Northern Ireland
Assembly

# COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION

# OFFICIAL REPORT
(Hansard)

# ETI Briefing on The Chief Inspector's Report

10 November 2010

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**
Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
Mr David Hilditch (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Mary Bradley
Sir Reg Empey
Mr Jonathan Craig
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Basil McCrea
Miss Michelle McIlveen
Mr John O'Dowd

**Witnesses:**
Mr John Anderson }
Dr Maureen Bennett } Education and Training Inspectorate
Mr Stanley Goudie }
Mr Paul McAlister }

**The Chairperson (Mr Storey):**

I welcome the chief inspector, Mr Stanley Goudie. I think that I am right in saying that this will be your last appearance before the Committee, although you might appear before us again before you retire.

**Mr Stanley Goudie (Education and Training Inspectorate):**

I am quite happy with this one. *[Laughter.]*

**The Chairperson:**

If this does prove to be your last appearance, I wish you well for your retirement, early in 2011, and thank you for your tenure as chief inspector, for your readiness to appear before the Committee and your patience with us when you are here. It is much appreciated. I also welcome your colleagues.

**Mr Goudie:**

Thank you, Chairperson, for your good wishes. We welcome this opportunity to make a short presentation to the Committee and to answer questions. On my left is Paul McAlister, who heads the directorate for policy planning and improvement; he is also involved with Irish-medium education and with information and communications technology (ICT). Maureen Bennett is the assistant chief inspector for children and young people, which covers early-years, special educational needs and youth provision; she is our connect with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and with work that the inspectorate does in health and with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority. John Anderson is a member of our middle-management group and is managing inspector for post-primary education in schools and also for teacher education.

With your permission, Chairman, I will bypass the work of the inspectorate, as I think that the Committee is fairly au fait with it, and go to the report. The report was published on 13 October 2010; its evidence base comprised the findings of more than 700 inspections and surveys between April 2008 and March 2010, across provision funded by the Department of Education, the Department for Employment and Learning, and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

The report's main findings were that there has been good improvement in several areas of

education in the past two years; however, significant challenges remain. Evidence from inspection over the reporting period shows that the implementation of the revised curriculum is progressing well and that the focus on how to improve learning through developing skills has led to improvement in the learning and teaching strategies used in about three quarters of the schools inspected. The fostering of attitudes of respect, tolerance, integrity and moral courage reminds us of the need to equip all learners with the values that are essential to living and working together.

Where provision and standards are of high quality across a range of sectors, practitioners can be proud of the vital contribution that they make. However, there are also areas in which provision is less than satisfactory and which, for various reasons, are not delivering sufficient benefit to learners. 'The Chief Inspector's Report 2008-2010' recognises those areas in which provision is good as well as highlighting areas in which provision is not good enough.

The past two years have seen significant change in the education system here, with new policies beginning to have a positive impact. The Department's Every School a Good School policy has a strong emphasis on raising standards; it also has a robust framework — the formal intervention process — to support schools when inspection shows provision to be below the required standard. We have seen real improvement as a result.

In the period of the report there has been good implementation of pastoral care systems by schools and institutions, further underlining the link between learners' well-being and their ability to study and develop. Newcomer and Traveller children have also been well integrated, with better capacity to meet their needs. However, parallel to those successes are areas that continue to give concern, including the quality of leadership in the primary and post-primary schools inspected over the reporting period.

Although there have been slight improvements in the standards for school-aged learners in

literacy and numeracy in recent years, overall improvement in those standards remains a priority for all phases. There is little evidence in the 14-16 cohort in particular that the literacy and numeracy requirements of learners are being adequately addressed. There is an opportunity to develop a clear continuum of skills development in literacy and numeracy from pre-school to post-16 to allow learners to access an accreditation appropriate to them, whether they are following an academic or vocational route.

The inspectorate found mixed quality of provision for learners with special educational needs (SEN). There is a need to build further the capacity of staff in mainstream classes and units to meet more effectively the needs of the increasing number of children presenting with special needs. In contrast, there has been improvement in the provision for those with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD).

The themes mentioned in previous reports continue to need most attention: transitions, connections, and inclusion. We need to support learners more effectively across the key transitions on their educational journey; including establishing clear connections for learners between the various stages and types of learning; and inclusion that ensures that all learners receive effective and equitable education and training.

The Committee requested that our presentation focus specifically on school leadership; the engagement of parents and community; and the under-performance of boys in deprived areas, particularly in deprived Protestant areas.

The leadership provided by principals in three quarters of the primary schools inspected was evaluated as good or better; in one quarter it is not good enough. In just under two thirds of post-primary schools inspected leadership was good or better. In just over one third, leadership needed to improve, and in about a tenth it was inadequate or unsatisfactory. In over two fifths of

the special schools inspected, leadership was evaluated as very good to outstanding, and in nearly one fifth it was evaluated as inadequate.

Where leadership is not good enough, pre-determinants are likely to include the following: insufficient focus on the achievement and standards of the children and, in particular, failure to identify and address underachievement; insufficient expectation of what the children are capable of achieving; being too ready to blame low attainment on factors beyond the school; giving insufficient attention to monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching throughout the school; and, at times, excessive attention focused on matters not directly related to developing and maintaining high standards of learning and teaching in the school.

With regard to the involvement of parents and the wider community, the Department of Education's policy document 'Every School a Good School' states that:

"it is essential that parents and the wider community play their part in supporting the work of the school, raising the aspirations and expectations of pupils and valuing education."

The Department's extended schools policy encourages schools to develop links with parents and their community. Achieving successful parental involvement is not always easy, but it is certainly not impossible. A recent report by a Belfast Education and Library Board officer outlines how her board's integrated services for children and young people provided funding to 23 primary schools in the west Belfast and Shankill area to develop a parent-and-child art project. More than 495 parents and children involved in the project demonstrated that there is a strong will on behalf of schools and parents to engage with each other.

We were asked to comment on the underperformance of boys in deprived areas. Although it is dangerous to generalise, it is generally accepted that boys prefer kinaesthetic and visual approaches, for example, the use of information and communication technology, investigative work, field study, work from 'The World Around Us' curriculum and connected topic work. Boys have to have a male role model in school to respect and to whom they can relate. There is a shortage of male teachers in the primary sector; last year, some 288 primary schools did not have

a male member of staff, and, increasingly, children do not have a male role model at home. As a result, it is often more difficult for a boy to have a strong bond with a positive male role model than it is for a girl to have a strong bond with a positive female role model. There are social factors that undermine boys' achievement, including peer pressure and influences outside school. Teenage boys, particularly in deprived communities, are strongly influenced by what can be an anti-school social environment where to be seen to study or to be interested in academic work severely undermines street credibility.

The chief inspector's report says that the number of pupils leaving school with no GCSEs has decreased from 3·9% in the 2006-08 reporting period to 2·9% or approximately 700 pupils in the 2008-2010 reporting period. There was also a reduction in the percentage of boys who left school with no qualifications to just over 5%. Schools and support organisations need to provide support that is more appropriate to the needs of this cohort of learners in order to improve their life chances.

**The Chairperson:**

Thank you for concentrating on those elements that are of particular interest to the Committee and for your support for the Committee's planned inquiry. The report refers to the close correlation between the effectiveness of leadership and the management and quality of provision. Can you clarify that for us?

To what extent can you comment on the impact and involvement of a board of governors in such a school? Having identified a leadership problem, what can you do to ensure that it is addressed effectively? Some sectors, such as the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) claim that they have a more robust way of dealing with a school whose leadership was deemed ineffective

Schools can be defined by outcomes, which can be very arbitrary. However, members can think of examples from their constituencies of a change in school leadership making dramatic changes in the focus and outcomes of a school.

**Mr Goudie:**

We know from inspection and research that leadership is a key factor in the quality of a school's — or, indeed, of any organisation's — provision and that there is a direct correlation between leadership and the standards that young people achieve. We report strongly on leadership and management, including reference to the governing body of a school. We can make an evaluation that a principal's leadership is unsatisfactory, and we did that several times recently.

Moreover, if we found the school inadequate or unsatisfactory per se, it would go into the formal intervention process, and the Department has placed a number of schools in that process on foot of our reports. We are increasingly robust in that area, and principals whose work is evaluated as unsatisfactory are afforded a programme of support on which we would subsequently report. Every School a Good School is beginning to get the traction that we need to deal with poor or unsatisfactory leadership.

**The Chairperson:**

You mentioned the formal intervention process, one of the elements of which is the involvement of the curriculum advisory support service (CASS). The report states that, fortunately, only a small number of schools is in the formal intervention process. How does CASS customise its support to assist a school that enters into formal intervention?

**Mr Goudie:**

CASS is developing its capacity and skill in tailoring support for schools whose leadership is described as unsatisfactory. It is also important to realise that part of our follow-up inspection in

the formal intervention process is discerning the quality of support; if we found that it was not as good as it should be, that would be part of the reporting process. If a school is at x and gets to y but we think that it could get to z were it not for poor-quality support, we would report publicly on that.

**The Chairperson:**

I do not want to draw you into the debate on whether there should be an education and skills authority. CASS is a service that is led by one board — the North Eastern Education and Library Board — however, there is no such service in the Western Education and Library Board. Is that correct?

**Mr J Anderson (Education and Training Inspectorate):**

There is a curriculum advisory support service in every board.

**The Chairperson:**

Is there a difference in emphasis, interventions or outcomes?

**Mr J Anderson:**

I have not observed that. I have observed the same procedures being used by advisory services. As the chief inspector said, they become intensively engaged when a school is assessed as being inadequate or unsatisfactory and goes into the formal intervention process.

They also engage with schools that are deemed to be satisfactory in an inspection. Every school has a link officer, who is an advisory officer on the board. The link officer's job is to work with a school to give it the advice that it needs to help it to develop its school-development plans and its approach to self-evaluation for improvement. Therefore it is not just schools that fall

into formal intervention that get ongoing support from the advisory service. Every board works in the same way.

**Mr Goudie:**

Every School a Good School was introduced in April 2009, so we have had time to learn how the process is working and bedding down. It would be very helpful if the Department, the boards and the inspectorate looked at how support follows inspection to make sure that there is uniformity, that the criteria used are absolutely even and that we learn from one another in that way. It is important that there be equity across the operation of the boards in their support for the schools that fall into the categories that require the formal intervention process.

**Mr J Anderson:**

For schools that are evaluated as satisfactory, inadequate or unsatisfactory, we continue to make monitoring and informal follow-up visits before we carry out a formal follow-up inspection so that we can see the extent of improvement after the initial inspection. We can get an insight into how effectively boards are supporting schools that fall into the categories and levels of performance.

**The Chairperson:**

Can you comment on the interactive computerised assessment system (InCAS)? I am concerned that your report talks about the jigsaw of reform. The constant comment that we get from teachers is that there is policy overload. We hear that no sooner is a policy in than a guru in another part of the world comes up with some other bright idea that the Department thinks sounds good. The Department then gets people working on it, and if it does not come through a circular, it comes through a policy memorandum.

You say that the extent to which the pieces of the jigsaw link together is not always clear

across the various sectors, while those who are charged with implementation report a sense of policy overload. "Policy overload" is a phrase of your own, so I cannot claim any originality for it.

Can the Department through InCAS, which is a formal diagnostic tool — dare I say it? — meddle to reclassify outcomes? What is all that about? I hope that there is no attempt to fiddle the books. The system is driven by outcomes, assessments and how a school is performing. I hope that InCAS is not an attempt to show a better outcome at the end of the year.

**Mr Goudie:**

I will defer to my colleague John Anderson on that. The original premise of InCAS was as an assessment for learning. For that reason, it was not our judgement that we should look for the InCAS results as such, as that would have deflected from InCAS's core purpose.

We see the data and make evaluations, but our evaluations are not based solely on data but on evidence in the classroom. We get beneath the data. For us, the data simply raise questions; they do not provide answers.

**Mr J Anderson:**

We are cautious not to ask teachers for children's InCAS scores, because it is primarily a diagnostic tool to help the teacher to make a judgement on how a child is progressing. It is one of several tests that primary teachers use; they also use cognitive, reading and numerical tests. InCAS scores are one of a set of information tools that they have for children, as well as their own judgement, because the teacher knows the children best.

Asking formally for children's InCAS scores in an inspection would run the risk of changing

in a teacher's mind the nature of the test; they might feel that it was being used for accountability purposes, and that would undermine its value to the teacher.

On the other hand, we need to stand back. The tests that teachers use need to be accurate and operate effectively. When there is a need to ensure that they are operating effectively, the agencies responsible do their best to make sure that they provide useful information to teachers so that they are not discarded by the teacher because they are out of line with other information that the teacher has about the children.

**Dr Maureen Bennett (Education and Training Inspectorate):**

John's points are very important. Any number of tests and tools are available to teachers; however, there is always a danger of overusing those tools. What is important is the use that is made of them to inform planning and to inform the teaching and learning that follows on from them. We need to be circumspect in dealing with tools of assessment. There are a couple of references in the report to assessment being used in a better way to help the planning for children's learning across the various sectors.

A second point that the report makes, and which we made in the 2006-08 report, is that the greatest resource in the classroom is the teacher and his or her skill and astute observation in making judgements about how well children are progressing.

**Mr Lunn:**

I am looking at paragraph 3.2.6 of your briefing. I am always interested in the statistical analysis that those who leave school at 16 without a GCSE A to C are inadequately prepared for life. I forget the percentage, although it might have been as high as 40%. Other people take the view, in particular about English, that a D can be perfectly adequate. It may not indicate an ability to interpret Wordsworth, but it means that they can read and write adequately and are quite well

prepared for the workplace. If you included the Ds, what effect would that have on that statistic?

**Mr J Anderson:**

I do not have those figures with me.

**Mr Goudie:**

We could get that information for you. The A* to C range is the one that we take as the marker, because it is important to have a marker that sets up a satisfactory level.

We can use English and mathematics as a proxy for literacy, but we are too far off the mark when we take into account those young people who are not achieving C or better in their English or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4. If that is the case after 12 years' compulsory education, something is going wrong in getting children across the line.

We are keen for the Department to publish and implement the literacy and numeracy strategy in order to raise standards in literacy and numeracy.

**Mr Lunn:**

I am not saying that we should not try to improve the statistics — of course we should. However, the D grade used to be regarded as a pass mark, whereas now it seems to be regarded as something of a failure. That is hard on kids who leave school with a D and who, like myself, are reasonably literate and numerate. It is a bone of contention.

**Mr Goudie:**

We will get the figures for you, but we do not have them before us.

**Mr J Anderson:**

As the chief inspector says, we benchmark from A to C. However, in our more detailed report we said that in two thirds of cases over the past two years learners achieved good or better standards in English and that the proportion of cases in which standards were less than satisfactory was one in 10. That gives you a sense of the scale, but we can supply you with the detail.

**Mr O'Dowd:**

The figures at paragraph 4.2 are cause for concern. In a quarter of primary schools leadership is not good enough; in just over one third of post-primary schools leadership needs to be improved; and about one tenth is inadequate or unsatisfactory. Leadership in almost one fifth of special schools was evaluated as inadequate.

As we enter the second decade of the century, why are our school leadership figures as they are? Two thirds are good, but one third is bad. Why are we still at that stage in developing our leadership skills in schools?

**Mr Goudie:**

I agree totally. Leadership is to do with the principal, the governance of a school and with leadership at each level; therefore there are degrees within figures such as a third or a quarter. However, there is a deficit in the leadership and management of some of our schools that we need to reduce in order to improve outcomes. The Chairperson correctly made the connection between the leadership of an organisation and the outcomes for its young people.

**Mr J Anderson:**

There are other factors, one of which is how complex and demanding a job school principal is, and I appreciate that the Committee has had discussions with Dr Hesketh about the demands of leadership. We must bear in mind that, over the past three years, schools have been dealing with

change as well as trying to raise standards. They have been implementing a substantial revised curriculum across the breadth of what schools and teachers have to do.

As well as running the day-to-day administration of a school, principals have also had to manage change. Our inspection of the implementation of the revised curriculum found that they have done that very well. Nevertheless, it has been demanding, and it may be one of the reasons for the figures that you cited.

Schools are beginning to look around to provide a broader curriculum offer to the children who live in their catchment areas; they are beginning to negotiate with other providers, and that requires leadership skills. Those are just some of the reasons why the job of principal is particularly complex. That is possibly why we see the disappointing shortfall in some schools' leadership performance.

**Mr O'Dowd:**

I accept that. There is no doubt that being the principal of a school is a demanding job, but the figures tell us that some principals are not up to it. The harsh reality is that we must continue to drive home the message. In all walks of life, as in your own roles, there are pressures and demands to be met. I cannot say any more that politicians are under pressure; that would only put me under pressure. If a principal is not up to the job, they are not up to it. Do we have to strengthen the mechanisms for removing such people from post?

**Mr J Anderson:**

That issue was indentified in 'Every School a Good School', and the inspectorate is responding to it. We are undertaking a survey of leadership development programmes. Indeed, I noticed in Hansard that Dr Hesketh referred to the work that we have begun to do. We are looking at revision of the professional qualification for headship (PQH) programme that the regional

training unit provides, tracking candidates in the new programme and interviewing those who graduated from previous programmes.

In Northern Ireland, there are six master's degree programmes, offered by higher education providers, for the leadership and management of schools. We are inspecting those and interviewing teachers who chose to take them. We are particularly interested in teachers who undertake both the PQH, which is funded by the Department, and a master's programme for which they pay themselves. We are pursuing lines of enquiry about what it takes to improve the capacity of the leadership cohorts in schools through those programmes in the increasingly demanding environment in which they work. That work is ongoing.

**Mr Goudie:**

The process for deeming a teacher's or principal's work unsatisfactory — not the teacher or the principal but their work — is being revised and reviewed, but we need to strengthen it. The process is too protracted and needs to be strengthened. We must be able to deal with those principals who do not have the capacity to lead and manage their school as they should.

**The Chairperson:**

We have encountered examples of that. The last time we met I mentioned the case of a school where there was an issue with the principal, and it took six years to remove him. In the interim, a vice-principal was appointed and that brand new school went from having 160 pupils to 84 or fewer. Numbers dwindled to the point where the school failed to meet the criterion for eligibility to have a vice-principal. That was because of the protracted legal process.

I do not detract in any way from the rights of individuals who feel aggrieved about particular processes. However, there must be a way of separating that from the school and of dealing with it outside the school. While that was going on the school went downhill. The process sapped the

confidence of the local community, and concerned parents took their children elsewhere. It is a huge issue.

You mentioned a continuum in education and the jigsaw of policies. Is there not an issue about all the methods and mechanics of training? Training is provided by CCEA, by boards and by others. How does a principal determine where to seek training? A principal has to look at a menu to choose training for his teachers. There seems to be no coherent continuum in training.

**Mr Goudie:**

I will defer to John Anderson on that. The chief inspector's report, or an aggregation of that which comes out of an individual school or organisation's report, should be driving the in-service training agenda of CASS. In other words, the menu should not be devised by CASS across five boards; it should follow a more strategic process whereby issues raised across the system drive CASS's in-service training provision.

John will discuss the CCEA/ELB approach because the inspectorate has already indicated issues around it.

**Mr J Anderson:**

That is why the chief inspector said what he did in his report. Over the past two years, we have published reports on a whole range of issues, but I particularly want to refer to the one that focused on the implementation of the revised curriculum. In those reports we have been critical of the challenges that face all the agencies that provide support for schools. The programme to implement the revised curriculum was managed through a partnership management board of which all the partners and stakeholders were members. However, even with such a mechanism it was still challenging to bring together in a co-ordinated way a single implementation programme. That remains a challenge.

Depending on their needs, schools will choose the support that they feel they need in order to improve. Every school is different and schools have different needs and different sources to which they can turn. However, the report says that there is a need for greater co-ordination.

**Mrs M Bradley:**

On the radio this morning, a school principal said that, because of the pressures that they are under, all his staff would leave if they could get jobs somewhere else. It sounded horrific. Do you pick that up from teachers when you are carrying out inspections?

**Mr Goudie:**

There is an issue about the number of initiatives that schools seem to face and the sense that they can make of them. It is imperative for all of us to communicate the connexions that exist between the various parts of the system so that they see how all the various policies interlock in an attempt to raise standards. There is an issue about how we communicate the idea of an overall whole rather than a series of different initiatives, which is not the intent.

It would sadden me greatly if people wanted to leave a profession as honourable as teaching.

**Mrs M Bradley:**

What I heard this morning on the radio scared me.

**Mr J Anderson:**

I believe that that radio report was on foot of a study that was carried out in England. I wonder whether it was the same report.

**Mrs M Bradley:**

I think that it was local; I think that it was from Tyrone.

**Mr J Anderson:**

Perhaps I read a different story in which a former union leader was commenting on a report that was conducted in England. He made similar points, so the story sounded familiar.

Northern Ireland has a different level of teaching recruitment; young people of a very high calibre want to teach. One cannot generalise in the same way in England. I do not think that the report that you heard reflects what I find in schools: the vast majority of teachers are committed to their job; they enjoy what they do. Of course there are exceptions, but the tone that I find in schools is very different.

**Mrs M Bradley:**

Teachers are all very professional. However, what I heard concerned me. The principal said that he could not get young teachers in to take short-term work.

**Mr J Anderson:**

Many young teachers would welcome such work.

**Mrs M Bradley:**

Well, the principal on the radio could not get them, and that concerns me.

**Miss McIlveen:**

Thank you for your presentation. A couple of weeks ago, we received a presentation from Tom

Hesketh about the professional qualification for headship. Is that qualification an indicator of effectiveness?

**Mr J Anderson:**

We ask that question in the inspection that we are conducting at present. We are looking at the previous model and those who qualified from it. However, we are also looking at the revised model and asking the very question that you pose: is it effective and is it directed at meeting the priorities and demands of our education service?

We are also looking at the master's programmes, because they have a different purpose and distinctiveness; they can develop concepts of leadership, management, change and improvement. The PQH programme is much more practical and focused; it involves placements, mentorship and coaching. Many take both, which indicates something. We are pursuing that by interviewing people who did either or both about the extent to which they feel they were better prepared for improved leadership as a result of those programmes. That work is ongoing and will be published in due course.

**Mr Goudie:**

Another thing that we mentioned the last time we were before the Committee was the extent to which PQH can be made mandatory before a person presents themselves for leadership. Perhaps a halfway house would be to suggest that once a person takes up a leadership position in a school, three years down the line they would be required to engage in PQH training. The question is whether having a PQH should be made mandatory immediately — candidates should not apply unless they have one — or whether a principal can be in post for a couple of years before being obliged to do proper leadership training.

**Miss McIlveen:**

A sort of continual professional development. The second area that I wanted to look at was the 0-6 strategy. There is an emphasis on early intervention, and we are in the middle of looking at the consultation on the 0-6 strategy. What input did you have on that strategy?

**Mr Goudie:**

I will put Maureen on the spot, because she is our young/early-years specialist.

**Dr Bennett:**

No reflection on my youth. *[Laughter.]* We had input to the strategy, as we have to most departmental strategies, in that the Department will take account of the findings of inspection reports. We commented on the strategy and gave advice on the qualifications and curriculum of early years and on the importance of building up the early-years strategy — support for SEN, for example. The short answer is yes, we had an input; however, our voice is one of several.

**Miss McIlveen:**

Having looked at the strategy, does it reflect what you said?

**The Chairperson:**

That was a very loaded question, Maureen.

**Dr Bennett:**

We are very supportive of the fact that there is a 0-6 strategy and an attempt to ensure that there is a more equitable, even and consistent picture of staff qualifications. We also support the need to look at the transition from early-years to primary education to put the emphasis on education, particularly in pre-school. In that penultimate pre-school year we need to focus on education for

three-year-olds and not simply on care for them. The link with Sure Start is important as is the involvement of parents. In short, we support the big themes in the 0-6 strategy.

**Miss McIlveen:**

How would you like the strategy to be taken forward?

**Dr Bennett:**

The greatest resource in education is the staff. Given the complicated and diverse panoply of strategies and the tight budgets that we face, we need to put our resources into building the competence of teachers and staff. A first step to achieving the outcomes that the 0-6 strategy sets for itself is to build up the resources, qualifications and expertise of staff, because it is quite uneven.

**Miss McIlveen:**

The report states that:

"In just over four-fifths of the pre-school settings inspected the achievements and standards across the curriculum were evaluated as good to outstanding."

Yet the report states that inspection of Irish-medium schools in the pre-school sector found that:

"one-half of the settings was evaluated as good or better"

Why is there such a difference?

**Mr P McAlister:**

A big difficulty with Irish-medium schools is finding staff who have the skills that Maureen spoke of, the capacity to deal with young people and the necessary fluency and flexibility in Irish. Early-years work in any language is about drawing the child out, stretching their imagination, and

presenting and building creative opportunities. A teacher cannot present a script that they prepared the night before and say that they have done their homework and now have all the Irish that they need to talk to the children.

It takes teachers with a high level of language flexibility and fluency, and, frankly, it is hard to attract those with such skills into a school for a few hours a day. That is particularly the case outside the critical mass of the cities. In rural pre-school settings it is hard to find the sustained services of staff who have the necessary quality of Irish, the skills that Maureen mentioned in dealing with young people, and the awareness of what is appropriate to the needs, interests and ability of young people.

**Miss McIlveen:**

Although my question focuses on Irish-medium schools, would a very poor rating from the inspectorate of a pre-school or primary school have an impact on the next year's intake? Would parents decide that they did not want to send their children to that school?

**Mr P McAlister:**

The Chairperson mentioned a school that had lost the confidence of the community. A negative report from the inspectorate would affect a community's confidence in a school. Although we do not follow it up, it is reasonable to suspect that a negative report would influence the thinking of a community in which such a school was situated.

**Mr Goudie:**

They may not be directly connected. However, recent analysis of the number of hits to our website shows an increasing interest by parents in accessing reports either because they live in an area and want to make a choice of where to send their children or because they are moving to an area. They also directly contact the inspection services branch for sight of reports on local

schools. Parental interest is growing.

John O'Dowd mentioned leadership. We should not have to wait for an inspection to surface a poor leader in a school — there is a responsibility on a school's governing body. Those folk work voluntarily; they are extremely valuable people who make a huge contribution. However, it concerns me that a governing body will accept our findings because it already knows that something was wrong but did not enact a mechanism to provide support for a leader who was experiencing difficulties. The governing body should not wait for an inspection report to surface a poor leader and then deal with the consequences. We are saying that more in our spoken reports to governing bodies and in our published reports.

**The Chairperson:**

Perhaps my question reflects my inability to navigate these reports. I in no way suggest that Stanley or his team were unduly sympathetic to or easy on Departments. However, sometimes I get the feeling that there is a sensitivity around some issues, especially Irish-medium schools, one in three of which was deemed to be failing. That is still an issue. As people involved in education, we need to address seriously the huge problems in that sector.

Over the past number of weeks, the Committee has been discussing pre-school education, and some pretty stark comments were made. It falls into the conflict — I will put it no stronger than that — between the statutory and the voluntary and community sectors.

The report states that almost all the statutory nursery schools and nursery units and a majority of the voluntary and private ones reach the necessary standard. I saw somewhere that 63% in the statutory sector and 24% or 25% in the community and voluntary sector fell into the category of "good or outstanding". That is a huge difference between the two sectors.

I have to be fair and reflect accurately the reasons that the early-years educationalists gave for the difference. On the other hand, the statutory and voluntary sector representatives gave reasons why their units were so good.

There is a huge difference between those two figures: more than 60% and 23%. What makes such a difference? We have had many reports about qualifications. Some will say that qualified teachers should be leading pre-school education; others will say that it is adequate to have people who have an NVQ level 3 or upwards.

**Dr Bennett:**

The figures show that the situation is not black and white: it is not all good in the statutory sector and not all poor in the community and voluntary sector. We need to recognise that to start with. Qualifications and experience are key issues, and we have dealt with that. There are other issues — funding is different for the two sectors. The statutory sector comprises two types of provision: one is the statutory nursery school, which is exclusively for pre-school children; the other is the nursery unit in a primary school. Both are staffed by qualified teachers, and their resourcing is higher than the resourcing for provision in the voluntary and private sector.

There are other factors. The size of the pre-school setting in the voluntary sector and the salaries of the staff in it often cause a huge turnover of staff, so it does not have the consistency of the statutory sector. There is also a difference in access to continuing professional development, because staff in the voluntary sector are usually not teachers and so do not have access to CASS support and the normal supports that exist for teachers.

The other areas of weakness in the provision that we talk about in the report — and remember that the overall picture is improving — include physical development. Sometimes, in a pre-school setting in the voluntary sector, there is not enough space around the school. The pre-

school accommodation may be much more limited and children may not have a playground or areas around the pre-school to explore. Those are just some of the reasons for poorer performance.

**Mrs M Bradley:**

Some 11,600 parents replied to your questionnaire. Are you satisfied with that? Does that represent an increase in responses to such questionnaires? Are schools and communities working closely enough together?

**Mr Goudie:**

We get a very good response from parents. Our statisticians tell us that, in their responses to questionnaires, parents not only complete the forms and tick the boxes, but they write comments, which we find extremely useful. The comments are analysed in advance of inspections and the information is made available to reporting inspectors. We do not always take what parents say as gospel truth; we check it with the head teacher. However, in many schools we get a healthy response from parents, which reflects their interest. The anonymous nature of the questionnaire facilitates that. We are careful to manage the information and check it with the head teacher; however, it is only a part of the evidence base for an inspection.

**Mr Lunn:**

I am curious about the best age to introduce children to pre-school. Is there evidence to suggest that bringing children into that environment a year before their pre-school year is beneficial in the long run? Does it make any difference to them?

**Dr Bennett:**

It is a question that the Department, and all of us, considers often. Ideally, the child's best environment in early years is the family. However, that raises questions about what constitutes

"family" and the values in it. Let us park that for a moment. We look at Sure Start and the research into the long-term consequences of pre-school provision.

Let me take the second of those first. Long-term research carried out by the Institute for Education of the University of London finds categorically that good-quality pre-school provision has long-term effects on the education of children through their primary-school years. A great deal of brain development takes place in those years, particularly in children's capacity to develop language — which is a tool for learning.

The second point is that family is best. However, we all know that there are huge numbers of dysfunctional families and single parent families and that parents need to go out to work. The Department's response is to develop Sure Start schemes in areas of deprivation to replicate the richness of a family education in early years. That is what we would like for children in the round. The beauty of Sure Start is that it also involves the parents and helps them to become involved in their children's education. In the developing world, the influences on a child's education come much more from without the school gates than from within them. The reverse is the case in the developed world, where there are many more implications and stronger impacts on education from within the school.

**Mr Lunn:**

I do not dispute the value of Sure Start. I think of the decreasing number of families that are not dysfunctional. Have you evidence that starting a child's education at two instead of three accelerates its educational development?

**Dr Bennett:**

The evidence that we have looks at three and four-year-olds rather than two-year-olds, and it suggests that the best place for early childhood is with the parent.

**The Chairperson:**

The inspectorate does not inspect Sure Start.

**Dr Bennett:**

We have inspected the two-year-old provision that the Department of Education funded; we published a report on it about four months ago.

**The Chairperson:**

We will make that available to members.

**Mr Craig:**

The annexe to your report says that you are doing follow-up on 39 of the 49 post-primary schools that you inspected. Is that not an indication of serious difficulties in those schools? Why is there such a high percentage of follow-up?

**Mr Goudie:**

I will let John deal with the detail. We have six categories of performance from outstanding to unsatisfactory. However, even if a school is deemed satisfactory, it will be subject to a follow-up process that is not as detailed as that for a school that is deemed inadequate or unsatisfactory. We continue to have an interest in a school even if it is deemed satisfactory with a view to improving its performance.

**Mr J Anderson:**

We must bear in mind that the follow-up procedure takes place 15 to 18 months after the original

report, and the figure of 39 must be understood in that context. I checked the 49 figure. Of the 49 schools, the half dozen deemed less than satisfactory have intensive support and follow-up; a further 14 that were graded as satisfactory were followed up. Therefore a better proportion to look at is 20 out of 49.

**Mr Craig:**

Is that not still a high percentage?

**Mr J Anderson:**

Of the 49, six were considered inadequate, and that is reflected in the report. Fourteen were considered satisfactory, which still means that they were less than good and that they have issues that need to be addressed. Those issues are spelt out in the report. There have been follow-up inspections, so I am sure that there has been an improvement. For the past two years, we have published a report on the extent of the improvement after follow-up inspections. In the 2008-09 business year, the improvement in the schools sector was 93%; there was a similar improvement in the 2010 business year. The improvement is significant.

**Mr Craig:**

A statement was made earlier that concerned me. Your inspection report on a school can annihilate it by saying that it is out of control. I read with horror a report that you did not so long ago in my constituency. Do you do a follow-up to ensure that education and library boards or the Department will intervene to turn around a school that is out of control?

**Mr Goudie:**

That is the premise of the formal intervention process. The Department now responds very robustly to a report and places a school in a formal intervention process. The formal intervention process in Every School a Good School has an end point; we are past the stage of schools

continuing in that mode for 10 or 20 years while generations of young people pass through them.

The formal intervention process allows us a number of interventions, including one based on the inspection findings. That could involve putting a new principal in post and changing the shape and make-up of a governing body. There are several interventions en route to the end game, which is now much shorter than it used to be. The formal intervention process in Every School a Good School is giving the traction necessary to turn underperforming schools around. They benefit from a period of intensive support. If our view was that the support was not as good as it should be, that would come of the reporting mechanism by publishing subsequent follow-up reports.

**Mr J Anderson:**

We conduct monitoring and follow-up visits. As a consequence of those, we publish a letter to the school, the chairman of the school, and chief executive of the board, providing the formal intervention and indicating progress in addressing the areas for improvement as published in the report. To be fair, on balance, the vast majority of areas for improvement are addressed and improved; only a very small minority fails to do so.

**Mr P McAlister:**

The formal intervention process is on pages 63 to 67 of the 'Every School a Good School' document.

**Mr Craig:**

Stanley, we are almost back to the scenario that you discussed with John O'Dowd about when you identify a serious managerial issue. You say that perhaps that is down to the board of governors. Have you ever tried to remove a principal who was not up to the job?

**Mr Goudie:**

I have not had personal experience of sitting on a governing body.

**Mr Craig:**

As the Chairperson rightly pointed out, it can involve years of litigation. It is not easy.

**Mr Goudie:**

I accept fully the complexities, which is why it is so appropriate that the Department is reviewing the process. It is not easy for a governing body to deal with such issues. However, if a governing body knows that the leadership is weak or poor, it should not let it continue; it should intervene in the ways that it is allowed to intervene before the situation becomes critical and before the inspectorate comes along.

**Sir Reg Empey:**

I join the Chairperson in his opening remarks about the inspectorate, as I had dealings with it on several occasions.

**The Chairperson:**

He had to respond to his inspection reports.

**Sir Reg Empey:**

Mr O'Dowd raised the issue of management and leadership, but that is an issue across the entire private sector. Departments put a great deal of money into management leadership courses for business. All the reports from Oxford Economics and others indicate that improving management and leadership in our economy would have a dramatic impact. The same applies to the education sector, which, in large measure, is contributing to that, because it is through basic skills bases that our economy develops, and management leadership seems to be a big deal.

The report that the Minister has been preparing on teaching refers to continual professional development, but I was struck by its almost haphazard nature. There are various budgets in different boards for it, there is no compulsion to participate in it, and given the fact that we have eight or nine applicants for every teacher training college place — in complete contrast to the position elsewhere — it seems bizarre that, with the esteem in which the profession is held, there is no clear-cut process for continuous professional development. I do not understand that. It has to be introduced in a meaningful way. Because of the high bar now to get into teacher training, we have a resource that nobody else has, yet we seem unable to exploit it to the best of our abilities. Despite pressures on teachers, demand to get into the profession is high here.

Like Trevor, I feel very strongly about basic numeracy and literacy, as problems in that regard cost Departments, including the Department for Employment and Learning, further down the line. I pushed up dramatically the amount of money that we put into essential skills; it will be more than £10 million next year. That does not take account of the support that is given to a whole range of training organisations so that they can reach harder-to-reach clients in the community, which is something that you inspect.

We are putting enormous resources in at a much later stage. It is so much harder to fix the literacy and numeracy problems of a young adult of 16 than those of a child. Given the expertise and experience of the inspectorate, how is it that we allow children to go from primary to post-primary school without being able to read properly? Those children sit at the back of the class, humiliated before their peers; they are inevitably discarded by their teachers, who have to get on with the rest of the children. Why are we doing that? Those children are the NEETs ( not in education, employment or training) of the future. With all the years of experience in the inspectorate, what are we not doing that is allowing that to continue?

**Mr P McAlister:**

In my first week as the principal of a primary school in a rural area, an elderly gentleman asked

me whether I was the new master, and I said that I was. He said, "Teach them to read and they'll teach themselves after that". I have often reflected on that. He did not have much schooling, but he appreciated the importance of reading.

Mary asked about the link between schools and the community. One of the things that we notice in our inspections is that that link is not uniform across the piece: where there is good support for the school from the community, the values and attitudes of young children are more often caught than taught. If children get a sense that their parents value learning, the school and what goes on in it, it is much easier for the teacher to point them in the direction of learning from the word go Part of the issue is getting a connection.

Maureen said that in other parts of the world the environment outside school has a bigger part to play. We must recognise that some teachers face difficulties that education alone cannot address and that support and resources are needed from other Departments to support the work of the teacher in that context by helping the community and parents to value education.

Once that is in place, it is important to remember that the teacher is the key agent of improvement; it is important to have well-qualified teachers and coherent, high-quality continuing professional development opportunities for them. It is also important that the focus be on learning and that each teacher is thinking about the next step in the learning of each child; teachers do not have to have a grand plan for education in Northern Ireland. The focus of the teacher is on the individuals in his or her class, particularly with regard to literacy and numeracy, not just as ends in themselves but as tools for learning in the years ahead.

**Mr Goudie:**

We do not manage the transition from early years to primary education or from primary to post-primary schooling terribly well. That leaves a deficit in which young trainees are in work-based

learning situations who cannot read, write or deal with basic numeracy.

Money should be deployed on early-years provision. We also need to look at how we manage transitions and whether it may be necessary to keep a young person back before they advance to the next stage of their education.

Paragraph 3.3.4 spells out things that we have found wrong in pedagogy. It sets out areas for improvement in the primary phase, which, if put right, would improve standards, particularly in reading and writing. We need to be more innovative in managing key transitions and correct difficulties in a young person's life earlier rather than trying to fix them when they are less receptive to the idea of education.

**Sir Reg Empey:**

When ICT was added as a third essential skill in summer 2009, it created a huge surge in the numbers coming forward. Embarrassment is a factor that must be overcome. Computers are now part of every aspect of business and everyday life — the first thing one does is switch on the computer, whether in an office, a factory or on a farm. They are omnipresent.

Could ICT overcome the many social and other barriers to which you referred? Teachers have to face kids who come to school without breakfast or lunch or who experience all sorts of difficulties at home. However, all kids understand computers, because they play games with them. Could ICT be adapted to assess what a child can and cannot do? There is no social barrier to computers, whereas learning to read and write in a classroom can be a huge issue for some children.

The States have hold-back years so that children can participate fully when they get to post-

primary education. The period from transfer until the age of 16 is the Death Valley of education for many young people. Could bringing ICT to bear at a very early stage be of help?

**Dr Bennett:**

I cannot believe that the numbers of children who are not succeeding as well as we would like are not succeeding because they lack innate ability; however, some children come to school with complex physical, linguistic and emotional difficulties. We need to recognise that there has been an increase in such difficulties and that children are not available for learning until those difficulties have been sorted out.

Why are those children not succeeding? I would take the more general point of what Sir Reg says: it has to do, at least in part, with the relevance that young people see in how they are taught and perhaps even in the language and content of programmes used in school.

ICT can be a huge draw for young people in its interest and hands-on impact. We could do considerably more with ICT.

However, that means helping teachers to realise what the potential is. Children learn to develop language by using it, not by being passive recipients of it or being taken through narrow skill-and-drill exercises. It is by using it in relevant ways. A child learns language through seeing how someone else can read the words that he puts on a page and understand what is going on in his head. ICT can demonstrate the engagement with language. I can write to you on screen and get your response. There are a number of ways in which ICT can be used, but teachers need to know how best to do it.

Let me go back to some of the programmes that were used for developing children's language

in the early years of primary school. I do not want to get into the detail, but teachers said categorically of the reading recovery programme and the training for it — in this part of the world, across the water, in Australia and New Zealand — that that programme gave them insights into how children develop language in a way that they had never before had. That came from experienced teachers. There is something there that we need to look at.

We need to know the various components that help children to develop. "Reading recovery programme" was a misnomer; the programme is about oral language, reading and writing. I have never seen a scheme as good as that programme for developing a teacher's capacity to assess how children develop language.

**Mrs M Bradley:**

In my parish in Derry there is a community group and a women's group that meets every Tuesday. On Fridays, some go to the school and help the children with their reading; others teach the children to crochet and knit, but the reading group is the most successful. One of the little lads in the class said to the lady helping him to read: "Can you be my granny?" The reading corner is now called the granny corner. It works very well. Those ladies can sometimes get more out of a child than a teacher can, because the child may feel more relaxed. The community can work with the school and help in many respects.

**The Chairperson:**

Adaptive learning teaching and assessment (ALTA) is a useful system and we must get some clarification from the Department on it. This treads on territory that John dealt with earlier about not having information and not asking about UCAS. It seems as though there is reluctance, for some reason, to use it. It has been on the go for some time and I have seen it demonstrated. It is along the lines referred to by Sir Reg. It gives a huge amount of information to the teacher. It is an IT system that helps the pupil immensely with mathematics. It is different when it comes to literacy.

There is something fundamentally wrong. I cannot get my head round this. In 1998, we had the first damning report from the Public Accounts Committee on numeracy and literacy, and we have not made massive strides since then. Elements of the report state that there have been improvements; however one in five — or one in four in primary schools — still has inadequate literacy and numeracy skills.

The Minister talks nonsense about transfer and blames everything on it. Set that aside. There is something wrong. Is it the jigsaw of policies? Is it the overload? Is it the revised curriculum? Is it the issue of male teachers? I do not think that it is any one of these things on its own, rather a culmination of factors. We do not seem to be getting it right. `

The figure that Sir Reg gave us is astounding.

**Sir Reg Empey:**

For one small aspect of essential skills.

**The Chairperson:**

It is probably far more. If we had a proper structure for early-years and primary education, we would have a continuum throughout the education system. I am very keen on that.

**Mr B McCrea:**

I apologise for missing some of your submission, so if you have already answered my questions you can nod and tell me to read Hansard. I cannot understand why the benefits of early-years education are not brought more to the fore. We talked recently about why we are not getting to

the core of education problems. Surely the inspectorate could speak out when it sees problems developing in transitions from Sure Start to nursery and then primary.

**Mr Goudie:**

We do and we have.

**Mr B McCrea:**

Perhaps we should be more emphatic. From speaking to folk in the pre-primary sector, I get the feeling that there is still an idea that nursery is where children go to have fun and that, far from being paid to work there, nursery teachers should pay us to play with kiddies and plasticine. I was interested in what Maureen said about communication as a specialist skill; not just reading and writing but language development for interpersonal and social behaviour.

Those are the areas in which we can make a difference. Frankly, we need to do more to explain to the public and to budget holders that this is where effective intervention takes place. Am I on the same page as you?

**Mr Goudie:**

Absolutely.

**Mr B McCrea:**

I know that you have to tread a fine line because sometimes people round this table play politics.

**The Chairperson:**

Never.

**Mr B McCrea:**

The commissioner for political statements has left, so I cannot check whether we are making political statements at the moment. *[Laughter.]*

With your professional reputation, you could influence the public debate by saying that there was a problem with a particular area. I do not expect the witnesses to comment, but we are having something of a sterile debate on transfer at the age of 11. Although there are different views on the matter, the real issue lies further back. A useful challenge for the inspectorate would be to say, "This is where the argument is."

In your report I read about leadership and where schools fail. That is also an issue on which we need to be harder-hitting. We are in danger of having 80% of our cohort more or less ok; they chunder through plus or minus a few percentage points. However, we are simply not reaching the under-achieving 20%. Should we not have a fundamental review to get to the bottom of under-achievement?

**Mr Goudie:**

I could not agree more. When our previous report showed that one child in five was not reaching the appropriate literacy and numeracy standards by the end of Key Stage 2, I could have reported it that 80% were hitting the mark.

However, I chose to turn it on the other side. That is why we said that we had a deficit in 25% of leadership and management in primary and post-primary schools. We have heralded the literacy, numeracy and leadership issues loud and clear. I have no problem with what you are saying, because we have a strategy to disseminate the report's findings by taking it into the community. If that enlivens the debate on the early-years contribution, we are happy to do that

and to engage in that way.

**Mr B McCrea:**

I happened to be in a nursery school on the Shankill Road, and the Sure Start folk said that one of the most disturbing things for them is having children on a Sure Start programme for two-year-olds who do not then find nursery provision. The children have all the benefits for two years and are then left in a desert. Somebody, I do not know who, perhaps it is me, is supposed to point that out, but how can that be? Should we have universal nursery or pre-primary school provision?

**Dr Bennett:**

About 94% or 95% of children are in pre-school education. The issue of where that provision should be is a difficult one. If you are basing your pre-school settings on one year's cohort, you do not have the same flexibility as, say, in a primary school, where you are dealing with seven years. Therefore it is difficult to get that provision in the right place at the right time, particularly in the voluntary sector, when you have so many small settings.

**Mr B McCrea:**

I agree. However, that is an area that we could bring out more. There is also an issue of logistics. If you ask young women why they will not take their child to playschool, part of the reason comes down to their place of work being in the other direction or they cannot cross the road there. A range of social issues prevents people from taking up provision, and those are precisely the mothers and children that we need to get to, because those who are doing OK will make sure that they get their children there anyway.

I worry that percentages mask the real problem. We need to look at the bottom end. We also need to place a bit more emphasis on speech therapists and basic communication skills. I do not mean to be critical, but the inspectorate, with its professionalism and status, could do a little more

to direct the debate. I would be delighted if you could take a few more risks, although I understand why there may be reasons that you cannot.

Is there anything that we can do? Sir Reg said that we have a huge talent pool of aspiring young teachers. Can we not think a bit more creatively? We have a problem with a lack of male teachers in primary schools. I do not think that we have a 'Teach First' scheme here to encourage young male graduates to do a couple of years in primary school. Should we be looking at that, or are we so overburdened by having too many teachers coming out of teacher training? There must be something that we can do to get young men into teaching.

**Sir Reg Empey:**

When the draft of the teacher training report went to the Department and ourselves, I raised the issue of doing something about male teachers. The Minister of Education felt that we would have difficulties with that under equality legislation. We have now got it down to such a small number that, as you say, some schools do not have any male teachers, and you could count on the fingers of practically one hand the number of people coming forward. The issue was raised, but she took the view that we were limited because of the legislation.

**Mr B McCrea:**

We could go in the other direction. How many primary schools did the report say do not have male teachers?

**Dr Bennett:**

Two hundred and eighty-eight.

**Mr B McCrea:**

Out of how many?

**Dr Bennett:**

About 850.

**Mr B McCrea:**

Therefore 25% of primary schools have no male teachers at all. There must be an equality issue there, given that research has indicated that it is a problem.

**The Chairperson:**

A certificate for male teachers.

**Mr P McAlister:**

There is a serious problem. Given the number of single female parents, there are instances in which a child's single significant adult at home is female and all the significant adults at school are female. There is an issue with young boys identifying school as a place that they aspire to do well in. It could lead to marginalisation.

**Mr B McCrea:**

Does the inspectorate agree that young boys learn in a different way from young girls? Is that an accepted fact?

**Mr Goudie:**

There are almost two different teaching methodologies for young boys and for young girls. Boys

prefer certain learning styles: they like to be moving, they like learning to be short and sharp, and ICT influences and motivates them hugely. That is part of the discourse in raising the standards for those who are underachieving.

**Mr B McCrea:**

Have you produced a report on early-years provision recently?

**Dr Bennett:**

Our most recent survey report was on special educational needs in early years. We also did a short report on the quality of provision in nursery units, vis-á-vis nursery schools and the voluntary sector.

**Mr B McCrea:**

The political debate has moved, and there is general consensus that early intervention and early-years provision should be supported. We need a plan or impetus to deal with the issue. At the moment, things are floundering. We are not sure whether we need an early-years strategy for children between naught and six, naught and three, or three and six. There could be some guidance on that.

Correct me if I am wrong, but I have a feeling that part of the reason why government is so keen to deal with the early-years provision from organisations in the community and voluntary sector is that it is easier to manage budgets, because you are only dealing with them on a one-year basis. If that is at the core of what we are trying to do, we should be looking at statutory provision with long-term funding.

**Dr Bennett:**

Some of that is dealt with in the nought-to-six strategy. It was part of the inspectorate's findings that young mums in certain areas will not move very far to take their children to pre-school

because they do not have the resources to do so. Equally, it is arguable whether a small unit with just one or two people would ever have the resources to deal with the full range of learning difficulties, learning styles or range of education. Where does that leave us? You need to look at some form of area planning so that you have pre-school settings with a collegia link, whatever that should be. That will help you to share resources more widely and will mean that you have a richer pool of resource from which to draw.

**Mr B McCrea:**

I will finish on this point, because the Chairperson will throw something at me otherwise. Universal provision raises the question of whether open enrolment is appropriate in pre-school provision. You need area-based planning, but you also need some way of dealing with much smaller units; that requires clarity from the inspectorate on how it is directed. You could find that there is support for that work and that it is urgently required.

I have only picked up bits and pieces, but by the age of four some children could be up to two years behind. We have to look at that. We need a unified approach, whether we are dealing with a two-, three- or four-year-old. Is there a body that can help us with that? Guidance on that area would be most useful and would be gratefully received by many people.

**Mr Goudie:**

We are very happy to do that. The other thing is that it is not just an educational issue; it is also a health and social issue. There is a connection.

**Mr B McCrea:**

I do not want to extend the debate, but we should look at the idea of almost having a children's ministry to embrace Sure Start, DSD or other aspects. We need a new approach, particularly in dealing with parents, families and children from the most deprived backgrounds.

**Dr Bennett:**

Over the past couple of years, we have been working with our colleagues in health and social services, particularly those working on the early-years team. In the voluntary sector, we did a number of joint inspections. In the Sure Start inspection that we referred to earlier, we enlisted the support of speech and language therapists and another early-years professional from the health and social services side to look at those areas.

The links between health and the wider dimension of education are important as is continuing professional development for teachers. I firmly believe that there is a need to have more definite career pathways for teachers, some of which will take on board modules, for example, from speech and language, counselling, educational psychology and so on. Several issues come together in the question you have raised.

**Mr J Anderson:**

Basil asked earlier whether there was anything that we might say about unemployed teachers, as high-calibre, well-educated and well-qualified young people cannot get teaching posts. The number of unemployed young people is likely to increase. That is particularly dangerous as communities emerge from violence. Those two problems could be connected.

**Mr B McCrea:**

Absolutely. That was my line.

**Mr J Anderson:**

That seems obvious.

**Mr B McCrea:**

Reg spoke of those not in education, employment or training, many of whom are of an age group close to that of the young teachers. We cannot afford to squander resources. Even if it is on a different financial basis, we need to look at it.

**Sir Reg Empey:**

We already have funded the graduate internship schemes that give people six months with a voluntary and community group in an area of significant deprivation. One might think it possible to adapt that and populate it in part with unemployed trainee teachers to deal with some of those issues. We have many of the pieces on the board, but they are not in place.

**The Chairperson:**

That ties in with a point that Maureen made earlier about the reading recovery programme. However, the reading recovery programme is different from the ALTA system used for mathematics, as the reading recovery system is based on the premise of there being an individual teacher. Forty million pounds was spent on numeracy and literacy according to the first PAC report. I hope that the Committee does not look at it again only to find that another £30 million has been spent without any progress.

Surely, rather than spend the money on policy we should spend it on young people who cannot get teaching posts. That reservoir of resource could be more effectively used. At present it sits dormant: young teachers cannot get jobs. We could address that fundamental problem. I cannot understand how we allow children to move from primary to post-primary to learn other languages when they cannot speak their own language. There is something fundamentally wrong.

**Dr Bennett:**

I want to build on the beautiful little incident that Mary mentioned of a child enjoying reading

with an adult so much that he wanted her to become his granny. It illustrates the importance of the relationship between a child and a significant adult in a child's life. That raises the fundamental issue of pastoral care and relationships in schools; there is more to literacy than motivating children with an education.

Youth education is another area, and in fairness the Department is looking at it and at its youth policy. At the moment, however, those two areas, both in the formal and informal education sectors, could complement each other rather better. We say that in our report. Often, a youth worker can provide a young person who is struggling or who has lost his way with a pastoral relationship.

**The Chairperson:**

I have always wanted Mary to be my granny. *[Laughter.]*

**Mrs M Bradley:**

You might not if you knew me. *[Laughter.]*

**The Chairperson:**

Stanley, as you are retiring soon, perhaps you can answer this question more freely. It is my view and that of my party that the inspectorate should be independent of the Department because you, as chief inspector, are also a member of the management board of the Department. Would the work of the inspectorate be unshackled — assuming that you believe it to be shackled — if it were independent and could ride in like the cavalry and tell the Department that there was a problem that it had better sort out?

**Mr Goudie:**

I thought that you had implied earlier that we had a cosy relationship with the Department or that we were sensitive to it. The inspectorate speaks independently and we report honestly and openly. I do not believe that I have a cosy relationship with Departments; that is the truth. I have written to the three permanent secretaries asking for a formal response to the report and for the actions that they will take on foot of it.

We will challenge the Department if it has not moved on the issues that we raise in our evaluation reports. I believe that we act independently and unshackled and that we speak openly and honestly. How structures might change in future is for others to say, but neither my colleagues nor I have ever pulled back from saying something that we felt needed to be said: our focus is entirely on the learner; we are advocates for learners. If that causes upset, we are happy to live with it.

**The Chairperson:**

I want to ask about a procedural matter. Was the paper that you presented to us today cleared by the Department?

**Mr Goudie:**

I have complete autonomy to write my reports. As a matter of courtesy, I would have shared the report with the permanent secretary, but there was no departmental input into it — nor should there be.

**The Chairperson:**

Thank you for your useful evidence. Again, we wish you well for the future.

**Mr Goudie:**

Thank you.