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Dear Peter

COMMITTEE'S INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE AND THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Thank you for your letter of 30 January 2015 regarding the Department of Education's (DE's) correspondence dated 15 January 2015 in relation to the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Firstly, the Committee's position in respect of the Department's proposed changes to **the Formal Intervention Process** (FIP) is disappointing. The Department's proposed changes aim to reduce the length of time pupils are in schools where the quality of education provision is 'satisfactory' or less and ensure that schools whose provision is reported to be 'satisfactory' on an ongoing basis are provided with the appropriate support to improve educational provision to at least 'good'; and improve the overall quality of education in an area.

The proposed revision, which is outlined briefly at Annex A, is that schools which are found to be satisfactory on 3 consecutive occasions will enter FIP and receive the more targeted support. The Committee appears to have a concern that this would significantly increase the number of schools entering FIP but may be interested to note that, if the proposal regarding 3 consecutive satisfactory ratings had been adopted from the onset of the FIP in 2009, a total of four additional schools would have entered the process.

The Committee sought information on other, **more recent good practice guides** produced by ETI for schools.

The ETI regularly publish evaluative reports, identifying good and innovative practice to address challenges within education. These challenges include leading and managing the organisation, self evaluation and action which promotes improvement, pastoral care, effective links and partnerships and the promotion of high quality teaching and effective learning.

In January 2015, the ETI published its report on the evaluation of the curriculum area, *The World Around Us*; this report on primary schools contains a number of exemplars of good practice. In February 2015, the ETI published the second Follow-up Report to *Better Mathematics* which identifies specific areas for improvement in the subject. This provides those who lead continuous professional development in the subject with a clear focus for development.

In recent years ETI has published the Final Evaluation of the International Fund for Ireland's Sharing in Education Programme (November 2013).

In March 2015, the ETI is organising five conferences to disseminate the Chief Inspector's Report 2012-14; these conferences will be attended by approximately 550 school leaders from the pre-school, primary and post-primary phases. A key element of each conference will be the case studies of good practice presented by schools which have been identified through inspection as very good or outstanding. Each conference will have workshop activities to allow the delegates the opportunity to discuss with the case study presenters the specific challenges they faced in bringing about improvement and how they met these challenges.

A final example is in relation to two studies commissioned by the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) reporting on the key features of successful teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy at post primary level. These reports will be presented at the next NSMC meeting on 25 March 2015 seeking agreement to publish.

The ETI also showcases some of the exemplary, 'sector-leading' practice that is identified in all of the education and training sectors inspected through the publication of case studies that highlight specific examples of practice that have achieved successful outcomes. These are available to view on the ETI website.

The ETI also liaises with ESaGS.tv on the production of good practice programmes. In recent times this has involved members of ETI working directly with ESaGS.tv in the identification of specific areas where improvements are necessary and in identifying effective practitioners in these areas. The ETI has then facilitated televised question and answer programmes on these topics. These are available to view on the ESaGS.tv website¹.

¹ <http://www.esags.tv/conferences-and-events/school-improvement-conversations-with-inspectors/literacy-the-journey-from-ks1-to-ks3/>

<http://www.esags.tv/conferences-and-events/school-improvement-conversations-with-inspectors/leading-to-success/>

<http://www.esags.tv/conferences-and-events/school-improvement-conversations-with-inspectors/the-role-of-the-head-of-english-in-effecting-improvement/>

The Committee sought an explanation of the apparently contradictory statements by the Department and OECD in respect of **longitudinal studies** and seeking also details of the longitudinal studies previously undertaken by ETI.

In their report the OECD make reference to longitudinal studies which involve the tracking of individual pupils over a period of time, specifically they reference New Zealand where the National Student Number, which covers both the schooling and the tertiary sector, is used to monitor pupil performance. The study recommends that the Department should consider using the Unique Pupil Reference Number for the benefits of longitudinal research and this is in train.

Currently, school aged pupils here are identified by the UPN (Unique Pupil Number). A UPN is assigned to learners when they join primary school at age 4 / 5 but cannot be used beyond school age. The Department is working on the introduction of a Unique Learner Number for all learners in Year 11 and above. This work will examine the possibility of linking these separate identifiers.

The ULN is a 10-digit reference number which represents a single consistent learning record. Work has been undertaken by the Department for Employment and Learning to ensure that the ULN has been adopted in the Further Education and Training sectors here.

The Higher Education Data and Information Improvement Programme (HEDIIP) is considering how ULNs should be used within the Higher Education sector. ULNs are currently optional as part of the UCAS application process.

The ETI has conducted longitudinal studies using a different methodology. The research on the long term impact of nurture units mentioned in previous correspondence is an example of this.

At a system level the biennial Chief Inspector's Report is a source of 'longitudinal' information. The commentary in this report identifies key trends in school performance over a period of years both from the outcomes of inspection and by way of commentary on the performance data collated over time by DE. In the most recent report, for example, the performance data of pupils attending post-primary schools was tracked over the period 2005-2013. This data included the percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE at grades A*-C in grammar and non-grammar schools as well as data relating to the attendance of pupils. The data also looked at the performance of pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds as measured by the Free School Meals Entitlement (FSME) figures.

Subject-specific work such as the Better Mathematics series is another example of longitudinal study. There are three reports currently in the system which report on the data collated from inspections of mathematics departments in the post-primary sector. The Follow-Up Report to Better Mathematics was published in 2011 and reported on the inspection findings over the previous four year period. A Second Follow Up report to Better Mathematics reporting on the inspection findings from 2010-2014 was published in February 2015.

The Committee requested sight of **the new inspection overview document**. This is a work in progress and the ETI are working towards an introduction in September 2015. A copy will be made available to the Committee on its introduction.

Further to this, the Committee requested details of the ETI **complaints procedure review**. The ETI complaints procedure is provided through the following link <http://www.etini.gov.uk/other%20pages/complaints-procedure-september-2013.pdf>.

Also included for the Committee's information at Annex B, is the Complaints – End of Year report to March 2014. The ETI complaints process has been discussed at length with the Northern Ireland Teaching Council (NITC) and at a recent meeting on 27 January 2015, the NITC indicated that they were content with the process. The procedure is kept under constant review and as the report indicates all complaints are analysed and used to inform improvement in internal ETI processes.

The Committee has also asked for details of the **consultation on the new inspection descriptors**. At their recent meeting with NITC, ETI also discussed the detail of the consultation on new inspection descriptors. The NITC were provided with a draft of the focussed consultation document and both NITC and Local Trade Union Side have until 20 February 2015 to respond. Following their response, ETI would be happy to share a copy of the consultation questionnaire with the Committee. The focussed consultation will take place in March 2015 and the aim is to include the new inspection descriptors within the Overview of Inspection document in time for the start of the new academic year – September 2015.

In relation to the ongoing work in relation to a **dashboard of measures** for schools, a wide range of management information about schools is currently available at school and system level. A subset of this information is currently published on Schools + (on the DE internet) but it is not presented within a policy framework which explains what or why information is being published or how it will be used.

The Department is keen to acknowledge that the success of a school in ensuring that every child receives a high quality education and achieves their potential is not measured in terms of assessment or exam results in isolation. Feedback from stakeholders, reiterated in the OECD report, is that there is an appetite in the system for a different approach that would allow us to draw more sophisticated conclusions about the quality of our system and our schools.

To date the work on the dashboard has primarily encompassed desk research, literature reviews and internal discussion on the range of indicators that might be included.

In taking this piece of work forward the Department will set up a panel of key stakeholders prior to more widespread engagement with the education sector and beyond. It is proposed that the panel will work with departmental officials to consider what should be included in the Dashboard of Measures, how it can be presented and the timescales for implementation.

Whilst the Department does not have a specific policy in regards parental engagement, the public consultation process provides a means for parents to

provide their views in relation to new policies. Where appropriate, the Department will engage with parents directly or via organisations such as Parenting NI to seek their views on particular topics. One such example is the engagement of Parenting NI to seek the views of parents in relation to the 'Deferral of School Starting Age in Exceptional Circumstances' consultation. The Board of the Education Authority (EA) will have responsibility for agreeing its policy for consultation with parents. Work is underway to recruit and appoint the Chair and Board of the EA for its establishment on 1st April 2015.

Yours sincerely

Russell

RUSSELL WELSH
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE FORMAL INTERVENTION PROCESS

The proposed revisions are outlined below:

- (i) For any school entering formal intervention and identified in the area plan as being unsustainable, the Managing Authority will be required to bring forward to the Department a plan for the restructuring of education provision in the area.
- (ii) The number of follow-up inspections for schools in formal intervention, and remaining less than satisfactory, will be reduced from two to one, before any follow-up action is taken, with the timing of the follow-up inspection being extended to 18 – 24 months. During this period there will be two interim follow-up visits (IFUV) by the ETI.
- (iii) A school in formal intervention which improves to a 'satisfactory' evaluation at the follow-up inspection, having had two years of tailored support, will have a further follow-up inspection within 12-18 months at which point it must have improved to at least a 'good' evaluation or further action may be considered².
- (iv) The timing of the follow-up inspection for a school with a 'satisfactory' evaluation will be shortened to between 12 – 18 months.
- (v) Any school with a 'satisfactory' evaluation not improving to at least a 'good' evaluation by the time of its second follow-up inspection will be placed in formal intervention, provided with tailored support and given a further 12-18 months to improve to at least a 'good' evaluation or further action will be considered.
- (vi) Schools currently within the inspection process and awaiting a follow-up inspection will enter the new process at the first follow-up inspection stage.
- (vii) It will be made more explicit in the FIP process that a school will not automatically exit FIP on an ETI evaluation of 'satisfactory'.

² This remains unchanged from the further actions outlined in Annex C of Every School a Good School.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – END OF YEAR REPORT

This report provides a summary of complaints received during the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, including:

- information on the main types of complaint;
- the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) responses;
- the timeliness of responses; and
- corporate learning, actions taken, or to be taken, following the review of complaints at a corporate level.

INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose

To provide the Inspectorate Management Group with:

- an end-of-year report on complaints made through the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI)'s complaints procedure; and
- a summary of corporate learning, recommendation and actions taken as a result of reviewing complaints received and investigated under the terms of reference of the ETI complaints procedure.

2. Background

An individual may make a complaint at any stage during the inspection of the organisation concerned or up to 12 weeks from the visit or final oral report back at the conclusion of the inspection. All complaints to or about ETI are investigated thoroughly and fairly and are handled in confidence.

SECTION A: STATISTICAL INFORMATION

3. Complaints received and ETI's response

From 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, ETI received 6 formal complaints, which were dealt with under the terms of reference of the complaints procedure.

	Number of formal complaints	Complaints not upheld	Complaints partially upheld
April 2013 to 31 March 2014			
April - June	4	2	2
July - September	1	1	-
October – December	1	1	-
January - March	0	-	-
Total	6	4	2

4. Main types of complaint

Complaints were mainly inspection related.

5. ETI responses

Of the six formal complaints received, two were partially upheld and four were not upheld.

6. Timeliness of responses

Of the six formal complaints received, five were responded to within ETI's 20 working day response timescale. One response could not issue on time as the relevant reporting inspector was on annual leave.

SECTION B: REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS

A review of all complaints was undertaken. During the review, the nature of each complaint was discussed, in general terms, and potential corporate learning and recommendations identified.

7. Corporate learning and recommendations

- District inspectors to monitor closely the follow-up process.
- Inspectors need to:
 - avail of the support from Inspection Services Branch (ISB), when necessary, to ensure information is passed on to organisations;
 - communicate clearly with organisations as to what the purpose of the [final] report back is;
 - ensure that there is clear dialogue at all times with all parties;
 - make organisations aware that the published report is a summary of key evaluations;
 - ensure that if a performance level is moderated or changed after the oral report back, the reason for the change is shared openly with the organisation; and
 - explain to the organisation that during interim follow-up visits (IFUVs) it is only the extent to which actions are being addressed that will be commented on (and that this is not a prediction of the outcome of the follow-up inspection (FUI)).

8. Actions taken as a result of the investigation of complaints

- From September 2013, all FUI and IFUVs are tracked and programmed centrally.

- All complaints are contained in a locked-down container in TRIM, which has limited access permissions.
- An automated acknowledgement issues to all who submit an online questionnaire and that this should be reflected in the guidance that issues to parents.
- Training has been arranged for Inspection Services Branch (ISB) staff in relation to answering telephone queries.
- All complaints that are received by ETI are processed centrally and strictly in line with the complaints procedure flowchart.
- The NICS Department Solicitor's Office (DSO) has been engaged to provide staff development for inspectors (on, for example, defamation, audio recording and partial privilege).
- Where ETI has agreed to meet an organisation to seek an informal resolution, an agenda setting out the TOR for the meeting will be prepared/agreed in advance.

9. Further recommendations and action points

- Further training is required for ISB staff when responding to queries on inspection processes.
- ETI should note the ICO's revised guidance on the treatment of vexatious requests.
- If a complaint is circulated to third parties, ETI should ensure that its response is circulated to third parties.
- Pastoral supported provided to colleagues [in the event of a complaint being received and investigated under the terms of reference of the ETI Complaints Procedure] should be recorded by relevant colleague(s) (i.e. line managers).