



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Education

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Inquiry into the Education and Training  
Inspectorate and School Improvement Process:  
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

8 January 2014

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)  
Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Jonathan Craig  
Mr Chris Hazzard  
Mr Trevor Lunn  
Mr Stephen Moutray  
Mr Robin Newton  
Mr Sean Rogers  
Mr Pat Sheehan

**Witnesses:**

Mr Malachy Crudden	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
Mr Terry Murphy	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Terry and Malachy, for coming; apologies for the slight delay. We will try to make up some time, if we can. Thank you for coming and thank you for the paper that you have submitted to us and the comments that you have made. Terry, do you want to make some opening comments? Members will then have questions.

**Mr Terry Murphy (Council for Catholic Maintained Schools):** Mervyn, thank you very much. Good morning, everyone. We are very pleased to be here. Thank you for the invitation.

We are very happy to have the opportunity to contribute to your inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and school improvement. CCMS is very committed to the importance of ensuring that every child fulfils their educational potential, and we believe that the work of the Education and Training Inspectorate has a very important part to play in helping us, working with our educational partners, in realising that ambition. Malachy and I work together with the leaders of the Catholic maintained sector schools and our partners in the education and library board to ensure that our schools are as good as they can be. While we are reassured by the inspection outcomes for the Catholic maintained schools, we know that there is always room for improvement. Through our close relationships with our schools, we will continue to strive for higher levels of educational attainment in our schools.

It is the view of CCMS that the work of the Education and Training Inspectorate has made a very significant contribution to school improvement in the North of Ireland through the reports and inspections that it provides, the regular and very purposeful contact that it maintains with its schools between inspection periods and the wide range of guidance materials that it has provided for the

education system over a long time. We feel that that contribution should be acknowledged. We have confidence in the reported outcomes of our school inspections. We rely on those very heavily for the school improvement work that we undertake with our schools.

In providing our response to you, we are keen to contribute to the debate on how the school inspection service should be developed in order to ensure that it meets the needs of individual schools particularly and the education system as a whole as it goes forward into the future. There are a number of matters that we feel should be considered in your review. We have reflected them in our response to you. They include such things as the need to look at a more holistic way of measuring the educational value that schools bring or add for their pupils; the reality that each school has its own distinct community and internal organisational context and the need to factor that into the evaluation of the school during the inspection process; the importance, therefore, of measuring a school's outcomes primarily against its own baseline position in the inspection process, which is a much greater educational priority, we feel, than the use of inspection simply for the purpose of providing a system comparator; the importance of leadership for school improvement by school principals and others in schools; and the enhancement of the effectiveness of boards of governors as accounting authorities that are capable of challenging and supporting their schools, which, we feel, needs to be given greater emphasis in the inspection process; and the need for inspection to be more supportive in nature, rather than it simply being seen as something that monitors the delivery of the Department of Education's policy priorities.

Many of those things that I have referred to are included in current inspections. However, our interest is that we feel that we need to discuss the emphasis that they are given in the inspection process and the thoroughness with which they are assessed as part of that process.

Your invitation to contribute to the review asked for comments about actions that could be taken to improve the inspection process. In our response to you, we have referred to such issues as the frequency of inspection, which, we know, is very much alive and well in media coverage today, and the need to broaden the range of value-added measures that are included in the inspection process and our evaluation of schools generally. We would like to see much greater scrutiny in inspection of the quality of educational leadership in schools, particularly leadership for school improvement, because we feel that, although the current approach to monitoring the quality of management and leadership of schools is generally fine, it needs to have a much stronger emphasis on the leadership of school improvement. That is critical.

We do, however, feel that there are some givens that any standard inspection should retain, such as the quality of school-development planning; the quality of teacher planning and lesson delivery; and the whole-school approach to monitoring and evaluating pupil progress. All of those things are very much cornerstones of the school's effectiveness and should be retained in inspection.

We feel that enhancement of the capacity of boards of governors is a critical process that should be part of inspection. It is part of inspection, but not sufficiently rigorously in our view. We know that that has to be balanced against the fact that governors are people who act voluntarily in the interests of schools.

We feel that your review needs to look at the descriptors and terminology that are used to report inspection outcomes to schools. We have given some detail on that in our report to you. We feel that more scrutiny should be given in inspection to how educationally focused the financial management decision-making in schools has been. That is very important.

Lastly, we also referred to the impact of falling and low enrolment on pupils' access to a broad and balanced curriculum in a school. Many very small schools that are, clearly, unsustainable into the future often use good inspection outcomes as a means of justifying their continued existence. We feel that the inspection process should be more direct in representing its view with respect to school sustainability. Finally, in our response we commented that we feel that the Education and Training Inspectorate needs to have sufficient autonomy to get on with its work, unencumbered to a degree by other influences. However, we have also acknowledged the need for some mechanism to quality-assure the work of the inspectorate — we are not quite sure how you would do that, but we feel that that is a necessary thing — so that we can have an overview of the standards that it uses in undertaking its work and the consistency with which it applies those standards. That, in our view, is largely a matter for the Department and for government to take care of.

That concludes our opening comments. We are very pleased to be here with you, and we are happy to enter into discussion with you today.

**The Chairperson:** Thanks, Terry. Given the comments and the submission that you have made, I take it that you see merit in there being an independent inspectorate.

**Mr Murphy:** Yes.

**The Chairperson:** Do you believe that the inspection regime in Northern Ireland has, over the past number of years, become more about informing area planning, as opposed to a school improvement process? You made a comment about a small school that is not sustainable but gets a good inspection report. That would be used as justification for the continuance of that school, but if a school gets a good report is that not really the reason why it should exist? Whether or not it meets a certain size is not really the issue, because you are making a judgement on the future of that school on its financial viability and not on its educational viability.

How could you justify closing a good school that was deemed to be such as a result of an inspection report? How would you be able to sell that to parents, particularly if the provision that you are going to amalgamate it with may be bigger but does not get the same outcomes as the smaller school? You and I are aware of examples where that is the case. In my constituency, without naming schools, there is a very good small post-primary provision that is being asked to subsume itself into a larger provision that has not had an inspection report like that of the smaller school.

**Mr Murphy:** Let me answer the first part of that. Malachy, who works in area planning, will take up your latter point. Our view is that the inspection process should be singularly aimed at monitoring the standard of education that is provided in a school and should not have an area planning function. However, inspection reports sometimes do mention a school's viability, and we are just a little concerned. It is a very small aspect of what an inspection might be about. Where a school has a very low and declining enrolment, the inspectorate will often comment on that and say that the employing authority or whoever should consider the matter, but it would never adjudicate on the viability of the school as such. My initial response to what you have said is that inspection should almost exclusively be an educationally focused activity.

**Mr Malachy Crudden (Council for Catholic Maintained Schools):** I have to agree with Terry when he says that the focus has to be on education. By the same token, however, we are in a very difficult and challenging environment at the moment with regard to area planning. In my view, we need the inspectorate to make, perhaps, more detailed comments about the impact of a small school on the educational experience of the children who are at that school. By that I mean the broad educational experience of the children in a small school.

It would be very surprising to us if, in a two- or three-teacher school, the outcome in quality of education was anything other than good. In many respects, in a lot of situations, we have small schools that are getting to a point where they offer almost one-to-one tuition because the enrolment has reached such small numbers. It would come as a surprise to us if the quality of education was not good. We ask ourselves, however, to what extent children in very small schools are being exposed to the full breadth of education in its widest meaning. We have concerns about whether, in some areas, where there is, for example, one child in a primary-one class, we are doing everything that we possibly can for that child's social and emotional development as well as for his or her educational development. That is a challenge for us. I feel that the onus is on the inspectorate now to comment in greater detail about the impact on the delivery of education in small schools, rather than simply saying that the employing authority may wish to look at their future sustainability.

**The Chairperson:** Malachy, is that not asking the inspectorate to give cover for a managing authority to close schools? The managing authority — I am not solely picking out CCMS, as it could be an education and library board or another managing authority — will probably take the same view. It is more likely to be an issue for primary schools. If I were to ask you or CCMS privately what number of schools you believe that you should close, you should be able to tell me where they are. You have not closed them yet. In fact, what you have done is waited and waited, and what has happened is that the number has got smaller and smaller. It would now be convenient for us all to say that the inspectorate should come in and say that a school should close. However, that is shifting the responsibility, because the inspectorate's primary role should relate to children's educational outcomes, although I have a doubt about whether that is the case. I take your point about the breadth of exposure that a child has in its educational experience.

**Mr Crudden:** We are certainly not saying that the inspectorate should say that a school should or should not remain in existence. What we are saying is that the inspectorate should look at the full

breadth of the quality of education for the children in a school and comment on that, rather than simply commenting on the level of achievement in English and mathematics. It should extend its comments on the quality of educational experience to the whole range of educational experiences that children are having.

**The Chairperson:** We could get into that whole area. I read one inspection report that commented on the ethos or identity of a particular school. I will not name the school, but I wish that every school had a report like that one, which referred to actions to redress social injustice. A lot of people would ask what that is and how the inspectorate can definitively say that a school has been very proactive and alive in promoting pupil action to redress social injustice. Many would argue from a different perspective that there is a risk of becoming very subjective as opposed to objective. What objective criteria would you use to determine the breadth of educational exposure that a child should have?

**Mr Murphy:** Every school inspection report in the primary sector of the Catholic maintained sector goes over Malachy's desk, and they all, primary and post-primary, go over my desk. The type of report that you describe is exceptional. Inspection reports, certainly in the Catholic maintained sector with which I am familiar, tend to adhere to a standard educational focus and rarely stray into areas such as the one that you refer to. So, in that respect, I do not share your concern about a degree of subjective judgement coming in. I feel that the current inspection process and how it reports the outcomes is fairly objective. We have a fairly high level of satisfaction in the maintained sector with the reliability of inspection reports on our schools. We rely on them very heavily. Indeed, our school system generally needs a process of inspection and reporting of inspection that we can rely on heavily, because it is a critical window into a school.

**Mr Kinahan:** Thank you very much, Terry and Malachy. During the previous presentation, Sir Robert Salisbury talked a great deal about self-evaluation and the need to move in that direction. How much of that happens in the maintained sector, and do you monitor how much of that is going on?

**Mr Murphy:** We agree with that. Our view is that we want schools to develop internal processes by which they develop their own improvement regimes, monitor and evaluate their own improvement, and challenge themselves, in the senior leadership of the school, the individual teachers of the school, and the board of governors of the school. In fact, the inspection process would be the quality assurance of that work. In the Catholic maintained sector, we monitor the outcomes of our school inspections very closely. We also keep a very close eye, on an annual basis, on the frequency with which inspections are happening. We visit schools that have not been inspected for some time, and we look at their processes for monitoring and evaluating pupil progress and staff performance, etc. We go into schools that have not had an inspection for some time and exercise our own scrutiny into those schools.

With regard to a school where there are concerns following an inspection, we visit the school in between an inspection and a follow-up inspection and sit with the board of governors and the senior leadership team and review the progress of the school. As a result, we have our own intelligence about our schools. We feel that they are very well served by the processes by which we visit and build relationships with them. If our schools are very well developed within themselves and have their own systems very well in place, we should become less and less dependent on the inspection process, as it were. However, having said that, the quality assurance of inspection outcomes and the frequency with which it works would continue to be important, would it not?

**Mr Crudden:** Down through the years — certainly in all the time that I have worked with the CCMS — we have developed a culture in our schools where, in the majority of cases, we would now classify them as being self-evaluating schools. We encourage them to use the documentation that the ETI sends out pre-inspection at any time. Even if they are not due an inspection, we ask our schools to take that documentation and conduct a self-evaluation exercise. In some cases, we got them to the point where they did that and then invited the ETI to come and quality-assure, as Terry said, the exercise that they undertook. That culture that we have developed contributes, in large part, to the outcomes that we find with the inspections in our schools.

**Mr Murphy:** In addition, last year, for example, we published a document for distribution to our schools — we also supplied it to our colleagues in the education and library boards for use in the controlled sector schools — about the process of self-evaluation in a school and how senior leaders and senior leadership in schools should be undertaking that process, particularly with respect to the self-evaluation of the school development plan, which is a critical tool that lies at the centre of the

school improvement strategy. We are very wedded to the importance of self-evaluation and the development of that skill within our schools.

**Mr Crudden:** The culture that we have developed was based on the fact that we had the staff to go out to the schools on a regular basis. For example, prior to my current post, I had responsibility for all the Catholic maintained primary schools in the South Eastern Board area, and I was in regular contact with them. We developed that culture, and it is one that, in a sense, sustains us at the moment. You will be aware that our staffing levels have been severely cut to the point where we do not have the manpower now to maintain the connection with the schools that we had. The work that we have done during the past 25 years or so is now beginning to see us through a difficult period while we await the decisions and so on in relation to ESA. We are very proud of the fact that we have created that culture.

**Mr Kinahan:** That answer was very good and comprehensive. However, I think that it gives us a real reason for why the sectoral bodies are so important in the inspection process, so maybe we should explore their underfunding. You had the funding, but at the moment you face the danger of being cut more, which could have an effect in the future. However, at the same time, other areas do not have quite the same funding.

**Mr Murphy:** As Malachy rightly said, the education and library boards are largely depleted. The Curriculum and Advisory Support Service (CASS) is stripped away in comparison with what it used to be. Our own educational and advisory services in our schools are significantly depleted. If it were not for access to our education associates teams, we would not be in as strong a position as we are or have been in the past. So, we need a resolution of the ESA question and to reboot the organisations that we have or to get the new organisation established. That is because the current position means that there is significant risk to the standards of education provision. In my view, that is a really important point.

**Mr Kinahan:** I am all for the rebooting side of it.

The summary that we got refers to life values and judging the importance of business input and seeing how schools prepare pupils for business and life outside. Can you expand a little on how you see that in the inspection process?

**Mr Murphy:** We feel that the inspection process is too narrowly focused in its judgement of a school on the outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 and GCSE etc. It often judges a school on how it compares on those things with schools that are broadly similar. Our view is that, primarily, the inspection should do two things. First, it should measure the progress that the school has made against its own baseline position. Where, educationally, are the P1s who came in? They are now in P3, so where are they educationally? Where are the children who came into Year 8 in post-primary school in their education coming out of P7? What are their GCSE or end of Key Stage 3 outcomes, and what is the real educational value that the school has added? So, we should look at the journey that a school has made within itself, perhaps in addition to a comparator with other schools with which it is broadly similar.

Secondly, we feel that the inspection process should be more holistic in its evaluation of the value-added that the school has brought. So, where children with special needs or special gifts are concerned, and in the preparation of children for life in their social and personal development, not just their educational development, the inspection process should look for ways to measure those to some degree. The difficulty, of course, is their measurability. For children with particular issues in their educational development or their life outside school, you may often have freedom of information and child protection issues. We think that more could be done to measure the school's contribution to the general personal and social development of children's lives.

If you took a small cohort of children who came into a school with particular issues, you would find that no one follows or measures their progress through inspected outcomes. So, we feel that your review could look at a range of things in that context. Many of our post-primary schools and some primaries are pushing community and educational challenges very hard in and around the inner city areas of Derry and Belfast where educational outcomes as measured by Key Stage assessments or GCSE outcomes would make it appear that a school was not doing terribly well for its children. However, you should look in much more detail at what that school has actually achieved with the children.

We have a school in west Belfast that is being inspected next Monday. An officer from the Belfast Education and Library Board has been in that school and has looked at where a significant cohort of its pupils have been in their learning from year 8 right through to the end of year 12. Although the overall outcomes for the school indicate that it is not doing very well for its children, many of them have made very significant educational advances. Those things need to be acknowledged. Otherwise, teachers and principals just get demoralised. We do not want that to happen. More could be done, but we acknowledge that it will be a difficult thing to achieve.

**Mr Crudden:** I have personal experience of the ETI appearing to take greater cognisance of value-added now. I can give two examples of two schools where, following the inspection, if the ETI had based its final determinations simply on key stage results, the outcome would not have been particularly good for the schools. However, in fairness to the inspectors involved at that time, they took the time to look in greater depth at the school-generated data. As a result of doing that, they were able to see that the school had actually done a considerably good job when it was taken into account where the children were when they came into the school. The result of that was that the school came out a grade higher than would have been the case had it been based solely on key stage results.

We are all aware of the difficulties around the key stage assessments and the reliability of key stage assessment. I go back to Mervyn's point about small schools: one or two children in a small school can make such a huge difference to the outcomes at the end of a key stage. Although that is what we are faced with at the moment when measuring schools, we need to make a concerted effort to find other measures that will accurately reflect the progress that a school has made.

**The Chairperson:** As well as that, they need to be standardised and consistent. There are other examples of inspection reports in schools in this city in which the inspectorate has totally and absolutely ignored the progress that has been made by a child from the day it went into the school to the day of the assessment; it looked at the overall picture and did not take that into consideration. That consistency needs to be addressed. There needs to be standardisation across the regime in how you assess. The Department has, for many years, resisted standardisation because it believes that it can be used for other purposes. I will not go into that debate today.

**Mr Rogers:** You are very welcome. Just on the point of school-generated data, would that school in west Belfast have used a baseline assessment for those kids when they came into P1?

**Mr Murphy:** Into year 8, yes.

**Mr Rogers:** So, it is a post-primary.

**Mr Murphy:** Yes. It would have used standardised tests at the point of entry into the school. Throughout the progress of the children, it would have used standardised tests. Therefore, we are able to demonstrate statistically the progress the children have made, apart from being able to demonstrate it in real terms in the work of the children as well.

**Mr Rogers:** You mentioned the enhancement of the role of boards of governors. You talked about more rigour. Maybe you would like to elaborate on that. I suppose that I should declare an interest as a chair of a board of governors of a maintained school.

**Mr Murphy:** Our experience is that our boards of governors are hard-working, highly committed groups of people who try to work in the best interests of their schools. Our experience also is that they are very underdeveloped in their capacity to understand statistical educational information provided to them by the school, what it means and how they should be appropriately responding to it. They are underdeveloped in the training that they have been provided with for how they appropriately challenge the school and how they draw in others to help them. It is probably exceptional across our whole school system for a chair of a board of governors to ring an organisation such as CCMS or an education and library board and say, "We are worried about our school. Can you come and help us with it?" so that we can send a professional educational associate to help them with their work. Such a culture of scrutiny and supported accountability is something that we would like to see much more strongly supported in our school system, as it would contribute significantly to the culture of self-evaluation that we want to develop in schools.

Why do boards of governors exist? They have to be significant players in school improvement. They are not there just to make appointments and discuss other things in school life. The leadership provided by the chairman of a board of governors is critical; we also feel that one of the most significant roles of a board of governors generally should be its focus on where its school is educationally, where it is going and how it is getting there. They are, if you like, schools' project management boards, and we feel that they should be given greater responsibility in that respect. They need to be trained and supported in undertaking that task, as many of them do not have an educational background. That is very important. Our experience of boards of governors is that, once they are engaged meaningfully, they are very keen and quite able to contribute to that aspect of school life.

**Mr Crudden:** The inspection of governance is now part of the inspection process, although it is still quite light touch. If an inspection report identifies areas for improvement, we have always adopted the approach that one of our officers asks the principal to convene a governors' meeting at which the inspection report is analysed and the areas for improvement are looked at in depth. In that way, governors are aware of what the school needs to do and are involved in helping the school to do it. Now that governance is part of an inspection, we are even more proactive in that area. If an inspection finds that a school is less than good, we insist that one of our officers be present at a governors' meeting, at which the governors' responsibility in school development is outlined. They have to understand that their role is to challenge the principal and the staff and to be seen to be doing that. However, that challenge has to be in a supportive context. There is a job for us to do in capacity building among governors to undertake that role, but it is essential now.

**Mr Hazzard:** Thanks very much for that. This morning, we heard from a parents' group that believes that inspections should either be unannounced or be at one day's notice. They need to be more holistic, as you have pointed out. The group said that reports need to be put up in lights for parents and communities to see everything that has gone on. What are your thoughts on that?

**Mr Murphy:** First, inspection reports are up in lights and are at people's disposal. Schools are encouraged to copy them to their governors and to the parent body. Of course, when schools get a good inspection report, they are not long in putting it up in lights through the local media etc. You cannot blame them for that. Why not, if they have worked hard to achieve good outcomes?

All our schools should be inspection-ready at any time, but they are not. Sometimes, we are surprised at the amount of preparatory work that schools appear to need to do in preparation for an inspection. The notification period has come down from four weeks to two weeks, and, apart from the time required for a school to respond to the inspection team's request for information in advance of the inspection, we are content to see the notification period kept as short as possible. It brings huge stress and strain into a school. If a school gets two weeks' notice, it spends them getting itself ready, and I sometimes worry about the impact of that on the teaching and learning in a school. We would not be terribly upset if the inspection notification period were shortened because we feel that any school or any organisation that is subject to inspection should be inspection-ready.

**Mr Crudden:** That highlights the very important point of leadership. If the leadership of a school is totally effective, any teacher in any school should be ready for anyone to walk into their classroom to observe them teaching. In the best schools, classroom observation takes place as a matter of course. The principal and colleagues come in to observe the teacher. From that perspective, I would be very confident that every one of our schools would be or should be ready to be inspected on the classroom side. However, as Terry said, the amount of documentation that needs to be produced prior to an inspection means that, if you were notified today that you are to be inspected tomorrow, you may have all the documentation in the school, but there is just no way that you could pull together all that documentation and have it ready for inspectors by the next day. I would say that, in 99-9% of our schools, we expect the staff to be ready for the classroom observation side of the inspection.

**Mr Murphy:** Remember that the inspectorate consults, through questionnaires, the staff of the school and the governors. The inspectors meet the governors of the school in advance of the inspection, so quite a bit of upfront work goes on to provide the inspectors with a fairly reliable and detailed contextualisation of the school before they embark on the inspection. All of that could be adjusted, of course. Inspectors could do their consultations throughout the inspection period, etc. Many of the inspections are carried out within quite snappy periods of time. Some of them are one- or two-day inspections; in bigger schools, they may be three-day inspections. To undertake a lot of the preparatory work and consultation exercises with parents and staff within that inspection period would reduce the time for the inspectorial activities. We would not be able to cut down the notification period



to a phone call to tell the school that inspectors are coming the following day. However, we have no significant issues with a reduction of the period. We encourage a culture in which schools are ready to be inspected at any time. If a school is not ready, it is not in the right place or where we want it to be.

**Mr Crudden:** I think that teachers would welcome a shorter notification period because those four weeks can be a bit nerve-racking.

**The Chairperson:** Not according to the inspectors, I have to say. They do not recognise that there is any fear factor in relation to the inspection process.

**Mr Crudden:** I speak from the point of view of someone who has direct contact with schools, day in and day out, and I can assure you — Terry has experience of this at the moment — that teachers get very uptight. If someone were to say to me tomorrow that someone will come to inspect my work next week, I would be equally uptight about it.

**The Chairperson:** The inspectorate is uptight about the Committee inspecting it at the minute, so what goes around comes around.

There is an issue that I think adds to the stress among our teaching staff. There is a mountain — an Everest — of information out there. You can get reams and reams of information from the system, but it seems as though the inspectorate comes in and asks the school to provide all of that within a short period. In reality, the inspectorate has access to possibly 95% of it. I do not know what the percentage is, and that is maybe something that we need to clarify. There is probably only a very small element of particular information that it requires. Rather than all that stress being put on the school, the inspectorate should have access to that overall assessment or information at the minute anyway, as most of us have. On the basis of annual reports and so on, very few schools do not provide that information. Teachers and schools spend an enormous amount of time filling in various requests for information every week. It is all there in the system. If the inspectorate is the Department, as it tells us it is, it should have access to all that. Is that not a way of simplifying the process?

**Mr Murphy:** To a degree. Where information can be drawn from the system — from the databases in the Department etc — the inspectorate should take it from there. Things that are specific to the school, such as the school development plan and other things that only the school can give the inspectorate, would need to stay with the school. Certainly, there is no justification for asking schools to duplicate information: if it already exists in the Department, it should be drawn down. That would help.

On the issue of anxiety, any teacher who has an inspector coming into their classroom to observe them teaching is going to be trepidatious about it, no matter how experienced they are and how deeply they regard themselves as perfectly good teachers. It is a very stressful time.

**Mr Crudden:** A lot of the information that we suggest the inspectorate uses to judge the school is held in the school, such as internal data. So, again, it is one of those situations where you say to yourself, "What information do we use in order to make a judgement, and who holds that information?" Part of the argument is that a lot of the information that gives a truer reflection of the quality of the school is held within the school.

**The Chairperson:** That is a valid point, Malachy.

We would appreciate it if you could provide us with more information on your self-evaluation process, because it would be very helpful to inform members. You made reference to that.

Malachy, to clarify, did the ETI change in the grading go from "satisfactory" to "good" in the specific instance that you referred to?

**Mr Crudden:** Yes, it went from "satisfactory" to "good".

**The Chairperson:** Was that after consultation with the board of governors and the ETI?

**Mr Crudden:** No, in that case the ETI officers spent a bit longer in the school and revisited classrooms, because the information that was contained as part of the key stage information was not,

they felt, an accurate reflection of what they were seeing in the classroom. So, they took the time to go back and look, which, I think, was a personal approach from the inspector concerned as opposed to any policy directive.

**The Chairperson:** We have been told that the ETI does not revisit its grading and —

**Mr Crudden:** No. This was while the inspectors were still in the school.

**The Chairperson:** This was during the inspection?

**Mr Murphy:** They had not reached their final judgement.

**Mr Crudden:** When they were giving the verbal report, they said, "If we had done this, we would have found this, but we did not."

**Mr Murphy:** There is an issue there, if I may say so. In an inspection report, the inspectors will report on a number of aspects of the school's life. They might say that the teaching and learning was "very good", they might say that the pastoral care was "outstanding" and they might say something else was "satisfactory". In their overall assessment, they are trying to balance all of those things. In a "satisfactory" outcome, you could find that some elements were "very good" or "good", some things were "satisfactory" and maybe one or two things were a bit inadequate. In that respect, the overall assessment of the school tends to hide the detail, and into the public domain goes one word only. We have some concerns about that.

**The Chairperson:** We all share that concern.

**Mr Crudden:** Going back to what Chris was saying about the availability of inspection reports to the general public, it may be worth considering at some point the language that is used in inspection reports. We very often find ourselves in a position where we have to be interpreters for a school. So, if professionals sometimes have difficulty interpreting the inspection report, you can imagine how it would be for non-professionals. So, it might be worthwhile at some point in the future to review the language that is used in those inspection reports.

**The Chairperson:** That is a valid point, and it has been raised in submissions and contributions to the Committee.

Malachy and Terry, thank you very much. Thank you for your submission and for the work that you continue to do on behalf of schools in the sector. I wish you a very happy 2014 and look forward to working with you.

**Mr Crudden:** Thank you very much indeed.