

Larne Grammar

To whom it may concern

Further to the letter from Mr Peter McCallion requesting written evidence for the Education Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, I would like to submit the following comments.

- The significant flaw in the current inspection process is the over-reliance on the NI Average as a measure of performance in GCSE and A Level examinations. Such a measure means, by definition, that half of the schools will "fail" by achieving results that are below the average. As a selective post-primary, this school is measured against the NI Grammar School Average. This is a crude and blunt tool to measure school performance and results in many good schools falling below the standard set by ETI. It fails to take into consideration the disparity between the academic ability of pupils even within the grammar school sector and no consideration is given to the "value added" by the school. It is certainly much easier for some grammar schools to ensure that their pupils achieve 7 GCSEs or 3 A Levels at grades A*-C than it is for others, based on the academic ability of the pupils, and often the standard of education provided to pupils in one grammar school can be better than in another supposedly higher achieving school.
- Data on the academic ability for each Year 8 intake is readily available for each grammar school and should be utilised by ETI in assessing the performance of the same cohort for pupils at ages 16 and 18. Other value-added measurements are also available, e.g. MiDYIS, YELLIS and ALIS data as well as GL CAT data. The use of FSME as a baseline measure is not helpful in any way.
- The current emphasis on GCSE and A Level performance distorts the inspection process. ETI starts with the examination data and having categorised the performance of the school is then set on train tracks which lead to an inevitable conclusion. The quality of teaching and learning, leadership and management and pastoral care are all viewed through the prism of external examination results rather than evaluated in their own right. This makes it very difficult for any school whose performance is below the NI Average to receive an accurate assessment of the quality of educational provision.
- With the current focus on leadership and management within schools it is vital that those within ETI leading inspections of schools have experience of senior leadership within a school context, preferably at the level of principalship.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment.