

Mr Lyle Cubitt and Mr Robin Stirling

**INQUIRY INTO EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE
2013**

- 1. The submission is being made jointly by**
 - (a) Robin Stirling of Ballymena, a former Headmaster of Gracehill Primary school Ballymena, former local Councillor and a current Governor of a Primary School and**
 - (b) Lyle Cubitt of Ballymena, a Retired Solicitor, a former Governor of a Primary School in Ballymena and a current Governor of a Primary School.**

- 2. *It is axiomatic that a form of Inspection is necessary for our education system.***

- 3. The present structure of Education is divided amongst the Department of Education (hereinafter referred to as DE), regional Education and Library Boards (hereinafter referred to as ELB) and the Education Training Inspectorate (hereinafter referred to as ETI) which raises questions as to demarcation lines in respect of each organisation and exchange of information between the DE and ETI and also ETI and ELBs. It would seem good practice that protocols/directives should cover these relationships and any such should be available in every school for Principals, teachers and Governors.**

- 4. An immediate priority to be addressed by the Committee should be disclosure to all Governors and Principals of the exact relationships referred to in paragraph 3. A further and immediate priority should be the provision to all Governors of the document “A Common Framework For Inspection.” The necessity of the provision of these documents is so obvious that no comment upon same is required.**

- 5. A serious issue re the ETI is to define the role which they are undertaking. Are they merely enforcers of the DE to implement the DE policies and satisfy the local Boards preferences? Consideration should be given to the ETI being put on the same footing as OFSTED.**

- 6. With the abolition of the 11+ and the proposed abolition of the “Dickson Plan” there is no objective standard to assess the success of the Inspectorate in the primary sector and yet in the secondary sector it is not unknown for the Inspectorate to refer to the GCSE results as an indication of the success of their recommendations.**

- 7. Prior to classroom observation the Inspector has sight of questionnaires completed by parents, teachers and support staff. The least amendment should require an objective assessment of the achievements and standards be made prior to any such input being disclosed to the Inspectorate. This practice should be amended to ensure a Principals right to be informed and to reply**
- 8. Fairness requires that matters which are not within the control of a Principal should not quoted as justification of criticism of a Principal The unfairness to a Principal whose teaching is not found to be unsatisfactory or inadequate is clearly obvious if the school itself is placed in one of these categories due to other teachers who do not satisfy the basic standards and the Report should clarify this.
(Nolan Principles).**
- 9. A reconsideration of all primary schools should take place in the light of the demise of Key Stage assessments (which do not appear to have been criticised by the ETI). An OFSTED type ETI should have an ancillary function namely to comment on the standards set by the D E.**
- 10. All information whether correspondence, email or/and verbal from DE and/or ELB with the ETI should be disclosed if for no other reason than to ensure that same is accurate/fair and not negligent or at worst malevolent. All material associated with a school inspection should be kept for the minimum period stipulated in a relevant Retention and Disposal Schedule.**
- 11. The Inspector on a Follow Up Inspection should not comment on matters, as if he/she had dealt with the issues on an earlier inspection, when in fact no comments were made as this is at best misleading and unfair.**
- 12. The failure by the ETI to in any way acknowledge the PRSD assessments carried out by the Local Board requires investigation as to why not and is PRSD simply a waste of time and money**
- 13. The ETI should identify factually the areas for improvement so that all parties are aware of the exact failings rather than parrot the phrases “to build working relationships; to improve inadequate leadership” as failure to do so can have a detrimental effect on the school.**

- 14. If additional Governors are recommended the ETI should specifically meet with the Governors and identify the particular reasons why such a recommendation, and should be prepared to advise the Governors where they allegedly failed particularly so if they have criticised the ETI and thus they may be left wondering if criticism of the ETI may have been an influence in making such a determination.**

- 15. Prior to making a recommendation for new Governors the ETI should ensure that such persons are available and the BOG should be advised of the criteria for assessing the “appropriate experience and expertise” of these new Governors and how these new appointees comply with the criteria. In the interest of transparency all meetings and communications amongst the DE, ETI and Board officials with the DE appointed Governors should be recorded with proper minutes and any meetings/discussions be reported to the Board of Governors.**

- 16. There should be an independent Appeal Procedure available for Principals/Governors.**