basic literacy and numeracy. It is extremely unfair to be labelled 'inadequate' by ETI based on the fact these children get below average GCSE results.

The other major issue I have with ETI is the fact that they are not independent. There has been a feeling in our school that the timing of our particularly aggressive inspection seemed suspicious given the area planning that is ongoing. At both our recent inspections pupils have been asked which primary schools they come from and why they are travelling so far to get here. I am unsure how questions like this evaluate the quality of education we provide and they lead to suspicion as to the real reasons we have been targeted. Until ETI are independent from the department of education they are open to such suspicion.

I could write a lot more but will restrict myself to one more suggestion. Many of the inspectors haven't taught in quite a long time. It can be quite difficult for a teacher to take criticism, constructive or otherwise, from someone who left teaching twenty years ago. It would be great if being an inspector was a job that a top class teacher could do on a secondment for three or four years. It would mean that they had more credibility from teachers and would mean they were not only teaching recently but would be going back into teaching again. I have friends in the medical profession who cannot believe that teachers are inspected by people who haven't practiced in years.

I wish you all the best with the inquiry and hope that we end up with a better inspection process as a result of it. I can only speak for my own school when I say that the education of our children has not been helped by the inspection process as we try to improve statistics in whatever way we can since that is all that seems to matter to ETI.

Yours faithfully

David Lutton