

Phoenix Integrated Primary School

1. The Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement and how/whether ETI properly assesses the value-added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment;

The ETI recently attended our school for a Focused Primary Inspection. It was the school's first inspection and to my knowledge it is not clear whether the school had any informal visits in the 7 years before I joined as Principal. In my opinion the school should have been inspected earlier and 7/8 years is too long to have a newly evolving school with no formal assessment of their overall provision. It was clear to me as Principal that the school had a number of issues which needed improved. The ETI confirmed this and as a result we were categorised as Satisfactory.

Key stage results are not a true indicator of the school's performance. At present the Cross curricular skills are being implemented and the transition takes time. Schools are still measured based on FSM and Key stage results. These are not robust enough to give an accurate picture of attainment in any school. It does not take into account individual pupils issues nor does it take into account socio economic problems which are not measured by official departments.

The inspectorate examined our internal data and tracking procedures. Although non statutory it gives a much truer picture of where the school is performance wise.

Computer Based Assessment is an extra burden for schools in terms of access to reliable technology. On a practical level the number of computer units accessible for Y4-7 is not enough for schools with smaller budgets. The time involved in allowing children to access tests causes an immense level of stress for staff who are busy trying to deliver the curriculum. The usefulness of the tests is minimal. In our experience they usually tell us what we already know about pupils we work with on a daily basis.

Internal assessments should be regulated to allow them to be used as an indicator of performance. Most schools use GL assessment tools such as PIE and PIM.

2. The key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the Education and Library Boards to help schools improve;

There is minimal support for schools who maybe experiencing difficulties and sit outside the review process. Our school is now in a Follow-up phase and we welcome the support of the SELB officers to move the process along in an organised and supportive way. We feel intervention from the SELB is effective and knowledgeable provide support and guidance for our school as we improve our provision.

The level of support for schools from ELBs across NI is totally unacceptable. The establishment of ESA is taking too long and it is schools who are suffering. There is no support out there for schools. The seconded teams have all been disbanded and ELB support officers who remain are working with schools who are in formal intervention or engaged in follow up. This is too late! Schools need support long before they are at this stage.

3. Alternative inspection/improvement approaches which might better assess value-added and recognise improvement by schools;

More regular visits - schools should not have to go for periods of up to 8 years before being inspected.

Remove Computer Based Assessment

Allow ETI to use internal tracking and assessment procedures used in Primary Schools.

Time to talk to teachers about their performance and give feedback on observation visits.

4. **The priorities and actions which need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process – does ETI need enhanced powers?; should ETI make more/any use of alternative measures of achievement (other than examination performance) to assess school performance?; should ETI be independent of the Department of Education (as Ofsted is)?; does ETI need a better complaints / feedback procedure? etc.; Do schools always understand the conclusions produced by ETI – is more transparency required in this regard?;**

It may be worthwhile considering the benefits of being independent of the Department of Education, but who would regulate it?

The Inspection Process has seen many improvements. It is clear that a number of Inspectors ETI are much more approachable and prefer to be seen as a support to the school encouraging schools to identify areas for improvement from within.

Feedback to teachers – Teaching is naturally a reflective profession, yet the ETI do not give feedback to allow the teachers and school to reflect on performance of the teachers (albeit in a stressful situation) – it would still allow opportunity for discussion and development.

More detailed feedback to Principal to allow them to put support in place for teachers who need it.

More training for Leaders to support teachers and help them move from satisfactory to good, good to very good, etc.

The language used by the ETI although familiar to Leadership could be simplified, although it is important to get the balance right between professional vocabulary and understanding.

5. **Other matters relating to ETI and the school improvement process that are worthy of further scrutiny.**

None of note

