



Department of
Education

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Dear Peter

I refer to your letter dated 29 November 2013. I will respond to each point below.

1. Information on the number of Education and Training Inspectorate staff who are trained to assess Irish Medium Education schools

Out of the total complement of 59 inspectors, 42 are mainly deployed across the primary and post-primary school sectors. Of these 42 inspectors, six are trained to inspect Irish Medium Schools, the equivalent of 14% of the operational schools staffing of ETI. Only 2.7% of schools are Irish Medium; the number of pupils attending IME schools or units within schools is equivalent to 1.3% of the school population. For consistency across all schools, these six inspectors work in English Medium Schools and ETI also deploys other inspectors of schools to work in IME schools.

2. Information on how training for ETI staff with regards to Irish Medium Education is accessed

All inspectors, on appointment, undergo an extensive induction programme. As part of the induction of a specialist inspector of schools s/he will learn about Irish-medium schools. Often s/he will accompany an experienced inspector on a visit to an Irish-medium school. All inspectors also have access to personal development days. How these days are spent is negotiated and agreed with the inspector's line manager. Inspectors who work in IME are encouraged to undertake regular immersion training over the summer period in the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking area) or to attend summer courses in Irish. Since 1996, inspectors from ETI have received invitations from Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate in the

Republic of Ireland to attend specialist training through the medium of Irish along with their specialist inspectors and have attended each time an opportunity has been offered.

3. A copy of the template Management and Reporting System (MARS) report used as part of the inspection process in all schools

MARS is the central recording tool used by inspection teams for management information purposes. It is aligned to the quality indicators of Together Towards Improvement. It should be noted that the MARS is for recording inspection outcomes and is generally completed during the inspection moderation meeting after the class observations and meetings with school personnel are complete.

MARS is not meant to be used as a checklist nor is there any 'mathematical formula' on the aggregation or averaging of the evaluations contained within the various sections to give an overall evaluation.

At all times inspectors use their judgement gained from their experience as practitioners and as inspectors visiting many classrooms and schools when arriving at the evaluations. The MARS is completed based on the decisions of the inspection team. The outcomes recorded are arrived at after much discussion and debate which takes place during the moderation meeting. It is here that the challenge function of the inspection process is most apparent; evidence is shared and, where appropriate, challenged. Everyone on the inspection team, including the Associate Assessor where there is one on the team, has the opportunity to contribute to this process.

A sample of a MARS report is attached.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "V. Bintley (mun)". The signature is written in a cursive style.

VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer