



From: Dr Liz Fawcett,
Northern Ireland Representative,
ParentsOutLoud,
c/o 48 Ailesbury Road,
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Tel: 028 9020 0811

Lynn Hayes,
Head of Inspection Services Branch,
The Education and Training Inspectorate,
Department of Education

11th February 2014

Re: Your correspondence ref: DE1-14-42

Dear Mrs Hayes,

Thank you for your letter of 29th January, in response to our FOI queries of 6th December 2013 and 2nd January 2014. We will forward your letter and the information which you have supplied to the Assembly's Committee for Education, to whom we will also forward a copy of this letter to you. We had previously forwarded to the Committee your response of 7th January 2014 to our first FOI query of 6th December 2013, in which you replied to our request for verification of our 'Belfast schools' table by referring us to the search facility of your website – which, of course, is what we had used in the first instance to obtain our data.

We entirely refute your assertion that we presented any party with inaccurate data. The data was presented very clearly to both the Committee and to the media as the information relating to certain types of inspection only (i.e. full inspections or the closest to a full inspection) which we were able to find using the search facility on the ETI website – it was therefore in no way misrepresented, and was entirely accurate in the terms in which we presented it.

Moreover, we feel compelled to point out that your corrected versions of the 'Belfast schools' and 'Omagh schools' tables which you have provided are inaccurate and misleading – as presented by you - because they treat follow-up and other more minor inspection reports as full or focused (close

to full) inspection reports when they are not that. In particular, some of the information in columns 3,4 and 5 of your corrected versions of these tables is now inaccurate for this reason (see the wording of the headings for these columns).

Your corrected tables still leaves open the question of exactly when Methodist College actually last received a full inspection (evidently prior to 2001, as we had originally incorrectly included a 2001 report as a full inspection report when it was, in fact, a focused report looking only at pastoral care). The 2005 focused report which you have listed examined only pastoral care and ICT. We feel it would have been more helpful to us and to the Committee if the information which we were actually seeking had been supplied.

For this reason, while we are happy to pass on a copy of your letter and of this letter to the Committee, we do not intend to inform the media that there were inaccuracies as there were no inaccuracies in the press release which we sent them, nor in the written submission to which we referred them in that press release and originally sent to the Committee, nor the updated version of the submission which we sent to the Committee subsequently. For your information, I enclose copies of the original and updated submissions to the Committee, and of our press release.¹ The text of our oral submission is available online.²

You will see, that in all these documents, we very clearly state that we are including only the following:

- Full standard inspection reports, in the case of post-primary schools, and focused reports which were not focusing on a very specific area of provision only, in the case of primary schools
- Also primary inspection reports and post-primary inspections in Table 3 in our more recent submission, in the light of your new categorisation of reports from September 2013

We note that, in your revised tables, you have included information about other shorter and more specific reports which we stated that we excluded from our data, and you have also included information about other inspection and evaluation visits. We are not aware that any reports concerning these additional visits are published on your website. We did not retrieve any such reports when we carried out our searches, nor is any information on these visits/visit reports available on your website as far as we are aware.

In our written and oral submissions, we also clearly stated that we had included only those reports which we were able to find using the search facility on the ETI website, and that the apparent length of time between full (or closest to full) inspection reports might actually be due to problems with your search facility or website. In our oral submission, we stated that we doubted, however, that any such problems fully explained this gap.


In the light of the information which you have now presented, it would appear that we were right – there are often unacceptably lengthy gaps between full inspections. As we stated at the time, whatever the explanation, the paucity of regular and comprehensive inspection information is quite unacceptable from our point of view. I should add that our press release also made clear that we were referring to published full (or closest to full) inspection reports – and there was a link to our written submission which provided further detail on this as per above.

We very much appreciate the additional information which you have provided about school inspections. We have already forwarded to the Committee the information which you and Ofsted (and Education Scotland) sent us previously, and have highlighted the fact that you observe all or most teachers when you carry out a full inspection, while Ofsted was less clear on this. We also voiced concern that Ofsted's more recent inspection reports do not seem to be as full as those produced previously.

For your information, we made our original written submission to the Committee's inquiry on school inspections at the invitation of the Committee. We did not realise that, in the course of researching our submission, we would discover such lengthy gaps between full school inspections, although we were aware that some inspection reports appeared to be very out of date. We believe, therefore, that our research in this regard has provided a valuable service by informing the Committee's inquiry and by informing public debate about a matter of which most people would have been unaware.

We intend to write to the Chief Inspector to request a meeting to discuss the issues which we have raised in our submissions to the Committee. We would also be delighted to meet you along with the Chief Inspector, or in a separate meeting if you would like to discuss these matters further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Liz Fawcett', written in a cursive style.

Dr Liz Fawcett,

Northern Ireland Representative, ParentsOutLoud

Encs.

¹ In the case of both latter documents, these are marked 'corrected' in the file name – aside from some typos in an initial version of the updated written submission, we also originally erroneously stated that an inspection report relating to Methodist College in 2001 was a standard inspection report when it was, in fact, a focused inspection report relating to pastoral care only.

We also initially neglected to highlight in a footnote that one of the Omagh primary schools in Table 3 had merged recently, but that that merged school had, as far as we were aware, received no inspection. Although we didn't name any schools in our press release, the press release was also corrected to reflect that information.

² Our oral evidence, presented to the Committee on 8th January 2014, is available here: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2013-2014/January-2014/Inquiry-into-the-Education-and-Training-Inspectorate-and-School-Improvement-Process-ParentsOutloud-and-Sir-Robert-Salisbury-/>