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Dear Peter

ETI AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INQUIRY

I refer to your letter dated 13 December 2013.

Please find below an extended response to question 9, to address your follow-up queries.

ETI evaluates the extent to which the school makes effective use of all of the forms of assessment data available in order to provide appropriate teaching and support to all of the pupils. ETI does not 'weight' assessment data from any specific source.

Inspectors will make professional evaluations of the progress made by the pupils, drawing primarily on their own observations and judgements as professionals. With respect to the sources of assessment data which the school has available to it, ETI are interested to find out how well the school uses that data to plan teaching and to support learning.

ETI does not undertake any numerical weighting, or any aggregating or any averaging of results or of scores when evaluating aspects of the provision and outcomes of a school. ETI makes and reports its professional judgements using one of the six performance levels (outstanding, very good, good, satisfactory, inadequate and unsatisfactory) under the four main headings of:

- Overall Effectiveness

- Achievement and Standards
- Quality of Provision
- Leadership and Management

For post-primary, the benchmarked evaluation of standards achieved in public examinations at GCSE and GCE A Level are considered professionally as one of 16 quality indicators, organised in four groups, under the heading of Achievement and Standards. (For primary the end of key stage assessments are considered professionally as one of 17 quality indicators. Due to the current transition period in the arrangements for statutory assessment, the analysis of the end of key stage performance data is based on the outcome up to but not including the 2012/13 school year. The key stage outcomes should be interpreted with caution for small primary and post-primary schools as a large percentage change from year to year can often be attributed to a very small number of children.) The four groups for post-primary and primary are: Achievement, Standards, Progression and Fulfilling Potential.

The quality questions and indicators which ETI uses to help them to evaluate and report how well the learners develop and achieve are outlined below for post primary. ETI also evaluates the extent of the school's own internal evaluation of the same indicators and how effectively, or not, the school's internal self-evaluation is used to lead to improvement.

Achievement: How far do learners achieve the highest possible standards of work and learning?

ETI evaluates the extent to which the pupils:

- make good progress in line with their prior attainment and achieve their full potential;
- achieve in line with relevant benchmarking data;
- are well-motivated, enthusiastic and set high expectations for themselves;
- attain good standards in literacy and numeracy and demonstrate good communication, ICT and numeracy skills within and across the curriculum; and
- apply their learning in a range of contexts.

Standards: How far do learners acquire and develop the dispositions, skills and capabilities for life-long learning, and contribute to (or lay the foundations for their eventual contribution to) the community and the economy?

ETI evaluates the extent to which the pupils:

- work independently and with others;
- demonstrate effective personal and social skills;
- think both critically and creatively, and show resilience in their learning; and
- understand how their learning can be applied to help them participate effectively in society and as contributors to the local and global economy.

Progression: How far do learners demonstrate progression within the school, building on their prior achievements, and preparing appropriately for the next phase of their learning?

ETI evaluates the extent to which the pupils:

- plan, review and evaluate their work;
- identify appropriate actions to progress their learning;
- make consistent progress commensurate with their abilities, in particular, at key transition stages;
- achieve the highest possible standards building on their prior learning and maximise their potential; and
- acquire, develop and transfer their knowledge, skills and understanding across their learning.

Fulfilling Potential: How well do individual learners, at all levels of ability, surmount the barriers they may have to learning and achieve their full potential?

ETI evaluates the extent to which the pupils:

- manage their own emotions, regulate their learning and interact effectively with others; and
- meet their full potential, regardless of gender, social, ethnic, linguistic and educational background.

With respect to the standards attained in GCSE (and their applied and vocational equivalent) examinations and in GCE A Level (and their applied and vocational equivalent) examinations, each inspection report includes a table which benchmarks the standards being achieved by the school against the averages for schools in the same free school meal category over the four year period prior to the inspection year.

The benchmarked averages are those published by the Department of Education annually in the DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

The headline examination standards reported are those as set out in the Programme for Government and in a non-selective school are as follows:

Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* to C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)

The headline examination standards reported are those as set out in the Programme for Government and in a selective school are as follows:

Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 7 subjects
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* to C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)

Each inspection report includes an evaluative analysis of the trends in examinations both at the headline level (as shown in the two tables above), over the previous four years, and also at the level of individual examination subjects compared with the average for non-selective schools at GCSE grades A*-C or for selective schools at GCSE grades A*-B over a three year period in each case. A similar analysis is

undertake for A level subjects, if appropriate. The trends are also considered over a five year period where appropriate. Trends in performance in applied and vocational subjects are also evaluated as appropriate. Retention, progression and the destinations of learners after leaving the school are taken into account.

In making and reporting its evaluation of trends in achievements and standards, ETI takes full account of its knowledge of the context of the school, not just as indicated by the free-school meal category, but also by factors such as the percentage of pupils with special educational needs and other educational needs, the percentage of newcomers, the attendance rates, the number of pupils in alternative education provision, the suspension and expulsion rates and the mobility of the pupils, where any of these factors are contextually important.

In evaluating and reporting how well the learners develop and achieve, the standards attained at key stage are also taken into account to help to evaluate progress in primary and post-primary. However, ETI has a wider interest in evaluating the extent to which the school itself makes effective use of all of the sources of assessment data, including but not limited to key stage assessments, which are available to it in order to find out how well the school uses that data to plan teaching and to provide appropriate learning support to all of the pupils, both individually and collectively.

As indicated more fully in the answers provided above, the OECD sentence quoted here refers accurately to the fact that ETI does not make use of any numerical weightings or composite scoring system to form its professional judgements about the school's overall effectiveness but rather makes a consensus, moderated and quality-assured professional evaluation of the progress made by the pupils, drawing primarily on ETI's observations and evaluations as well-informed professionals and further informed by ETI's view of the school's own informed insight into its pupils and their progress.

ETI ensures openness and transparency in all of the quality indicators and questions used to form its evaluations on how well learners develop and achieve by publishing them and distributing them widely in the ETI publication **Together Towards**

Improvement: a process for self evaluation at:

<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm> and <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Schools are encouraged to use the same, or similar, quality indicators in their own self-evaluation to help ensure that inspection and internal self-evaluation are symbiotic processes. Together Towards Improvement (TTI) indicators are also promoted through all forms of teacher education, including on-line education video resources.

Independent annual evaluation of inspection carried out by The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) indicates that the TTI publications are the most well-known and most heavily-used of all ETI publications.

Furthermore, immediately prior to the start of each post-primary inspection, the school is asked to complete a self-evaluation document in which the school prepares the benchmarking of its own examination data and summarises its own evaluation of the remaining 15 quality indicators for Achievements and Standards given above. In this

way, the school is not just advised about this aspect of inspection but is proactively engaged in it. The self-evaluation document is also available openly on the ETI website and schools are encouraged to use it, even if they are not about to be inspected.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "V. Bintley (mm)".

VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer