

Committee for Education

Report on the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process

**Together with the Minutes of Proceedings, Minutes of Evidence
and Written Submissions Relating to the Report**

Ordered by the Committee for Education to be printed 28 May 2014

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Powers and Membership

Powers

The Committee for Education is a Statutory Departmental Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Standing Order 48 of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Committee has power to:

- Consider and advise on Departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- Consider relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee stage of primary legislation;
- Call for persons and papers;
- Initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- Consider and advise on any matters brought to the Committee by the Minister of Education.

Membership

The Committee has 11 members including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and a quorum of 5. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)^{1 2}
 Maeve McLaughlin⁸
 Jonathan Craig
 Jo-Anne Dobson
 Stephen Moutray⁶
 Chris Hazzard⁴
 Trevor Lunn
 Robin Newton⁷
 Pat Sheehan⁵
 Sean Rogers³

¹ With effect from 31 January 2012 Mr Mike Nesbitt replaced Mr David McNarry
² With effect from 17 April 2012 Mr Danny Kinahan replaced Mr Mike Nesbitt as Deputy Chairperson
³ With effect from 23 April 2012 Mr Sean Rogers replaced Mr Conall McDevitt
⁴ With effect from 10 September 2012 Mr Chris Hazzard replaced Mr Phil Flanagan
⁵ With effect from 10 September 2012 Mr Pat Sheehan replaced Mr Daithi McKay
⁶ With effect from 16 September 2013 Mr Stephen Moutray replaced Miss Brenda Hale
⁷ With effect from 16 September 2013 Mr Robin Newton replaced Miss Michelle McIlveen
⁸ With effect from 02 December 2013 Ms Maeve McLaughlin replaced Ms Michaela Boyle

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List of Abbreviations

AA	Associate Assessors
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACGS	Association of Controlled Grammar Schools
ACTS	Accelerating Children's Thinking Skills
AEC	Assembly Education Committee
ALIS	Advanced Level Information System
ASCL	Association of School and College Leaders
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASE	Association for Science Education
ATL	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
BELB	Belfast Education and Library Board
CAFRE	College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise
CASS	Curriculum Advisory and Support Service
CAT	Cognitive Abilities Test
CBA	Computer Based Assessment
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CHA	Catholic Heads Association
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment
CCMS	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
CnaG	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (Northern Ireland Irish Medium Education Council)
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRED	Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED)
CVA	Contextual Value-Added
DE /DENI	Department of Education Northern Ireland
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DES	Department of Education and Skills (Ro)
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DI	District Inspector
EAL	English as Additional Language
EFQM	European Foundation of Quality Management
ELB	Education and Library Board
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance
ESA	Education and Skills Authority
ESaGS	Every School a Good School
ESAIT	Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate

FIP	Formal Intervention Process
FSM	Free School Meal
FSME	Free School Meal Entitlement
FUI	Follow-up Inspection
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GERM	Global Educational Reform Movement
GBA	Governing Bodies Association
GIS	Geographic Information System
GTC	General Teaching Council
GTCNI	General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
IEF	Integrated Education Fund
IIP	Investors in People
IM	Irish Medium
IME	Irish Medium Education
InCAS	Interactive Computerised Assessment System
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
IQ:RS	Improving Quality: Raising Standards
KS	Key Stage
LLW	Learning for Life and Work
MARS	Management and Reporting System
MidYIS	Middle Years Information Systems
MLA	Members of the Legislative Assembly
NAHT	National Association of Head Teachers
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NEELB	North Eastern Education and Library Board
NIAO	Northern Ireland Audit Office
NICCY	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
NICIE	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
NILA	Northern Ireland Literacy Assessment
NINA	Northern Ireland Numeracy Assessment
NIPSA	Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NITC	Northern Ireland Teaching Council
NQTs	Newly Qualified Teachers
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
OFQUAL	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
PDMU	Personal Development and Mutual Understanding
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PiE	Progress in English
PiM	Progress in Maths
PIRLS	Progress in International Mathematics and Science Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PRSD	Performance Review and Staff Development
PQH	Professional Qualification for Headship
PSEEP	Pre-School Education Expansion Programme
QA	Quality Assurance
QUB	Queens University Belfast
RBS	Renfrew Bus Story
RQIA	Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
RSSI	Raising School Standard Initiative
RTU	Regional Training Unit
SEELB	South Eastern Education and Library Board
SELB	Southern Education and Library Board
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SICI	Standing International Conference of Inspectorates
SSIDs	Secondary School Information Disks
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TAC.	Teaching Appointments Committee
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TNC	Teachers Negotiating Committee
TTI	Together Towards Improvement
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UCET	Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UTU	Ulster Teachers' Union
UU	University of Ulster
WELB	Western Education and Library Board

Executive Summary

Following consideration of: Departmental proposals to enhance the powers of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI); concerns raised in respect of the reported high stakes nature of school inspection; and the reported absence of consistency in the measurement of the value added by schools, the Committee undertook an inquiry into ETI and the school improvement process.

The Committee's scrutiny was informed by: numerous written and oral submissions; stakeholder events involving District Inspectors and Associate Assessors; a school visit and the OECD report on evaluation and assessment frameworks in Northern Ireland.

The Committee agreed that professional, independent, broadly-based, balanced inspection of schools is and should continue to be an essential component of the school improvement process. The Committee also found that although inspection is essential, it is neither reasonable nor sensible to expect schools to improve outcomes for pupils by simply repeatedly inspecting their effectiveness. The Committee agreed that the other essential component of the school improvement process was support for schools and that in order to ensure equitable provision, this should be better aligned with the inspection function as is the case in other jurisdictions.

The Committee found it difficult to reconcile the very different reported experiences and perceptions of the school inspection process. The Committee felt that this was in some part owing to poor or unforeseen inspection outcomes and a high stakes environment created by concerns relating to school sustainability. However, the Committee also felt that schools had reasonable concerns that would be addressed by providing: improved communication; more transparent practices in respect of inspection moderation; and a more independent complaints procedure coupled with more reliable school feedback channels.

In respect of school inspections, the Committee agreed that a more collaborative approach between ETI and schools was preferable and that this would be facilitated by: greater use of 3rd party questionnaires; revised inspection reports (written in plain English for parents while providing more detail for schools); use of less pejorative descriptors; a consistent role for District Inspectors on inspection teams with more time for pastoral support; and a revised approach to the inspection of immersion settings in line with other jurisdictions.

The Committee considered at some length the issues and the sensitivities associated with the measurement of the value added by schools both in terms of a formative pupil-based measure and as a summative indicator of school or system effectiveness. The Committee agreed with GTCNI that to inform the assessment of the value added by schools, a standardised attainment baseline was required. The Committee also agreed with OECD that further work was needed by the Department to engage teachers and win their trust for the development of a measure of the value added by schools which properly recognises school context.

The Committee recognised the significant potential benefit of enhanced parental engagement with school improvement and the self-evaluation process. The Committee therefore strongly supported – in line with OECD suggestions – the establishment of a platform for representative parental consultation. The Committee felt that this was essential to address sometimes limited parental understanding and involvement in the school improvement process.

The Committee felt that its recommendations would go some way to address adverse or ill-informed perceptions of school inspection and school improvement. In order to mark the significant changes that are proposed and as part of the process of persuading stakeholders that a more collaborative and conciliatory approach is to be adopted to school inspection for improvement in future, the Committee felt that the realigned school inspection and

improvement service should be rebranded as the Northern Ireland Education Improvement Service (NIEIS). Additionally and to permit the NIEIS the freedom to: highlight good practice; identify improvement actions; set its own agenda for school improvement through inspection; undertake longitudinal studies and comment on Departmental policies, the Committee felt that the NIEIS should be established in statute as independent of the Department of Education.

Summary of Recommendations

1. The Committee recommends that in line with Every School a Good School, the Department should adequately resource school improvement services so as to equitably support improving outcomes in all schools across Northern Ireland not just for those in or near Formal Intervention.
2. The Committee recommends that school improvement services should be aligned with school inspection in a single organisation in line with the practice in Scotland. The governance arrangements for the new inspection and improvement service must ensure the professional independence of inspection with an appropriate separation between this and the improvement function – as is the case in Education Scotland.
3. The Committee recommends that ETI better communicates its inspection methodology and clearly sets out the process of external moderation for school inspections – indicating how the latter has been applied in each individual inspection report and that it desists forthwith in sharing draft inspection reports with DE or maintaining anything other than transparent communication channels with all stakeholders.
4. The Committee recommends that the school inspection complaints procedure should explicitly allow for the possibility of a revision to an inspection finding and that consideration should be given to a reformed school inspection complaints procedure which would allow for investigation by personnel outside of the inspectorate or the Department of Education.
5. The Committee recommends that the inspectorate co-operates with GTCNI in the redesigning of post-inspection surveys and customer service assessments so as to ensure independent and robust assessment of the school inspection and improvement service.
6. The Committee recommends that anonymous questionnaires should only be included in a school inspection when the need for such a measure has been identified by inspectors and in the absence of a reliable, independent (parent, pupil, staff and governor) survey which has been undertaken by the school as part of the School Development Plan process.
7. The Committee recommends that in line with the practice in other jurisdictions, alternative inspection report publication measures should be adopted – specifically two school inspection reports should be produced – the first should be a detailed, formative inspection report which would be made available to the school only; the second should be a plain English, high level, public domain summative report which informs parental understanding of a school's strengths and weaknesses.
8. The Committee recommends that in line with the practice in other jurisdictions, less pejorative descriptors be adopted for public domain summative inspection reports and accompanied by plain English statements of a school's strengths and weaknesses.
9. The Committee recommends that in order to fully exploit the unique good practice experience and understanding of school context of District Inspectors, they should always have a role in the inspection of schools in their districts and should be allocated sufficient District Time to allow adequate provision of pastoral support for schools.
10. The Committee recommends that the Department should review its inspection practices for the IME sector and bring them into line with the inspection of immersion education provision in other jurisdictions – specifically the requirement to undertake inspections of IME schools and units in the Irish language.

11. The Committee recommends that a reliable standardised baseline of attainment at key pupil junctures be introduced in order to provide a common objective formative measure of pupil value added by schools in all educational phases. The Committee further recommends that the Department engage a broad and representative cross-section of teachers to determine the best use of the baseline and the selection of other factors in the development of a robust indicator of school effectiveness which would complement other existing measures.
12. The Committee recommends that in line with the OECD findings, measures should be adopted to more effectively promote a self-evaluation culture supported by training and guidance for school staff and governors; advice from District Inspectors; and including greater engagement with parents.
13. The Committee recommends that District Inspectors should take a greater role in the mentoring, auditing and quality assuring of self-evaluation in schools. The Committee further recommends that in the longer term, when self-evaluation is effectively embedded in schools, consideration should be given to a revised inspection regime.
14. The Committee recommends that, in line with OECD recommendations, the Department should establish a parental consultation platform and that this should be used to inform the development of understandable and accessible information on school inspection and school improvement for parents and should also be used to explore enhanced engagement options for parents relating to school and education policy.
15. The Committee recommends that the Education and Training Inspectorate should be renamed as the “Northern Ireland Education Improvement Service (NIEIS)”. The explicit focus of the rebranded organisation would be improvement through inspection.
16. The Committee recommends that the new “Northern Ireland Education Improvement Service” be statutorily independent from the Department of Education and that research be undertaken to establish the most appropriate governance model for the new organisation. The new model should allow the independent organisation to inspect school effectiveness; advise impartially on DE policy and undertake supporting longitudinal data analysis studies of the effectiveness of education policy in all phases.

Introduction

1. During the Committee Stage of the Education Bill (NIA14/11-15), the Committee considered proposed enhanced inspection powers for the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and a requirement on Boards of Governors to promote high standards of educational achievement. In respect of the latter and in line with the Every School a Good School (ESaGS) policy, the Committee agreed (in April 2013) to recommend that the Department consider the introduction of a value added measure for schools which would complement existing academic achievement measures.
2. Witnesses to the Committee Stage of the Education Bill also commented at length on new ETI provisions and highlighted what was described as a lack of independence and transparency in respect of ETI. Following a number of divisions, the Committee agreed to recommend that ETI become fully independent from the Department and that a statutory complaints and appeals process be introduced.
3. Some Members also felt that the Area Planning process had heightened the stakes for school inspections and that, coupled with a reported rundown in the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) provided by the Education and Library Boards, this may have undermined the school improvement process.
4. At its meeting on 29 May 2013, the Committee agreed to undertake an Inquiry focusing on the work of ETI in respect of primary and post-primary school inspection and the school improvement process. The Terms of Reference for the Committee's Inquiry were to:
 - Review the effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement – considering particularly how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment;
 - Identify the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the ELBs;
 - Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection, the assessment of value added and improvement;
 - Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process including the need for enhanced powers; alternative measures of achievement; improved governance; and transparency; and
 - Report to the Assembly on its findings and recommendations by January 2014.
5. The Committee extended the timescale for the production of its report so as to enable it to fully explore a number of the issues that had arisen from the evidence and research gathered as part of the inquiry.

Committee Approach

6. The Committee agreed that the inquiry would include oral evidence sessions with a wide range of stakeholders involved in school inspection and school improvement. The Committee also agreed to restrict its inquiry to schools and to not consider the other elements of ETI's work and related educational improvement.
7. The Committee also agreed to commission research from Assembly Research Services on particular aspects of school inspection and improvement in this and other jurisdictions in order to inform its deliberations.

8. The Committee placed an advertisement in the regional press in June and wrote to stakeholders requesting written submissions to its Inquiry. Over 70 written submissions were received from 57 stakeholders.
9. The Committee received oral evidence from: the Chief Inspector and her officials (16 October 2013, 26 February 2014 and again on 12 March 2014); General Teaching Council Northern Ireland (GTCNI) (23 October 2013 and 11 March 2014) and Northern Ireland Teaching Council (NITC) (23 October 2013); Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA); the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) (6 November 2013); Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), Association of Controlled Grammar Schools (ACGS), National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) and other representatives of head teachers (13 November 2013); Comhairle na Gaelscoileachta (CnaG) and other representatives of the Irish Medium Education sector (20 November 2013); Professors C Knox and V Booroah (University of Ulster) (11 December 2013); the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), Parents Outloud and Sir Robert Salisbury (8 January 2014); the Department of Education (5 February 2014 on the Formal Intervention Process and 19 February 2014 on the relevant aspects of the OECD report); and Professor J Gardner (5 March 2014).
10. To facilitate better understanding of the culture of the Education and Training Inspectorate and the nature of the school improvement process, the Committee also undertook 2 informal briefing sessions with District Inspectors (24 January 2014) and Associate Assessors (19 February 2014).
11. To enhance its understanding of self-evaluation, the Committee undertook a visit to Antrim Grammar School (4 March 2014).
12. The Committee received a small number of confidential written submissions. The Committee also considered a smaller number of confidential oral submissions. The Committee noted that the substantive issues raised in confidential submissions were adequately discussed in other public written and oral evidence.
13. The Minutes of Evidence of the oral evidence sessions are included at Appendix 2. Written non-departmental submissions are included at Appendix 3. The Committee's correspondence with the Department in respect of the Inquiry is included at Appendix 4. A list of witnesses to the Inquiry is given at Appendix 5. A record of the Committee's findings in respect of the informal briefing sessions is included at Appendix 6.
14. The Committee commissioned a series of research papers on: school inspection in other jurisdictions; inspection complaints procedures; governance options for the inspectorate; the inspection of language immersion provision; the assessment of the value added by schools; and inspection funding and staffing levels. The research papers are included at Appendix 7.
15. While the inquiry was ongoing, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published its Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education in Northern Ireland. The Committee noted the OECD findings with great interest and used the relevant report to inform its deliberations. The relevant report can be found at the following link:
http://www.oecd.org/education/school/NorthernIreland_review.pdf

Acknowledgements

16. The Committee wishes to record its thanks to all those who participated in the inquiry through the provision of written and oral evidence or the facilitation of Committee visits.

Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the School Improvement Process

17. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) provides inspection services for: the Department of Education (DE); DEL; DCAL, DARD and Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland. It has an annual budget of around £5m. DE's powers of inspection are conferred by Article 102 and 102A of the 1986 Education and Libraries Order. These orders and the amending provisions do not specifically reference ETI.
18. ETI is described as a unitary inspection body which inspects organizations that receive funding for education and training including:
 - pre-school settings;
 - primary, post-primary and special schools;
 - alternative education provision centres;
 - the youth and community sector;
 - initial teacher education institutions;
 - independent schools;
 - further education colleges and work-based learning providers.

ETI also monitors, inspects and reports on the nature, scope and effect of advisory and support services provided by the Education and Library Boards.

19. Departments, including DE, commission work from ETI through the business planning process. ETI's professional evaluations are to be made and published independently of DE on the ETI website. The ETI Chief Inspector is a member of the DE Departmental Board – Assistant Chief Inspectors meet the DE Board at least annually. Administration services are provided to ETI by Inspection Services Branch of ETI.

ETI is involved in DE internal and external groups and committees subject to the agreed terms of reference. Where ETI is to have a subsequent evaluative role the Inspectorate remains sufficiently independent of such groups such that its subsequent evaluative role is not compromised. ETI provides advice to the Departments and Ministers on request, for example, in relation to Development Proposals – ETI provides information about the quality of education provided by a school, based on inspection evidence and district inspector knowledge.

Every School a Good School (ESaGS)

20. Every School a Good School (ESaGS) – a Policy for School Improvement was issued by DE on 30 April 2009. The focus of the policy was given as the improvement of outcomes for pupils and young people. The policy set out the core characteristics of an effective school as:
 - Child-centred provision;
 - High quality teaching and learning;
 - Effective leadership; and
 - A school connected to its local community.
21. A key element of ESaGS is the principle that most schools, through rigorous self-evaluation, are best placed to identify areas requiring improvement and to drive changes that would bring about better outcomes for all their pupils. ESaGS indicates that support would be provided to help these schools work to raise standards and overcome the barriers to learning that pupils may face. ESaGS also indicated that successful schools would continue to be subject to inspection leading to improvement.

22. ESaGS also indicates that where pupils are not receiving a high quality education, intervention would be required. Although such interventions were to be rare, the associated transparent procedures would form an important part of the school improvement process. ESaGS indicates that interventions would be based on inspection findings and that support would be targeted on weaknesses identified by ETI. Where the need for a significant improvement is identified by ETI and the school is not capable of implementing the necessary changes, the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) was to be empowered to undertake a range of other actions including: writing a letter of concern to the relevant Board of Governors; providing a set of tailored support interventions; requesting re-inspection by ETI; and removing any number of school Governors etc.
23. In the absence of ESA, the ELBs working with CCMS, CnaG, and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) are to monitor the performance of schools in their areas and provide support to schools to ensure a sustained focus on improvement. ELBs are also expected to challenge and intervene where necessary to ensure that pupils receive a high quality education. In the case of voluntary grammar or grant maintained integrated school, ELBs must consult with the Department before initiating any action. ELBs and other education support bodies can also write to the Department requesting that a school is inspected.
24. The ESaGS policy indicates that ETI is responsible for promoting school improvement through the inspection programme and through reporting the outcomes of school inspections to the Department, the principal and teachers, the Board of Governors, parents and others who need to know. The mission statement of ETI is 'Promoting improvement in the interest of all learners'; ESaGS indicates that the work of ETI is designed to underpin the promotion of improvement at all levels of the education system.

School Inspection

25. Until September 2010, ETI aimed to inspect each school at least once every seven years with more frequent inspection of a school being undertaken where it was deemed necessary. A new approach to the frequency of school inspections was introduced in September 2010. This approach aims to be more proportionate and risk-based whereby a range of information is used to inform inspection requirements including:
 - Information from school performance indicators;
 - Risk factors such as the length of time since the last formal inspection; and
 - Ongoing monitoring of schools by (District) Inspectors at a local level.ETI indicated in March 2014 that it has "inspected 90% of primary schools and 97% of post-primary schools within seven years" and that in addition to this District Inspectors undertake formal and informal visits to schools in their districts.
26. When ETI inspects a school, the inspection team uses 3 inspection domains: achievements and standards; the quality of the provision for learning; and leadership and management. For each domain ETI uses one of the following performance level indicators: "Outstanding", "Very Good", "Good", "Satisfactory", "Inadequate", "Unsatisfactory". Furthermore, ETI assigns a performance level to the "overall effectiveness" of the school.
27. Inspection teams are composed of full-time inspectors who are also District Inspectors. The District Inspectors provide ongoing inspection services in a given region of Northern Ireland. The teams are supplemented with part-time Associate Assessors who are principals, vice-principals and senior teachers who usually undertake a maximum of 2 inspections per year. The total number of inspectors per formal inspection visit varies between a minimum of 2 + Associate Assessors in a primary school to a maximum of 7 + Associate Assessors in a large post-primary school. District Inspectors undertaking an informal visit to a school will ordinarily not be accompanied by any colleagues. District Inspectors normally undertake the formal

follow-up inspection activity. On a formal interim follow-up visit, two inspectors may attend and in a formal follow-up inspection three or four inspectors may make up a team, depending upon individual circumstances.

28. The recent OECD Report (on the Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education in Northern Ireland) described achievements and standards as an important domain which is assessed by ETI in terms of: how learners achieve the best possible standards of work and learning; how far learners acquire the necessary disposition and skills for learning; how far learners progress in the school; and how well learners do in surmounting individual difficulties. To evaluate pupil progress ETI uses quantitative data: teacher assessments; pupil results (sometimes based on commercial tests chosen by the schools) and benchmarking data from DE including end of Key Stage / GCSE / A-level results categorised into 1 of 5 bands relating to the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. ETI also collects and uses qualitative evidence based on lesson observation (typically teaching, learning and assessment in lessons taught by a range of teachers in the school is observed by ETI); scrutiny of the pupils' work and planning documents; and discussions with pupil and with staff. The OECD stated that ETI takes information and data from a range of stakeholders and through direct observation. It also stated that these multiple perspectives help increase objectivity in evaluation results. ETI uses this evidence to assess, amongst other aspects of provision, pupil development; skills and dispositions; thinking and leadership skills, their achievements and their wider development as young people.
29. ETI does not use a scoring system to evaluate the three inspection domains and thus a school's overall effectiveness. Rather, each inspection team reaches a professional consensus taking account of all available evidence, including its direct evaluation of the school's strengths and area for improvement in the context of its knowledge of the school.
30. The Chief Inspector advised (16 October 2013) that since September 2013, ETI has been using "a running record of evidence on all of our school inspections" which, it is intended, to share with schools in the future once the process is perfected and subject to discussion with the teaching unions. ETI is also understood to be trialling "involving the organisation leader more in our team meetings and moderation meetings". ETI is also undertaking, in consultation with stakeholders, a "review of performance levels that we use on inspection" – this refers to a review of the evaluative descriptors – ranging from 'Outstanding' to 'Unsatisfactory' – as used in inspection reports.
31. Under the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 schools are required to produce school development plans which are to be informed by self-evaluation.
32. A guide for schools undertaking self-evaluation, "Together Towards Improvement' (TTI), was introduced in 2003 and revised, to take account of feedback from stakeholders, and re-launched in 2010. TTI is a resource for schools to use at any time, not just 'in preparation for an inspection'. Whilst the quality indicators in TTI are provided to help schools self-evaluate the quality of the educational provision, ETI evaluates the school's process of self-evaluation in the round, not whether or not the school uses the TTI document. Effective self-evaluation is described as a key feature of schools that are evaluated by the ETI as "Good" or better.
33. TTI sets out quality measures against which schools can evaluate themselves. These include for post-primaries 20 indicators overall including, for example: strategic leadership; leading improvement; management and recruitment of staff; planning; management of accommodation and physical resources; partnership with the community; teaching and learning; curriculum provision; pastoral care; child safeguarding; careers advice; standards and progression, etc..
34. DE also provides each school with benchmarking data to support self-evaluation including, for example at post-primary: attendance level, retention rates at Year 12 and 14, and Key Stage 3 and school leaver examination achievement, and progress to other educational providers.

35. Further detail on the self-evaluation process can be found at the following link:
<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement.htm>
36. ETI advised that District Inspectors are “engaged with schools in supporting and providing a challenge to their school development planning and self-evaluation processes.” ETI also indicated that inspectors find “self-evaluation to promote improvement (to be) good or better in 75% of the primary and 55% of the post-primary schools inspected.” ETI also indicated that for schools assessed as having an effective self-assessment process, a lighter touch of inspection can be applied: for example, “the sustaining improvement inspection in very good or outstanding school”, – a model which is currently being piloted.
37. Until relatively recently, there were two main forms of inspection in the primary sector: focused and short. A focused inspection (typically five days) was an inspection of achievements and standards; quality of provision for learning; and leadership and management and usually included a pre-inspection visit. A short inspection (typically two days) inspected the same domains; however, it contained a stronger element of self-evaluation and was conducted in small primary schools or in those deemed to be lower risk. A short inspection may not have included a pre-inspection visit. As of 2013, there is just one approach to primary school inspection with the differentiation being between lower risk/small schools (2 days) and higher risk/larger schools (5 days).
38. Until relatively recently in the post-primary sector, standard inspections (typically five days) were performed in respect of achievements and standards; quality of provision for learning; and leadership and management. They typically included a pre-inspection visit. Two or three subject departments were inspected and the inspection team included subject specialists accordingly. There is no equivalent of a short inspection at the post-primary level. As of September 2013, the post-primary model of inspection has been revised with a stronger focus on the whole school rather than on individual departments.
39. The Chief Inspector advised that notice periods for all school inspections have now been reduced from a maximum of 4 weeks to 2 weeks in all cases.

Formal Intervention Process (FIP)

40. ESaGS also sets out the current Formal Intervention Process (FIP). Essentially, where ETI finds the quality of education in a school “Unsatisfactory” or “Inadequate”, DE (not ETI) places the school into FIP. A letter is issued requiring the development of a detailed action plan by the school. ETI then conducts interim monitoring (follow-up) visits which are intended to check the “trajectory and status” of the school.
41. Within 12-18 months of the original inspection ETI carries out a formal follow-up inspection related to the areas for improvement originally identified and to the school’s own self-evaluation and action planning. The follow-up inspection report sets out the direction of travel in the school. Within 20 days, DE will decide on whether the school can exit FIP.
42. In response to previous Assembly Written Questions, the Department had advised that there are “no set criteria for determining whether a school should exit the FIP rather each case is considered on its individual merits. The Department’s decision will take account of the findings of the follow-up inspection report and any other specific issues pertaining to the school that could potentially impact on the school’s ability to sustain the level of improvement made or its ability to operate effectively. A key factor in the Department’s decision will be whether the pupils’ best interests would be served by the school exiting the FIP. In making its decision the Department will seek the views of the local Education and Library Board and, in the case of schools in the Catholic maintained sector, the CCMS.”

43. Within a year of the first follow-up inspection, if it is found that progress has not been sufficient, ETI undertakes a second follow-up inspection relating to the first follow-up and the action plan. A report is issued by ETI setting out the school's response to the reported areas for improvement.
44. Schools successfully exiting FIP are to be acknowledged and celebrated. Schools, which after two inspections have performance which is found to be "Inadequate" or "Unsatisfactory," or schools which achieve a measure of progress but then regress at the second follow-up inspection, are subject to further action which may include one of several options.:
- restructuring of the governance, leadership, or management within a school;
 - merging the school with a neighbouring school;
 - closing and re-opening the school with a new management team; and
 - closure of the school with pupils transferring to other nearby suitable schools.
45. In the Chief Inspector's 2010-12 report, it was reported that:
- 21 primary schools had entered FIP since this was introduced – 13 had improved (literacy, numeracy or quality of learning etc.) and thus exited FIP – 8 schools were still in FIP at that time;
 - 13 post primaries entered FIP since it was introduced – 1 school had exited FIP and 1 school had closed – 11 schools were still in FIP at that time. The report stated that those still in FIP were mostly in the Controlled Sector and had attendant complexities which have developed over time and clear trends towards under-achievement which were unlikely to be resolved for the young people currently at the school;
46. While the Inquiry was ongoing, the Department consulted upon proposed revisions to FIP. The proposed revisions included changes to the timing of the follow-up inspections and further action for schools in FIP and revised procedures which could see unimproved "Satisfactory" schools entering FIP.

ETI Complaints Procedure

47. The number of complaints that the Education and Training Inspectorate received in each of the last five school years was given by ETI as follows:

School year	Complaint
2007/2008	9
2008/2009	2
2009/2010	7
2010/2011	5
2011/2012	2

48. In response to previous Assembly Written Questions, the Department advised that the "procedure for complaints (revised in September 2012), is available to the public and can be accessed using the following link: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/Homepage/complaints-procedure.pdf>." ETI advised that the intention is that most issues can be resolved at an informal level. However, if that is not possible "the ETI complaints procedure has two formal stages: stage 1, the formal complaint investigation; stage 2, an internal review of the way in which the complaint was investigated at stage 1. Both stages are carried out by an investigating officer who has had no previous involvement with the inspection. If the complainant remains dissatisfied they can refer their complaint to the Assembly Ombudsman." The ETI advised

that complaints are followed up systematically, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Inspectorate's Complaints Procedures at that time. No complaint since 2007 has been fully upheld. ETI advised that there have been instances of a complaint being partially upheld.

Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS)

49. In addition to a range of services for Controlled and Maintained schools, ELBs also provide a Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) to all schools in their area. The core function of CASS is described as supporting schools in enhancing their capacity to develop as effective and efficient learning organisations. The Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU) Stage 1 report highlighted some differences in CASS across the different ELBs. Notwithstanding this, those undertaking the CASS officer role were generally required to:
 - have pastoral oversight for all “mainstream” schools;
 - help schools to identify their individual educational support needs;
 - initiate and support whole school management issues;
 - support schools with beginning teachers and early professional development (EPD);
 - provide management development opportunities for the principal, vice principal, senior and middle managers;
 - offer a training and development programme for Boards of Governors;
 - advise, where appropriate, schools in a range of policy and procedural issues.
50. CASS officers were to work to meet individual school needs within the context of the board's corporate plan and learning strategy. Emphasis was placed on systematic work through developing individuals and teams. CASS was to play a key role in advising and supporting schools in the implementation of departmental policy and initiatives e.g.:
 - Every School a Good School (ESAGS);
 - School Development Planning (2010);
 - Count, Read: Succeed;
 - Together Towards Improvement;
 - the inspection process (and formal intervention process, if necessary);
 - Assessing the Cross-Curricular Skills;
 - Extended Schools;
 - STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics);
 - Entitlement Framework (14-19 Curriculum);
 - CRED (Community Relations, Equality and Diversity);
 - NI Curriculum (2007).
51. In the BELB area for example, every school previously had a dedicated link officer to support them in the implementation of Every School a Good School. The link officer's role was to ensure that the support offered was coordinated in a way that met actual identified needs thus leading to enhanced achievement and attainment in each school. The link officer was also to work with the school, in particular with senior and middle managers, to develop a range of procedures for self-evaluation. NEELB described the CASS officer as the “critical friend” who would enable the system to ‘raise the bar’ as well as ‘close performance gaps’ in schools through the provision of specialist knowledge; expertise and co-ordinated/coherent support; and facilitation of self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes.

52. Support for Professional Services for Schools including CASS was reduced by £15m (recurrent) in 2011-12 as a result of “termination of all part-time fixed term contracts; return of seconded teachers to schools; voluntary severance for posts formerly covered by earmarked funding and within the CASS cohort; redeployment to CASS core business; and termination of all earmarked funded programmes.” A further recurrent reduction of £10m per annum was planned for Professional Services for Schools from 2012-13. Correspondence from the Department on budget allocations (received in April 2013) appeared to indicate that the budget for CASS in 2012-13 was to be £5.5m (CASS) + £3.5m (including the Music Service which was previously included in CASS).
53. ELBs indicated that as a consequence of reducing resources, ELBs have reprioritised CASS – skewing services to support schools in, or approaching, the Formal Intervention Process and directing resources in light of ETI recommendations. ELBs suggested that the development of the new regional governor support service and the regional school development service may address the CASS resourcing issues.

Consideration of Evidence

54. All non-departmental written submissions are included in Appendix 3.

General Teaching Council Northern Ireland (GTCNI)

55. The GTCNI made 3 detailed and wide-ranging submissions. The first of which entitled “Striking the Right Balance” was endorsed by the Northern Ireland Teachers’ Council (NITC) and by the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET (NI)). GTCNI also provided the Committee with its views on the OECD report and with the findings of its online survey.
56. In respect of perceptions of ETI, GTCNI suggested that:
- ETI’s information requests were excessive with schools being generally required to submit around 700 pages of information in support of a full school inspection.
 - ETI post-inspection reports lack sufficient detail and that 2 reports are required – an internal detailed report which would be the basis of a school action plan and a public domain highlights version;
 - schools report inconsistency in the judgements made by inspection teams and commented on the absence of appropriate professionally qualified inspectors e.g. inspectors with no knowledge of the Irish language who were inspecting IME immersion schools;
 - inspections are now viewed as supporting an opaque agenda for school rationalisation, exacerbating the fears of teachers and parents and having a questionable impact on school improvement;
 - a greater focus on accountability measures (e.g. GCSE results) has led to unintended consequences in schools e.g. teaching to the test; concentration on pupils at grade boundaries; manipulating grade boundaries; multiple exam entries etc. to the detriment of the overall educational experience; and
 - the proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process don’t recognise the time needed to effect improvements to a school’s practices and culture and don’t take into account the run-down of the CASS service – consequently, the proposed changes will not support sustainable improvement and are likely to “exacerbate perverse behaviours” in schools.
57. GTCNI indicated that the above was very much at odds with the generally well-received role of the District Inspector which was described as supporting a continuous improvement process in schools
58. In respect of the assessment of how the value added by schools is inspected, GTCNI suggested that:
- although TTI identified useful indicator like: Leadership & Management; Quality of Provision of Learning; and Quality of Achievement & Standards – schools perceived that there was a stronger emphasis placed on the numerical evidence e.g. exam performance at GCSE. It was argued that this data can only properly assess the value added when the school’s intake profile is taken into account;
 - the use of Free School Meals Entitlement levels among school pupils as a measure of deprivation is “a coarse and unreliable indicator to judge school performance and leads to biased estimates of the effect of poverty on pupils’ academic progress” GTCNI suggested that this measure had led to an underestimation by 50% of the number of children who consistently remain below the thresholds implied by the FSM-eligibility criteria;

- the use of 5 good GCSEs and A-level results as a measure of performance flatters some schools (which should be doing better given their intake) and underestimates the value added by other schools (with academically poorer intakes);
- most teachers did not believe that current numerically based assessments give a useful picture of student progress at the end of Key Stage 3.

59. In respect of the difficulties affecting schools, GTCNI suggested that:

- teachers' emotional reaction to inspections were critical to determining whether any improvements transpire thus the issue of maintaining staff morale must be designed into the inspection process through 4 steps:
 - schools governors and teaching staff need to be convinced of the validity of inspection findings;
 - schools need to be given resources to improve;
 - staff need to be motivated to alter ways of working; and
 - an effective system of encouragement and reward for staff and the institution is required;
- differentials in educational performance lie largely outside schools and the classroom and other issues can overwhelm the efforts of schools to improve. GTCNI referred to e.g.:
 - individual pupil characteristics – health, age, gender etc.;
 - family socio-economic characteristics;
 - home learning environment and parenting skills; and
 - neighbourhood and cultural expectations.
- pupil performance varies considerably and is significantly affected by selection at post-primary level. GTCNI contends that selection at post-primary exacerbates socio-economically related educational differences by reinforcing separation of socio-economic groups ; and
- the assessment and examination system does not align with the Revised Curriculum and has failed to engage pupils who are merely complying.

60. In respect of gaps in the ETI review process and school improvement support, GTCNI suggested:

- ESaGS fails to recognise the effect of pupil intake quality and “effect sizes” i.e. the degree to which school improvement is a function of uncontrollable factors external to the school – GTCNI argued that the variance in pupil performance which is a consequence of the work of schools amounts to only 5 to 18%;
- DE's focus on short term measures and failure to complete longer term strategic work e.g. the review of teacher education coupled with the general reduction in resources for CASS has led to an unhealthy focus on “struggling schools” which fail inspection with ELB officers diverted from actual school improvement to restoring staff confidence and motivation following “inspection trauma”; and
- the proposed revisions to the Formal Intervention Process do not recognise the rundown of CASS and the possible significant additional demand for CASS that the proposed revisions might entail.

61. In respect of other jurisdictions, GTCNI highlighted:

- Finland's devolved model of school management which does not include state school inspections but does use pupil/parent questionnaires as part of an annual self-evaluation review. GTCNI also referred to Finland's very well qualified and respected teaching profession and significant investment in all stages of education;

- Scotland's use of a 2-way collaborative approach to inspection with Education Scotland including both the inspectorate and the support service; and
- New Zealand's use of a socio-economic decile system which informs: school baselining and how value added is measured. The decile system allocates students to small areas of 50 households based on census factors such as parental education, parental occupation, household occupancy, household income and income support.

62. GTCNI made the following recommendations:

- on school improvement
 - a cost benefit analysis should be undertaken of the relationship between inspection and school improvement;
 - supportive quality assurance model should be developed for school inspection using positive language, as in Scotland – i.e. rather than “inadequate” or “unsatisfactory”, schools might be assessed as “Not Confident”;
 - a new streamlined inspection process should be developed which reduces data requirements, allows constructive challenge and limits reporting timescales;
 - support services and school inspection should be aligned, as in Scotland;
 - the make-up of the inspectorate should be revised – reducing the full time inspectors and making more use of seconded teachers and principals;
 - schools should be supported to undertake self-evaluation and develop school leaders and Boards of Governors; and
 - research should be undertaken by ETI and good school practice disseminated.
- on measuring the value added by schools
 - schools should be categorised by socio-economic deciles, as in New Zealand and resources allocated to target social need with value added by schools being calculated on the basis of baseline data;
 - a Geographical Information System should be developed with sufficient granularity to capture relevant socio-economic data;
 - oracy assessment (productive language on school entry) should be undertaken by all pupils to establish a reliable baseline;
 - ETI should undertake a light sampling of value being added by schools to verify other measurements;
 - the Department should feedback international quantitative and qualitative findings (TIMSS and PIRLS etc.) to schools; and
 - models of value added should be developed which take into account baseline and socio-economic background and assess school progress accordingly.
- on measures of achievement
 - measurements of attainment by students should be clearly separated from measures of accountability for schools;
 - a wider range of measures of attainment should be used including for example hard measures like number of students leaving school with no qualifications and softer measures like attitudinal surveys – e.g. how confident students felt about maths or reading etc.;
 - the use of standardised testing by schools should be limited to diagnostic and formative purposes;
 - the focus on literacy should be limited and the focus enhanced on students' management of information and application; problem-solving and reasoning etc. in support of new 21st century qualifications for NI; and

- research should be undertaken to develop other forms of assessment.
 - on governance and transparency
 - targets for education should not be used to inhibit improvement through the misuse of numerical targets but should be based on “an understanding of supportive accountability”;
 - ETI’s evidence base should be open and transparent;
 - education policy be based on sound research; and
 - political and public respect for teaching as a profession should be addressed possibly by limiting the ability of the media to produce misleading league tables.
63. GTCNI also undertook an online survey of its members. The survey included responses from around 9% of all teachers. It is understood that following an exchange of information with NISRA, GTCNI elected to place less emphasis on responses from teachers as the sample size was said to be too small to be representative and concentrated instead on the responses to its survey from principals. Roughly 450 principals i.e. one third of all principals in all phases responded to the survey. Two thirds of the principals responding to the survey indicated that their school has been inspected within the last 5 years.
64. The feedback from the survey showed that:
- Most school principals (around 60-80+%) supported school inspection; felt that it recognised context and practice in school and provided good feedback and explanation of the inspection criteria. However, a sizeable minority of principals from 30% rising to 45% felt that ETI had not explained the inspection criteria and did not accept evidence-based challenge
 - A large proportion of principals 70%+ felt that inspection encouraged compliance not innovation; was overly data driven; and held schools to account for factors outside of their control. Only around 30% of principals felt that inspection took account of the value added by schools.
 - 80%+ of principals supported: inspection being undertaken by practicing principals / teachers; inspection assessing wider learning goals; inspection reports using supportive language; more opportunity for schools to challenge inspection findings; 2 inspection reports being produced – 1 short version for the public and a longer report for schools; and alignment of ETI and the improvement support service etc.
65. The survey included open questions. 829 comments were received, around three quarters of which are described as “challenging” – many of these referred to inspection stress. GTCNI concluded that the “general consensus was that schools would value an approach possibly more like an audit process, aligned to the support services, focusing on a longer unpublished report which includes more detail about areas for improvement, with the opportunity to challenge judgements with evidence, and follow-up support for all schools.”

Northern Ireland Teaching Council (NITC)

66. NITC endorsed the GTCNI submission and identified a number of other issues which are set out below.
67. NITC reported an increase in pressure on staff associated with inspections and a consequential detrimental impact on staff morale. NITC contended that school rationalisation had raised the stakes for inspection – arguing that the publication of a poor inspection report often peppered with pejorative language e.g. “failing school” or “under-performing principal” could lead to an actual drop in enrolment sometimes followed by school closure.
68. NITC contended that ETI is intent on criticism rather than improvement and has developed a data-driven inspection system with an ever-increasing demand for related documentation.

NITC argued that schools do not feel that they can raise issues with ETI or adopt an innovative approach to problems or make complaints about an inspection for fear of adversely affecting the inspection outcome. NITC indicated that District Inspectors no longer advise schools in confidence in respect of school improvement suggestions. NITC suggested that the determination of the final grading of a school is not a transparent process with final grades sometimes not at all matching ETI's interim findings.

69. NITC suggested that ETI does not provide sufficient feedback on teacher performance to effect improvement and that the rundown of Curriculum Advisory Support Services (CASS) means that schools can not avail of necessary support to achieve improvement. NITC advised that schools are only permitted to access dwindling CASS resources when they are already perceived as failing.
70. NITC highlighted its concerns with ETI's complaints procedures – citing the absence of independence and indicating its dissatisfaction with the final arbiter of many complaints being the Chief Inspector.
71. NITC suggested that ETI had issued guidance to schools in respect of school inspection which, unlike previous guidance, was not sensitive to ongoing industrial action and had unnecessarily damaged relationships between schools and inspectors.
72. NITC therefore contended that as a consequence of the above, school inspection is not the transparent self-improvement journey envisaged for schools and teachers in ESaGS.

Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)

73. NIPSA indicated that its members who are ETI inspectors undertake a difficult role, elements of which are unremunerated and not appreciated by schools and teachers. NIPSA highlighted that school inspections are team-based endeavours which are always based on consensus within the inspection team and therefore often require protracted debate. NIPSA appeared to indicate some concerns in respect of ETI's new post-primary inspection process with its focus on short inspections and shorter timescales for reporting.
74. NIPSA highlighted the pivotal importance of the District Inspector (DI) role – indicating that DIs “are also called upon to provide ETI recommendations on development proposals for schools within their districts.” This may be compared with other Departmental evidence: “Education and Training Inspectorate will have no role in drafting the area plans but will be asked to provide input to the Department's assessment of the draft plans.”
75. NIPSA highlighted concerns in respect of the possible adoption of what were described as ‘Ofsted practices’ in Northern Ireland indicating that this would damage rather than enhance constructive engagement between schools and inspectors.
76. NIPSA indicated that it believes that inspectors should be the final arbiters in respect of school inspections and that although external post-inspection challenge is welcomed, there are concerns about the possible introduction of a time-consuming complaints procedure which would limit inspectors' capacity to inspect schools.
77. NIPSA highlighted concerns in respect of the use of Associate Assessors as a cost-saving measure which may reduce the professionalism and effectiveness of school inspections.
78. NIPSA disputed other evidence that inspectors focus inappropriately on examination outcomes and argued that consideration was always given to school context which included direct discussion with pupils.
79. NIPSA expressed misgivings in respect of any alteration to the status or governance of ETI indicating that such a change would undermine accountability and transparency. NIPSA

argued in favour of the greater use of self-evaluation by schools and closer co-operation between inspectors and principals.

Education and Library Boards (ELBs)

80. The Committee considered written and oral evidence submitted on behalf of the 5 ELBs – Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB); South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB); Southern Education and Library Board (SELB); Western Education and Library Board (WELB); and North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB);
81. In respect of the ToRs for the Inquiry, the ELBs argued that the key factors affecting schools in difficulty include particularly the quality and stability of the school leadership team – principals and governors – as well as the context (i.e. level of social deprivation of the pupils) in which the school operates. The former is exacerbated by a requirement to address ETI recommendations in a relatively tight timescale – 12 to 18 months. The latter it was argued is outside the control of the school, is of considerable importance and is not properly recognised by ETI.
82. ELBs indicate that there is some difficulty in demonstrating value added in the absence of a standardised baseline assessment for children on entry to primary school. NEELB and BELB also indicated that the current unmoderated teacher-based assessment undertaken at the end of primary school is considered unreliable by post-primary schools. BELB suggest that owing to the centrality of this data to inspection outcomes, the relevant findings have become “increasingly dubious”.
83. BELB also commented on an over-reliance by ETI on data highlighting a “marked dichotomy between ETI’s rhetoric of collaboration and professional discussion and the interrogative, data-driven, mechanical and perceived demoralising nature of the actual (inspection) process.”
84. The ELBs highlighted the absence of a rigorous and robust procedure to support borderline or inadequate teachers. BELB suggested that ETI be given additional powers to identify “inadequate” teachers and require their entry into a rigorous and robust re-training programme. BELB also suggested the use of active registration by GTCNI under which teachers would be required to re-apply for registration regularly and show evidence of Continuing Professional Development. BELB also suggested a rigorous and competency-based training programme for poor principals and school management.
85. NEELB also suggested that ETI should focus more on quality assuring school self-evaluations which should be produced annually as part of the school development plan cycle but that much more guidance and support is required to embed the self-improvement process.
86. SELB and WELB indicated that a research and development unit could be established to capture best practice in respect of school improvement in other jurisdictions and to disseminate this to schools.
87. SELB and WELB suggested that in order to address concerns relating to inconsistency relating to inspection reports, consideration should be given to an appeal mechanism through which ETI would be obliged to provide evidence to support its inspection findings.
88. BELB suggested that schools should be given 6 months to take action before inspection reports are made public thus avoiding “trial by media” and allowing ETI time to evaluate whether Formal Intervention or other measures are required. BELB also suggested that teachers should no longer receive informal feedback from inspectors as this impairs the acceptance of ETI findings and the improvement process following inspection.
89. BELB suggested that inspection should be more of a 2-way formative (developmental) process borrowing some of the principles and practices in Scotland including production of 2

inspection reports – a short external version and a more detailed non-public domain report for the school's use.

Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) / Association of Controlled Grammar Schools (ACGS)

90. ASCL/ACGS argued that current measures of performance considered by inspectors do not reflect the value added by schools or the quality of school leadership. ASCL suggested that free school meal entitlement (FSME) is not always an accurate or useful measure for categorising school performance. It was suggested that an alternative might be a system based on classroom behaviour and parental education together with prior educational attainment. ASCL recommended “state sponsored, standardised, numeracy and literacy tests at 7, 11 and 13 which would allow accurate mapping of pupil progress and could be used to set KS 4 and 5 targets”. ASCL argued that such tests could be used to assess value added by schools.
91. ASCL reported statistical anomalies associated with the concentration on headline statistics associated with school attainment. ASCL called for more flexibility in the interpretation of GCSE and A-level results so as to recognise the achievements of different school cohorts.
92. ASCL and ACGS both recorded considerable concern at the use of the current questionnaire system by which feedback on the performance of principals can be obtained by ETI from staff, parents etc. ASCL called for a balanced approach where context and the views of senior staff are also considered and for the provision of mentoring support by successful and retired principals.
93. ACGS argued that ETI must be independent of the Department and the ELBs and that this is particularly important given ETI's role in commenting on Area Plans

National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)

94. NAHT recommended that in order to restore confidence in ETI, there should be more training for principals to facilitate a common understanding of what constitutes a good education and how ETI evaluates this. NAHT recommended the involvement of principals and heads of department in aspects of their own school's inspection.
95. NAHT argued that the role of the District Inspector had altered in recent years becoming more audit-based and adversarial and less pastoral. However NAHT expressed some reservations in respect of short notice pastoral visits by District Inspectors at which issues outside of the inspection remit might be considered.
96. NAHT contended that ETI should provide detailed comprehensive written reports on individual teacher performance which should be shared with principals. NAHT argued that the absence of this simple measure prevented principals from actioning individual poor teacher performance.
97. NAHT commented on reports of inconsistent and non-transparent inspection report findings. NAHT suggested that ETI inspectors should be required to sign-off and be accountable for their inspection reports and that the evidence base for reports should be made available to Boards of Governors (BoGs).
98. In order to dispel a level of uncertainty and confusion in respect of ETI's activities and suggestions that different sectors are treated differently, NAHT suggested that an annual report should be issued by ETI detailing the number, types and results of inspections and which highlights good practice.
99. NAHT argued that ETI should be independent of DE and should not be what it described as the “enforcement arm” of the Department.

100. NAHT suggested that inspectors should be required to have relevant senior leadership (and other) experience in schools in the school phase being inspected – this could be facilitated through secondments from schools. NAHT recommended that all inspectors be identified and be required to provide pen portraits for the schools that they are inspecting. NAHT highlighted its concerns in respect of reports of inspectors in the IME sector who are not competent Irish speakers.
101. NAHT suggested that inspection reports should reflect the context in which a school operates and the community served and should acknowledge the value added by schools. NAHT claimed that this is not the case presently and ETI's reliance on FSME as the sole indicator of deprivation is inappropriate and fails to capture the school environment.
102. NAHT argued that inspection reports should take cognisance of issues outside the principal's control e.g. industrial action or poor accommodation. NAHT commented that no reports acknowledge the difficulties facing principals in respect of industrial action and that acknowledgment of accommodation issues is inconsistent in school inspection reports.
103. Like other witnesses, NAHT contended that ETI should report inspection findings with more sensitivity and be mindful of the impact on staff morale and reputations. ETI should, it was suggested as in Scotland, produce 2 reports – an internal detailed report which can support improvement and an external public domain report which protects the identity of all staff including the principal.
104. Further to the above, NAHT suggested that ETI immediately discontinue the use of anonymous questionnaires for staff and limited questionnaire distribution for parents. NAHT recommended that all the findings from questionnaires be shared with principals and BoGs and that principals be given a right of reply. NAHT suggested that on occasion staff have used anonymous questionnaires in a concerted attempt to victimise principals who are unpopular following the resolution of difficult but unavoidable staffing problems e.g. poor staff attendance or poor performance. NAHT claimed that ETI has been selective in their interpretation of questionnaire responses and is alarmed that as a consequence principals have been placed on the Unsatisfactory Teacher Procedure.
105. NAHT recommended that ETI should put in place an independent appeals procedure – under which schools could lodge an appeal in respect of an inspection report's findings and the publication of the report could be delayed until an investigation is complete.

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)

106. CCMS in its oral and written submission highlighted what it described as the important contribution that ETI has made to school improvement for many years through its inspection work. CCMS also suggested that as the education environment is constantly changing it is important that the inspection service keeps pace with current trends and makes the necessary adjustments to what it does when inspecting schools.
107. CCMS argued that, while current practice in inspection examines many aspects of school life, the value that is added to the personal, social, physical and spiritual development of the pupils may not be sufficiently acknowledged in inspection reports; and suggested that more effort could be made to find an appropriate balance between measuring and reporting the academic progress children make, and the other important aspects of their development.
108. CCMS contended that ETI's failure to report on a wider range of value added measures may give rise to the perception that some schools are characterised by educational stagnation or decline while failing to give sufficient recognition to the very good work they do given their circumstances. CCMS suggested that a more effective model for assessing value added would look at progress against an initial educational baseline position and allow for the

impact of special needs alongside other personal and social factors, including the pastoral and social contexts in which the school is working.

109. CCMS identified a number of issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties with standards including:
- the high number of pupils with significant developmental or learning deficits;
 - poor school attendance which is often associated with low educational aspiration and motivation;
 - disruptive pupil behaviour;
 - lack of family capacity to support children with their learning, and poor parental attitude to learning;
 - lack of vision, community, team working, challenge and ambition in school leadership;
 - personnel issues e.g. strained staff relationships or weak leadership; and
 - poor governor awareness and the absence of governance practices for monitoring school performance.
110. CCMS made a number of suggestions that it felt would provide a more accurate and reliable evaluation of the quality of provision in a school through the inspection process including consideration of:
- the educational leadership provided by the principal and senior leaders;
 - professional relationships within the school community;
 - the impact of communication strategies in the school on pupil and parental engagement, and on staff commitment to strategic improvement priorities and actions;
 - teacher effectiveness by measuring value added;
 - the nature and effectiveness of learning support provided for families and by parents;
 - the role played by school governors in promoting school improvement;
 - evidence of the strength of shared understanding by all staff and Governors of the School Development Plan, the school curriculum, compliance with the Entitlement Framework, strategies for assessing learning and for monitoring and evaluating pupil progress and the quality of staff development;
 - the efforts the school has made to share curricular access, good practice, staff development, planning and resources with other schools;
 - the quality and effectiveness of the transitional arrangements with other schools and organisations;
 - the effectiveness of the management of the school budget; and
 - the school's view on the quality of support provided by the ELBs.
111. CCMS also contended that school improvement is a system-wide matter which needs to be reflected in education policy, before being implemented and subsequently inspected. CCMS suggested a number of issues to be considered when thinking about alternative approaches including:
- an appropriate range of value added measures are likely to have a greater improvement impact than the use of narrow free school meal entitlement benchmarking data;
 - agreement on the aspects of teaching and schooling that we place value on, which might then provide a better focus for subsequent inspections;
 - agreement on establishing baselines and reliable progress measures;

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- Key Stage and GCSE data should not be the primary indicator of value added, but should be considered alongside information about other value added measures, and consideration of the community context in which the school is working;
 - measuring schools relative to each other should be informed by more extensive assessment of the value added;
 - inspection should focus on the improvements that a school has achieved with each cohort of pupils that it has admitted;
 - training for schools should a wider range of value added measures be introduced;
 - providing time for periods of teaching observation to be of sufficient length to allow a reliable evaluation to be made, with feedback given directly to the teacher and principal;
 - providing opportunities for schools to demonstrate that pupils are developing the social and personal skills valued by employers; and that appropriate pastoral care is in place to support pupils.
112. CCMS highlighted that the following are used to broaden the range of value added indicators in other educational jurisdictions (but acknowledged that their reliability can also be challenged):
- progress against student learning objectives;
 - use of student surveys and feedback measures to assess satisfaction with the educational experience;
 - measures of pupil enjoyment and parental satisfaction; and
 - the use of teacher portfolios and videos of lessons.
113. CCMS identified the following priorities and actions which could be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process:
- agree what is valued and inspect those things using a wider range of value added measures;
 - amend inspection frequency in line with the needs of schools;
 - place more emphasis on how good the principal is as an instructional leader, with a greater focus on relationship development and the management of effective communication at all levels;
 - focus on the effectiveness of governance, and the strategic nature of the work of governors;
 - rather than an overall assessment, each aspect of school life that is inspected should receive an individual evaluation thereby highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the school;
 - where a school is performing well within its current context but the limited enrolment is having an impact on the access to curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for pupils, this should be stated more clearly;
 - ETI should have as much autonomy and independence from the Department as possible. Under the current system, CCMS felt that ETI is caught between the policy makers and those charged with implementing it.
 - ETI should be able to establish a schedule of inspections, carry them out and report their findings without interference from either the Department or other bodies;
 - It is important that the Department does not exert its influence to the extent that inspection is seen only as a driver of policy but rather that it operates as a support to governors and principals.
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Irish Medium Education (IME) Organisations

114. Irish Medium Education (IME) in Northern Ireland employs an immersion methodology i.e. where teachers communicate with children in Irish at all times. A number of IME organisations submitted written evidence to the Committee.
115. CnaG argued in oral evidence that the IME model differs greatly from English medium schools and therefore requires e.g. different assessment arrangements and the production of curricular support materials. It is argued that the immersion methodology – which is applied in many other jurisdictions – will also provide other pedagogic benefits to children and to the education system as a whole.
116. CnaG argued that ETI should monitor and formally assess:
 - the skills and experience of IME Governors and principals ensuring their commitment to the immersion ethos and that ETI should develop appropriate guidance;
 - how IME school governance supports the immersion methodology e.g. requiring a member of the school senior management team to be the co-ordinator of any IME units in the school and requiring the Teaching Appointment Committees in the ELBs to have an IME assessor when appointing a principal of an IME school or school with an IME unit;
 - enrolment arrangements in IME schools – essentially ensuring that Governors give preference in respect of access to IME school to pupils who have attended a recognised IME pre-school;
 - how IME schools apply the immersion methodology and the value added by schools in respect of improved bi-lingualism, bi-numeracy etc.; and
 - the advice provided by ELBs to parents in respect of IME schools.
117. CnaG also argued that ETI should:
 - maintain a pool of inspectors who are fluent in Irish and who will continuously develop their best practice knowledge of and diagnostic tools to assess the immersion methodology;
 - require all school inspectors to have some knowledge of the immersion methodology and provide all inspectors with the opportunity to further develop their knowledge and experience in this regard; and
 - with DE, develop and assess new IME-based indicators of pupil progress. CnaG contends that current end of Key Stage assessments do not adequately assess attainment in IME schools or units.
118. In written submissions, other IME witnesses suggested that:
 - many ETI inspectors including lead inspectors of IME schools or IME units have little or no knowledge of the Irish language;
 - on occasion inspections of IME pre-schools are undertaken by whole teams of inspectors with no knowledge of Irish;
 - some inspectors are routinely, and as a possible consequence of unfamiliarity with the immersion methodology, overly critical of IME schools – leading to inconsistent and inexplicable inspection reports;
 - inspectors wrongly assess IME immersion provision using the same evaluative principles as are applied to English medium schools; and
 - inspectors' reports are not subject to a reasonable level of challenge.
119. Other IME witnesses to the inquiry indicated that ETI's inspection documentation did not always relate to quality indicators or provide a rationale for the allocation of evaluative

summative statements or descriptor bands allocated to the school. These witnesses argued that ETI failed to provide proper explanations of how it arrived at gradings.

120. Other IME witnesses suggested that the inspection experience can be inconsistent and vary greatly depending on the inspector – it was argued that the inspection regime should be changed to include safeguards to mitigate against shortcomings in the knowledge base of inspectors and providing a transparent link between inspection evidence and inspection conclusions. It was contended that the failure to require inspectors to evaluate the immersion elements of IME schools is a significant failing which may lead to negative evaluations of IME provision.
121. A number of IME witnesses reported that inspection teams can include or be led by inspectors with little or no knowledge of Irish. It was argued that this prevents the inspection team from understanding the quality of the education provision. It was suggested that inspectors have, without justification, encouraged digression from immersion delivery in IME schools – wrongly arguing that the Irish language is holding back children’s attainment.
122. Some IME witnesses recommended:
 - a review of ETI’s training programme for inspectors in respect of IME; and
 - a requirement for ETI to provide inspectors for IME schools who are fluent in Irish.

Professors Knox and Borooah

123. In written and oral submissions to the inquiry, Professors Knox and Borooah considered GCSE attainment in post-primary schools highlighting significant differences in 5 good GCSE (including English and Maths) results for grammar schools as compared to the non-grammar sector and between maintained and controlled schools and between grant maintained integrated and controlled integrated schools. Professors Knox and Borooah argued that existing school improvement processes have failed to address these significant differences in outcomes. It was argued that school improvement in post-primaries has failed in this regard owing to an imbalance in pupil intakes which effectively limits access to grammar schools for the social deprived (as highlighted by generally low levels of FSME pupils in the grammar school sector) and those with special educational needs.
124. Professors Knox and Borooah indicated that the current self-evaluation and benchmarking processes for schools have not been effective and have not narrowed attainment gaps between sectors. It is argued that schools do not set ambitious targets for improvement in School Development Plans and the sanctions for failure are non-existent. Additionally schools are not provided with guidance on how to improve but are instead simply compared with similar kinds of schools (i.e. grammar or non-grammar; high or low levels of FSME etc.).
125. Professors Knox and Borooah argued that the key factors in determining school performance include: being a grammar (or not); pupil attendance rates; FSME levels in the school etc. It was also suggested that analysis of these factors can allow a reasonable prediction of school performance – the idea being that where schools out-perform the prediction, they are adding value. This is contrasted with the Department’s approach where it is argued that where improving schools are in the lowest quartile of educational achievement for 3 successive years they are by definition “under-performing”.
126. Professors Knox and Borooah argued that variation in performance between sectors could be ameliorated through collaborative shared education or peer learning interventions – i.e. where stronger schools are matched with their weaker counterparts.
127. Professors Knox and Borooah highlighted the strong linkage between GCSE attainment by schools and their popularity with parents when making transition choices in Primary 7.

128. Professors Knox and Borooah endorsed the Minister's stated intention to raise school standards by: better CPD for teachers; better leadership programmes of principals; rewarding principals who undertake leadership roles in under-performing schools and enhancing professional teaching standards. Indeed Knox and Borooah also called for more and better incentivisation of school performance.
129. Professors Knox and Borooah also recommended:
- Grammar schools should have quotas for FSME and SEN pupils set by DE – this would address poor attainment by pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds;
 - All schools (which are educationally proximate and geographically close) should receive a Shared Education premium designed to incentivise collaboration presumably between stronger and weaker schools;
 - Value added by schools should be determined using the Knox and Borooah (or similar) formula – schools would be incentivised to out-perform the attainment predictions for their pupil profile and school type etc.
 - ETI should have a role in monitoring and addressing access and performance inequalities and should focus on value added by schools with less reliance on non-punitive, unincentivised self-evaluation.
 - ETI should oversee a new system of peer cross-community networked learning incentivised through a Shared Education premium.

Parents Outloud

130. Parents Outloud made a number of written submissions. In oral and written evidence, Parents Outloud raised a number of concerns regarding the accessibility of school inspection reports and information about the school inspection system to the public and made the following recommendations:
- information on ETI and school inspections should be provided to all parents when a child enrolls in a school, and prior to a school inspection;
 - ETI should publish its own equivalent of Ofsted's Framework for School Inspection on its website;
 - ETI should make its website more user friendly and intuitive for parents; and
 - ETI should require schools to publish their school inspection reports on their website in a timely manner.
131. The Department advised that ETI publishes the quality indicators against which inspectors evaluate the quality of educational provision during inspection in 'Together Towards Improvement'. DE also advised that other relevant documents including 'A Charter for Inspection' and 'What Happens after Inspection' etc. are also available on the ETI website as are the inspection reports for all school inspections.
132. Parents Outloud made a number of observations based on an analysis of a small sample of primary school inspection reports. Parents Outloud suggested that ETI does not carry out full, standard inspections of primary schools, but instead focuses on specific areas of a school's provision in focused inspection reports. This concern is also reflected in their understanding of post-primary reports. Parents Outloud suggested that there is a lack of evidence of a consistent and rigorous approach to the investigation of the quality of teaching in any subjects other than mathematics and literacy. Parents Outloud argued that neither the development of key cross-curricular skills nor the quality of a school's communication with parents or pupils nor the provision of physical education are adequately or consistently inspected and reported upon by ETI. Parents Outloud also argued that ETI does not produce

- many thematic reports as Ofsted does and does not publicise such reports and that they do not deal with teaching quality.
133. Parents Outloud made a number of recommendations on the criteria used to assess schools including:
- primary school inspection reports should examine the following, in a consistent and rigorous way:
 - quality of provision in all areas of the Revised Curriculum;
 - development of core skills throughout P1 to P7;
 - quality of a school's communication with parents and pupils.
 - the Committee for Education should commission an analysis of the criteria used and the actual areas of investigation in post-primary school inspection reports;
 - primary and post-primary inspection reports should include an assessment of both the quality and quantity of physical education and sports provision received by pupils.
134. The Department advised that with regard to primary inspections, the three key aspects which are evaluated and reported on include the achievements and standards attained by children in English, Mathematics and ICT; the quality of the provision which entails learning, teaching, pastoral care and assessment; and, the quality of leadership and management at all levels; and safeguarding. While there is a focus on achievements and standards in English, mathematics and ICT are assessed, ETI also assesses the extent to which these subjects are integrated across the curriculum. DE reported that ETI conducts thematic inspections of other areas of learning on a rolling basis. ETI has published a number of thematic reports on e.g. numeracy and literacy.
135. Parents Outloud suggested that the current system of reporting parental views is highly unsatisfactory and recommended an approach, previously used by Ofsted, whereby the results of parental questionnaires are displayed clearly in the inspection report. Parents Outloud also recommended that more detail should be provided on the views of pupils and how these are used to inform inspection findings.
136. Parents Outloud referred to a very low response rate to parental surveys indicating that ETI appeared to be trialling a new survey method. Parents Outloud also recommended that teaching staff be obliged to provide their views to ETI on the effectiveness of the school.
137. Parents Outloud argued that no attempt is made to assess the value added by a school. Parents Outloud make the following recommendations:
- The grading and assessment of pupil achievement in school inspection reports should investigate value added achievement, and should take into account the proportion of children receiving free school meals, the proportion of children with special educational needs;
 - The Committee for Education should carry out a comparative analysis of the quality of content and standard of the assessments of quality of teaching in ETI's post-primary reports etc.;
 - ETI inspection reports should include information on the "number and grade of inspectors" carrying out each inspection, and the number of teachers and lessons observed.
138. As indicated above, ETI inspection reports compare the performance of schools operating in 1 of 5 FSME bands and usually also make reference to the level of SEN pupils at the school.
139. Parents Outloud believe that ETI's inspections are far too infrequent, citing schools for which the most recent full inspection report available on the ETI website is 12 or more years old;

and expressed concern about the perceived paucity of regular inspection information through the ETI website. In this respect Parents Outloud recommended the following:

- a full inspection of all schools every three years, with follow-up inspections where necessary;
- the Committee for Education should carry out an analysis of the actual frequency of school inspections in NI.
- ETI should provide clear information on the frequency of school inspections on its website.

140. The Committee noted that some of the claims made by Parents Outloud in respect of the frequency of school inspections were disputed by the Department. The Department also advised that until September 2010 ETI aimed to inspect each school at least once every seven years with more frequent inspection of a school being undertaken where it was deemed necessary. In September 2010 ETI introduced a more proportionate and risk-based inspection strategy whereby the need for an inspection is identified by information from school performance indicators, risk factors including the length of time since the last formal inspection and from on-going monitoring of schools by inspectors at local level.
141. Parents Outloud argued that inspectors should view schools on a 'normal' school day and suggested that ETI should provide schools with one day's notice for full or focused schools inspections, with no notice given for shorter or follow-up inspections. Parents Outloud further suggested that all schools should receive at least three months' notice that a full or focused inspection will be held, but with no details of the precise date.
142. Parents Outloud recommended that the Committee undertake a comparative study of the level of resources invested in school inspections in Northern Ireland. A short Assembly Research paper comparing financial and other resources for school inspectorates in other jurisdictions is included at Appendix 7.
143. Parents Outloud expressed concern in respect of the difficulty parents face in raising concerns about their child's education. Parents Outloud recommended that ETI should offer assistance to parents who have concerns about their child's education, and should investigate any issues raised by parents when carrying out school inspections.
144. Parents Outloud also recommended that the quality and rigour of ETI inspections should be benchmarked against those of comparable bodies in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. Parents Outloud also recommended the creation of "a British-Irish partnership between the school inspection bodies in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland".
145. The Department advises that although there is no published comparative analysis of ETI and Ofsted inspection reports in respect of the assessment of the quality of teaching, ETI continues to maintain close links with Inspectorates in other jurisdictions in order that good practice can be shared.

Sir Robert Salisbury

146. Sir Robert Salisbury endorsed much of the submission from Parents Outloud. Sir Robert highlighted the importance of
 - Improving the quality of the teaching.
 - Improving the quality of the school leadership.
 - Raising the expectations of everyone involved.
 - Sharpening the inspection process.

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147. He argued that a new culture was required which sees regular inspection as an integral part of life in schools and which is underpinned by self-evaluation. The most important part of this process was that schools must have a clear strategy for addressing any areas that have been identified as in need of improvement. He suggested that in schools of all types where self-evaluation is carried out “honestly, fully and regularly and can be endorsed by ETI” only ‘light touch’ inspections need to follow which would reduce costs and workload for ETI. Conversely, where self-evaluation is found to be misleading or limited, this should automatically trigger a full inspection.
148. Sir Robert also highlighted the importance of including parental perceptions and views in inspection reports; the vital importance of the dissemination by ETI of best practice in schools; and the value of follow-up inspections.

Professor John Gardner

149. Professor John Gardner strongly endorsed the need for and benefits of school inspection. He indicated that although a causal link between inspection and improvement can not be definitively established it is nonetheless the case that the process of inspection promotes reflection and change in teaching approaches and the organization and management of schools. He argued that where this happens improvement follows inspection. Where this doesn’t happen owing to the inspecting process being mishandled or where the school is beyond improvement, more drastic action is required. Professor Gardner indicated that any improvement which is actually achieved is a result of the actions of teachers and school managers themselves and that inspection is therefore a facilitative process underpinning school improvement.
150. Professor Gardner also argued that although beneficial, self-evaluation alone would not provide the necessary assurance in respect of school effectiveness. He therefore highlighted the need for a continuing external and expert review of school provision that is independent of vested or other interests. He also argued that teachers and schools, whilst being apprehensive and finding inspection a stressful experience, are on the whole satisfied with it.
151. Professor Gardner suggested that although announced inspections are less than satisfactory, a truly authentic view is more likely to be had from an unannounced school inspection visit. He indicated that such a visit must be careful in terms of sensitivities to staff but that it is the assessment of the experiences of the young people attending the school that must be the priority. He argued that unannounced inspections should be the norm not only in order to secure more representative results but also in order to reduce the build-up of stress that develops among staff as the announced inspection date looms.

Key Findings and Recommendations

152. The Committee considered 70+ written submissions; feedback from 2 informal evidence events; and 16 formal oral evidence sessions to the inquiry. The Committee reviewed a wide range of opinions, suggestions and assertions: from teachers and their representative organisations; from principals and head teachers; from parents; from District Inspectors and Associate Assessors; from academics and from the Department and the Education and Training Inspectorate. The Committee also commissioned a number of research papers. The Committee's findings and recommendations in respect of its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process are set out below.

The need for inspection

153. Every School a Good School (ESaGS) characterises schools as being best placed to identify areas of improvement and to drive the changes that would bring about better outcomes for all pupils. However ESaGS also clearly identifies an important role for inspection coupled with external support as the means by which school improvement would be facilitated.
154. The Committee noted that despite a range of differing commentary – some of which was adverse – in respect of the nature of inspections or the means by which they are carried out, almost all stakeholders strongly supported inspection as key to the process of school improvement. GTCNI indicated “We need inspection; professional colleagues want it. However, the manner in which it is done and the use to which it is put are not quite right.”
155. The Committee noted particularly that the GTCNI on-line survey (largely in line with the NISRA post-inspection survey) found that most school principals (around 60-80+%) supported school inspection; felt that it recognised context and practice in schools and provided useful feedback in support of school improvement.
156. The Committee noted with great interest, submissions to the inquiry which made repeated references to the very different school inspection arrangements or the (reported) absence of formal inspection arrangements in Finland. As with a number of issues raised in evidence to the inquiry, witnesses made a wide range of often contradictory assertions on this subject. The Committee noted however the very useful advice provided by leading academic educationalists about the very different context in which the education system operates in Finland and how simple comparisons with other jurisdictions should be treated with caution.
157. The recently published OECD Report on evaluation and assessment frameworks in the Northern Ireland education system was of particular relevance to the Committee's deliberations. The OECD report indicated that “ETI has a broad and legitimised inspection framework. The framework not only covers outputs and teaching and learning processes, but also the quality of provision for learning, pastoral care and leadership and management. These broad areas are supported by international research on the characteristics of effective schools. In particular, the focus on leadership and management is coherent with the heightened importance of self-evaluation and a move to a more proportionate external evaluation approach.”
158. The OECD report also highlighted that ETI had “well documented procedures on decision rules for professional evaluation” indicating that these “strengthen the standardisation of external school evaluation.”
159. The Committee took particular note of the OECD report and was greatly impressed by the assertion from almost all witnesses to the inquiry of the value of, and need for, a professionally independent inspection and evaluation of the effectiveness of schools. The Committee therefore agreed that professional, independent, broadly-based, balanced

inspection of schools is and should continue to be a key component of the school improvement process.

A balanced approach

160. A large number of witnesses to the inquiry made reference to substantial reductions in support provided to schools by CASS as part of the school improvement process. ACGS commented: “Ten or 15 years ago, if there was a problem, we could have gone to the board. There was a significant CASS service, and it could have provided support to a head of department who was perhaps having issues that he or she needed to address. That support is no longer there, which causes problems for all of us.”
161. ELBs also referred to loss of expertise from CASS owing to redundancy and reducing budgets. GTCNI argued (and ELBs agreed) that CASS was only sufficiently resourced in order to support improvement in those schools which were in, or nearly in, formal intervention. GTCNI also suggested that planned changes to the Formal Intervention Process (FIP), which would lead to a few more schools entering FIP, could not be supported by the existing level of CASS resources.
162. GTCNI argued that the “reality of shrinkage in the CASS service and the experience of schools would suggest that policy development is at variance with planning. Indeed, evidence over the past 6 years or more would suggest that the one consistent characteristic of Northern Ireland’s approach to educational change management is that written policy directives are issued from the centre and then schools are expected to interpret and implement them without any tangible sustained support to do so.”
163. CCMS also commented on differing levels of school improvement support available to Maintained schools as compared with others – indicating that 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.”
164. The recent OECD report also referred to “the winding down of CASS support services to schools” and how the “challenge from ETI needs to be effectively balanced with an adequate offer of support to schools.”
165. District Inspectors generally indicated to the Committee that CASS had been significantly rundown and that as a consequence the school improvement process had been undermined. Tellingly, in oral evidence, ETI recognised that adequate resources for school improvement “...is a hugely important area that needs to be addressed in the system” and that ETI’s “colleagues in CASS would say that they struggle to provide support to a school before it is in crisis...”
166. The Committee noted that in a previously published PEDU report, variations in CASS services across the ELBs had been highlighted. The Committee also noted suggestions from the ELBs that the development of the new regional governor support service and the regional school development service would address some of the CASS resourcing issues.
167. In contrast to the evidence from ETI and other stakeholders, the Department indicated in a written submission that it recognised that although there had been a reduction in the available CASS resource, ELBs were nonetheless able to extend their focus beyond schools in the Formal Intervention Process (FIP) to those schools which are at risk of underachievement.
168. The Committee agreed that although inspection is essential, it is neither reasonable nor sensible to expect schools to improve outcomes for pupils by simply repeatedly inspecting their effectiveness. The Committee agreed that, in line with ESaGS, it views training, mentoring and resource support for schools as essential to the school improvement process and that this should be available to all schools in all sectors and parts of Northern Ireland equally.

169. The Committee believes CASS no longer provides the necessary support to help all schools improve and is disturbed by suggestions of a different level of support for schools in different sectors with possible consequent implications for the frequency of Formal Interventions. The Committee is also unimpressed by vague assurances from DE officials in respect of support for schools which clearly contradict not only the evidence from all other stakeholders but apparently the professional opinion of the Education and Training Inspectorate.
170. The Committee therefore agreed the following recommendation:
 1. **The Committee recommends that in line with Every School a Good School, the Department should adequately resource school improvement services so as to equitably support improving outcomes in all schools across Northern Ireland not just for those in or near Formal Intervention.**
171. The Committee believes that the measure of the effectiveness of adequately resourced school improvement services will be a marked increase in the number and quality of supportive interactions with schools in all sectors and a consequent marked reduction in the number of schools entering Formal Intervention. The Committee also believes that pending the implementation of the recommendations in this report no further changes should be made to the Formal Intervention Process.
172. The Committee noted many references in evidence to the Scottish education system. Members noted that this is described as a more highly delegated system than in Northern Ireland and is based on largely comprehensive post-primary education with extensive use of coursework in place of formal examinations. Education Scotland features a close alignment between Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the school support service. The former is said to emphasise a two-way collaborative approach, aiming to work with staff in a "constructive, positive and professional manner". Inspection arrangements place a strong focus on: school self-evaluation; analysis of a wider range of outcomes; and a wider range of "continuing engagement" or "improvement visits" carried out by non-HMI development officers and/or senior education officers who work within Education Scotland. This engagement aims to offer support more directly and to capture and publish innovative or creative work noted on inspection.
173. The Committee also noted that since September 2013, ETI has been providing direct support to 20 schools in which there is, what was described as, a gap in the outcomes at GCSE. Two inspectors are understood to be working with the schools on a full-time basis with additional support being provided by Associate Assessors in English and maths. ETI officials described the project as "a supportive process and something that we have not done before.... an extension of the interim follow-up activity and the district inspector activity that we do. However, it is different, in that it is targeted and dedicated support to those schools."
174. The Committee noted differing opinions in respect of the benefits or otherwise of a closer alignment between ETI and school improvement services. The ELBs opposed a closer alignment between ETI and school improvement services as is the case in Scotland arguing that a separation is necessary between the inspectors and those tasked to support improvement. However NITC commended the Education Scotland model to the Committee arguing that "because the support flowed from the assessment, less high stakes seemed to be involved."
175. Some District Inspectors suggested that ETI should be more closely aligned with the school improvement support services. It was suggested that new governance arrangements should be devised in this regard so as to reflect the culture and needs of the Northern Ireland school system and should not simply reflect practices in other jurisdictions. Other District Inspectors however opposed any governance changes to ETI and argued that the realignment of ETI with school improvement support services had not been widely considered nor was it widely supported by District Inspectors.

176. The Committee also noted a radical suggestion from GTCNI to enhance support for schools temporarily by putting all “inspectors into the schools that they are concerned about; help the schools develop their self-evaluation processes and data analysis; give the schools areas and targets for inspection; support them for a while; and then inspect them.”
177. The Committee warmly welcomed ETI’s recent project wherein direct support is being provided to 20 schools on a pilot basis and queried whether, as is presently the case in Scotland, this kind of activity might form a greater part of ETI’s workload in future. In response, the ETI officials highlighted the importance of a separation between the inspection and support roles indicating: “I am not saying that that cannot be done, but I am saying that there would need to be a very clear strategy that outlined either that we were evaluating and providing some sort of support or not, as the case may be.”
178. The Committee endorsed the views expressed by OECD in respect of the importance of a balance between inspection and support. The Committee felt that in order to address the current imbalance (between ETI and schools generally) and the perception of an imbalance between support for schools in certain sectors, a closer alignment between the inspection and support functions was required. That said, the Committee also accepted the assertions from ETI officials and others regarding the importance of clearly defined inspection and support roles.
179. The Committee noted the important differences in the 2 education systems but concluded nonetheless that good practice in respect of Education Scotland’s governance, collaboration and support arrangements with schools could be usefully adopted in Northern Ireland.
180. Further to the above and in order to ensure that school improvement policy is matched by appropriate practice in future, the Committee agreed the following recommendation:
- 2. The Committee recommends that school improvement services should be aligned with school inspection in a single organisation in line with the practice in Scotland. The governance arrangements for the new inspection and improvement service must ensure the professional independence of inspection with an appropriate separation between this and the improvement function – as is the case in Education Scotland.**
181. ETI is a unitary inspectorate whose inspectors provide services to all phases of education in Northern Ireland – not just schools. The Committee recognises that although this is outside of the terms of reference of the inquiry, the above recommendation might lead to consideration of the alignment of improvement and inspection services for other education phases.

Inspection transparency

182. The Committee noted evidence from NAHT and other witnesses in respect of what they regarded as the absence of transparency in the school inspection process. NAHT indicated in written evidence: “There is a level of mystery, uncertainty and confusion around the inspection process, how it operates and how our schools are evaluated. If teachers, school leaders and the public are to have faith in the ETI and the inspection process, it is essential that all aspects of that process are carried out in an open, honest and transparent manner. The outcome of an inspection should not come as a surprise to anyone.”
183. The Committee noted evidence in which some schools contended that there was no connection between the written MARS reports (completed by inspectors during school inspections); the interim feedback provided by inspectors (during the inspection process); and the final inspection findings for a school.
184. DE had previously set out in an AQW the ETI complaints procedure – whereby schools can raise issues with inspection teams; other ETI officials and ultimately with the NI Assembly Ombudsman (in the case of the latter in respect of procedural matters only). In the case

- of the former, complaints are investigated by ETI and are ultimately referred to the Chief Inspector for adjudication.
185. Approximately 25 formal complaints have been made since 2007 – none of which have been fully upheld. A single complaint to the Ombudsman in respect of the destruction of school inspectors’ notes was upheld – the Committee was very surprised to learn that school inspectors’ notes were not (at that time) retained in line with public records guidance but noted that the relevant ETI procedures were amended in 2010 in this regard. DE advised the Committee that no judicial reviews have been granted against ETI. However, DE also advised that proceedings relating to leave to seek a judicial review were in 1 case abandoned. In this case the Department met the complainant’s legal costs.
 186. In evidence to the inquiry, stakeholders argued that the ETI complaints and challenge process does not allow for changes to inspection results – this, it was contended served to discourage complaints or challenges from schools. NITC indicated that teachers felt that complaints “will just come back on them and inspectors are untouchable in that respect.” A particular school referred to the reported correction (after considerable prevarication) of what the school described as a factually inaccurate ETI inspection report and ETI’s “culture of infallibility”.
 187. The Committee also noted the findings of the GTCNI on-line survey of school principals wherein a sizeable minority of principals from 30% rising to 45% felt that ETI had not explained its inspection criteria and did not accept evidence-based challenge.
 188. Members found it difficult to reconcile the above with the findings of the OECD report which indicated that during “the OECD review, nobody questioned the legitimacy of the inspection framework.”
 189. The Committee also noted other commentary from NAHT in respect of transparency relating to the post-inspection process as follows: “We have other situations with other principals in which we have evidence of the Chief Inspector communicating with unions. We also have evidence of the Chief Inspector relaying conversations with unions to the Department and the inspection teams. That is not an acceptable system or process.”
 190. The Committee noted evidence from NIPSA – representing the views of some Inspectors – in which reference was made to inspection teams and an apparent unwelcome level of central ETI control. NIPSA commented: “...inspectors need greater assurance about the finality of their decisions and that evaluations may not be overturned from anywhere outside of the original inspection team” and “.. we are not saying that there has been interference; rather, we are saying that there should not be and that that should be clear.”
 191. In written and oral responses to queries relating to alleged interference from senior ETI management with inspection teams, ETI and the Department utterly refuted any suggestions of interference and advised that “the role of senior management of ETI is to moderate and quality assure the work of all inspectors and the reports which they produce”. ETI officials also indicated that “...no overall effectiveness grades have been changed through the moderation process.”
 192. The Committee queried suggestions that ETI informally shares draft inspection reports or summary documents with DE prior to their agreement with schools. In response to a written question AQW 26136/11-15, DE had previously advised that: “Inspection teams share the key findings with their DE colleagues once the inspection has concluded”. ETI (16 October 2013) appeared to confirm this indicating that: “at the verbal report back with the school, we leave a summary sheet, which is a short, one-page document that sums up the findings of the inspection. That is left in confidence with the school, and that is exactly the same information that is passed on to the Department.”
 193. ETI then (12 March 2014) modified this, indicating that draft reports were not shared with DE and that draft summaries were only shared when a school was to go into Formal Intervention:

- “the only thing that will ever go to colleagues in the Department is where a school is likely to go into formal intervention and we do what we call the oral report back before it receives the final report. We leave an A4 piece of paper that sums up the strengths that have been identified and the areas for improvement.”
194. ETI and the Department wrote to the Committee confirming the oral evidence in this regard and resolving the contradiction in the evidence in respect of the sharing of draft reports/ summaries.
 195. The Committee also noted submissions from witnesses in respect of ETI’s involvement in the Area Planning / Development Proposal process. ETI officials clarified that ETI’s involvement in Area Planning / Development Proposals was limited to the District Inspector summarising “the most recent inspection evidence and inspection history of that school. That is provided as a memo to that division in the Department. And if there are implications for other schools nearby, the inspector would point out that there are other schools enrolling pupils from the same contributing primary.”
 196. The Committee accepted the explanations in respect of draft summaries and Area Planning / Development Proposals. The Committee noted references in the OECD report to a general absence of trust and buy-in by schools in respect of some Departmental policies. The Committee concluded that the absence of total clarity in respect of the sharing of draft reports, moderation and Area Planning tended to support the perception that there is less than complete transparency in respect of the relationship between ETI and DE.
 197. As indicated above, ETI commissions NISRA to undertake an independent and anonymous post-inspection survey of schools (and other organisations inspected by ETI). The NISRA post-inspection survey regularly records very high satisfaction levels with ETI among schools. ETI also commissions EMQC Ltd to undertake a 3rd party evaluation of ETI’s compliance with a Customer Service Excellence Standard - ETI has achieved the required standard for the previous 8 years. The 2011 report on the Customer Service Excellence Standard is a very positive report and indicates that ETI is a highly customer focused organisation.
 198. In respect of the NISRA survey, GTCNI commented: “I asked schools about that survey, and they said, ‘We have been through an inspection process. We are exhausted and stressed out, and we suddenly get this survey. Our name is on it even though it is anonymous, and we do not believe it is anonymous.’ I do believe that it is anonymous, but schools feel that they just want to get it over with and do not want anybody to come back at them.”
 199. NITC argued that the low level of complaints and the positive findings of the NISRA evaluation should not be viewed as an endorsement of the effectiveness of ETI’s inspection process. It was suggested that the inspection process was such a traumatic experience for schools that they would often demure from making complaints owing to “inspection fatigue” or an undefined reticence relating to challenging ETI. The teaching unions made reference to a so-called “fear factor” among teachers and principals which limited complaints in respect of inspections.
 200. NIPSA – representing many inspectors – strongly disputed the above indicating that its members “in ETI would refute suggestions of schools being terrified” in respect of inspections or related complaints.
 201. The Committee noted that the Customer Service Excellence Standard assessor is accompanied by an ETI inspector at all times during visits to school principals. When the Committee queried why this was the case, ETI officials appeared to indicate that the assessor needed an inspector to drive them from school to school :“I would hope that, because they are on unfamiliar territory — our assessor is from England — we would drive them wherever they need to go.” ETI officials went on to strongly argue that despite the presence of an ETI inspector at all times during discussions with principals, the assessor’s findings were robust.

202. The Committee was surprised to learn that the principal interview phases of the Customer Service Excellence Standard assessment are not undertaken completely independently of ETI. The Committee found ETI's explanation, as to why an inspector had to accompany the assessor at all times, to be not credible. In the light of this and ETI's generally evasive and unhelpful responses in this regard, Members felt that any reasonable person would view the relevant assessment findings as highly questionable.
203. As indicated above, the Committee noted with great interest the very clear and unequivocal assertions made in the OECD report in respect of the legitimacy of the inspection methodology; the well documented procedures on decision rules for professional evaluation and the acceptance by schools of the inspection framework. The Committee was also greatly impressed by the professionalism, dedication and enthusiasm of the District Inspectors and Associate Assessors with whom Members undertook informal briefing sessions. The Committee noted a number of very positive written and oral evidence submissions from school principals and Associate Assessors referring to a transparent, consistent and beneficial inspection process.
204. The Committee also noted and welcomed innovations trialled by ETI including the use of "a running record of (inspection) evidence" which is to be shared with schools. The Committee also welcomed ETI's trialling of "having a nominee from the provider that was being inspected attend all of our (school inspection) meetings, including the moderation meeting".
205. The Committee found it difficult to reconcile the very different reported experiences and perceptions of the transparency of the school inspection process. The Committee felt that this was in some part owing to poor or unforeseen inspection outcomes and a high stakes environment created by concerns relating to school sustainability. However, some of the variations in inspection experiences and the surprising lack of understanding by some school leaders in respect of the inspection methodology can not be so easily explained.
206. The Committee noted feedback from school leaders, including some Associate Assessors, who reported very different experiences of their interaction – formal and otherwise – with their local District Inspector. 1 Associate Assessor reported that they had had no contact with the District Inspector in over 5 years. Most other witnesses to the inquiry gave very different evidence and were very highly appreciative of the pastoral aspects of the District Inspector role.
207. The Committee was also particularly affected by the evidence from a principal of a primary school who described his and his staff's shock and astonishment at ETI's published findings for his school which it was argued were greatly at odds with informal feedback and failed to recognise actual school practice and the poor educational base of children starting at the school. He commented: "To say that it was devastating would probably be an understatement. It was confusing and heartbreaking. Instead of turbo-boosting and accelerating school improvement, it succeeded in knocking the stuffing out of a school that was showing improvement. There was a real buzz of curriculum development and learning in our school before the inspection process started and before the inspectors arrived. It succeeded in taking the hard work and good practice of committed staff who were working in difficult situations and discounting it all."
208. The Committee was greatly impressed by the obvious professionalism and dedication of the witness and the sincere and measured way in which he gave his evidence. Members felt that the experience which he described must be in part owing to an unacceptable level of variation in ETI's school inspection practices and a varying level of transparency in its interactions with schools and other stakeholders.
209. The Committee recognised that ESaGS was not intended to create the current high stakes environment for school inspection. Nonetheless, ETI as a key player in the delivery of this policy must recognise the difficulties in the present situation and change its practices accordingly.

210. Evidence to the Committee – contrary to OECD’s findings – has suggested that ETI’s inspection processes are not universally well understood. In particular, some witnesses expressed confusion in respect of the exact nature of the external moderation process for inspection team findings. The Committee was also nonplussed by DE and ETI’s unconvincing evidence relating to the sharing of draft inspection reports/summaries and the Customer Service Excellence Standard. This, it was felt, was an example of poor communication or opaque practices by ETI which had understandably undermined confidence in the school inspection and improvement process.
211. ETI appeared to accept that some schools may struggle to understand the inspection framework, indicating “...we have a huge amount of documentation. Truth be told, that is probably overwhelming for people, and we should not expect them to deal with all that on their own. Perhaps we really need face-to-face interaction with people...” and also conceding that “...we need to look at our communication.”
212. The Committee felt that the obvious remedy for this situation is improved communication and transparent moderation of the school inspection process. The Committee favours enhanced transparency in respect of inspection moderation processes, in line with this it does not accept that there is any valid reason for ETI to share draft inspection summary reports with DE and to have anything other than transparent communication channels with all other stakeholders.
213. The Committee therefore agreed the following recommendation:
- 3. The Committee recommends that ETI better communicates its inspection methodology and clearly sets out the process of external moderation for school inspections – indicating how the latter has been applied in each individual inspection report and that it desists forthwith in sharing draft inspection reports with DE or maintaining anything other than transparent communication channels with all stakeholders.**
214. The Committee agreed that a robust, independent and reliable complaints procedure is a good measure of transparency for any organisation. The Committee noted wide-ranging dissatisfaction with the ETI complaints procedure and agreed that this was symptomatic of a lack of confidence in ETI among some, though by no means all, stakeholders.
215. The Committee noted that notwithstanding the above there are few material differences between the complaints procedures for school inspection in Northern Ireland and those in the rest of the UK and Republic of Ireland. The Ofsted complaints process does however allow for the possibility of a change to a school inspection outcome following a complaint – though the change could be either positive or negative.
216. The Committee believes that in order to enhance transparency and tackle the perception of a “culture of infallibility”, the school inspection complaints procedure should be reformed in respect of its investigation procedures and brought into line with some other jurisdictions which explicitly allow for the possibility of a revision to an inspection finding.
217. The Committee therefore agreed the following recommendation:
- 4. The Committee recommends that the school inspection complaints procedure should explicitly allow for the possibility of a revision to an inspection finding and that consideration should be given to a reformed school inspection complaints procedure which would allow for investigation by personnel outside of the inspectorate or the Department of Education.**
218. The Committee was greatly surprised by the procedures adopted by ETI in respect of the Customer Service Excellence Standard assessment and noted also dissatisfaction among stakeholders in respect of the NISRA post-inspection survey. The Committee felt that a further measure of the level of an organisation’s transparency can be obtained from how that organisation deals with its customers. ETI’s use of questionable or unsatisfactory

procedures could give the appearance of an unwillingness to receive feedback which might be unflattering. The Committee was appalled by the suggestion that ETI – which itself requires schools to sometimes receive and accept a difficult or unwelcome appraisal – is unable to set a good professional example for educational organisations across all phases in Northern Ireland in this regard.

219. The Committee noted that many of the positive findings of the GTCNI survey matched the NISRA post-inspection survey – indeed although ETI strongly disputed the validity of the GTCNI survey, officials appeared to acknowledge the accuracy of some of the general findings. “we have... genuine concerns about the quality of the survey... I think that we have to take some of the broad messages on board, and.... we are already beginning to work on those aspects through the development of inspection work.” The Committee noted that the GTCNI survey asked considerably more searching and ultimately more useful questions than the NISRA post-inspection survey.
220. The Committee found GTCNI’s submissions to the inquiry to be professional, enlightening and constructive. The Committee certainly did not accept that the GTCNI online survey was substantially flawed and that its findings were without merit. Indeed, the Committee felt that GTCNI could usefully assist in the redesign of ETI’s post-inspection and other school surveys.
221. The Committee therefore agreed the following recommendation:

5. The Committee recommends that the inspectorate co-operates with GTCNI in the redesigning of post-inspection surveys and customer service assessments so as to ensure independent and robust assessment of the school inspection and improvement service.

222. The Committee considered a number of different dimensions to the school inspection process – frequency of inspection; notice periods; data requirements; use of questionnaires; inspection reports and descriptors; the role of District Inspectors and inspection arrangements for immersion settings.

School inspections: Frequency

223. In respect of the frequency of inspection, the Committee noted that ETI reported that it had formally “inspected 90% of primary schools and 97% of post-primary schools within seven years”. The Committee also noted that since 2010 a more risk-based approach was taken in determining inspection frequency and that (presumably as a consequence) the frequency of inspection for some schools would fall below current levels.
224. Parents Outloud strongly argued that the frequency of school inspection was currently much too low. This organisation commented that “the paucity of regular and comprehensive inspection information is, as far as we are concerned, quite unacceptable”. Parents Outloud argued that all schools should have a comprehensive inspection at least every 3 years. Parents Outloud also contended that ETI’s focus on literacy and numeracy had led to less attention being paid both to the holistic view of a school’s effectiveness and to other key areas of curriculum delivery e.g. physical education, arts or science subjects.
225. The Committee noted feedback from District Inspectors – some of whom argued that ETI’s current focus on undertaking a fixed number of inspections per year was being achieved at the expense of better, more useful engagement with schools. The Committee also noted the findings of the OECD report which indicated that the current practice of “intense and comprehensive evaluations at each inspected school” is no longer tenable for ETI and is in any case an inefficient use of ETI’s resources where a school has an established self-evaluation process.
226. As indicated above, the Committee greatly values school inspection as an important part of the school improvement process. The Committee believes that the selection of schools for inspection should be based on a combination of publically available data and the

professional judgement of District Inspectors who have a sound and recent knowledge of a school's context. The Committee believes that it is neither reasonable nor sensible to expect schools to improve outcomes for pupils by simply repeatedly inspecting their effectiveness. Consequently the Committee does not support suggestions relating to an across-the-board increase in inspection frequency for all schools irrespective of their record of attainment or the judgement of the District Inspector.

227. ETI assured the Committee that although inspections quite properly have a higher focus on the key cross-curricular skills like literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, the inspection methodology ensures an appropriate and broadly based assessment of a school's effectiveness. The Committee noted OECD's unequivocal endorsement of the ETI inspection framework and therefore did not support suggestions that change was needed in this regard.

School inspections: Notice periods

228. The Committee noted that ETI had reduced notice periods prior to school inspection to 2 weeks. The Committee noted considerable and passionate disagreement among witnesses as to whether shorter or longer notice periods would lead to better inspections or less stress for schools undertaking inspection.
229. NITC appeared to favour shorter notice periods indicating that "if the atmosphere towards inspections changed, there is no reason that the inspectors could not just walk in." ACGS took the opposing view, commenting: "Why are we moving to a position that we only allow schools two weeks' notice of inspections? Does our inspectorate think that it is helpful to put head teachers and teachers under more stress than they feel at the moment?"
230. Parents Outloud also called for shorter notice periods – arguing that this would ensure that ETI obtained a true picture of a school's usual performance. Sir Robert Salisbury made a similar argument indicating that there is a "... real danger with having a long run into an inspection and almost a wedding-day attitude to the inspection week." This view was also expressed by Professor John Gardner and a number of Associate Assessors.
231. The Committee noted and endorsed the views expressed on this matter by the Public Accounts Committee in its recent report on literacy and numeracy. PAC commented that reducing "... the school inspection notice period to two weeks is sensible and gives schools sufficient time to collate all the necessary evidence and to ensure attendance of key personnel." PAC also recommended that "...the option of no-notice inspections should also be available to ETI, in cases where the area inspector has registered specific concerns about a school's performance."

School inspections: Data requirements

232. The Committee noted considerable adverse commentary from teachers and their representatives in respect of increasing data requirements associated with school inspections. GTCNI commented that submissions to a typical standard inspection for a large post-primary school might exceed 700 pages. The teaching unions also highlighted what they described as the growing bureaucratic burden of inspections and the associated workload for teachers.
233. ETI disputed the above indicating that a school is asked to provide "a subset of the data that it already holds in its school administration systems about the pupils, the curriculum and their progress. It has been said during the inquiry that that is an onerous task. People have mentioned large numbers of pages. In fact, these are spreadsheets that are downloaded on to laptops and are not printed off....It is a matter of downloading a very small proportionso it is not a very difficult task."

234. The Committee felt that the concerns addressed by teachers and their representatives in this regard would be addressed by the recommendation (above) relating to the improved explanation of the inspection methodology and also through greater use of self-evaluation, as discussed below.

School inspections: Questionnaires

235. Some witnesses strongly felt that the inspection process was unfair to principals – affording them no or limited confidentiality and through the use of anonymous (often reportedly undisclosed) questionnaires, providing disgruntled staff or disaffected governors with the opportunity to level unsubstantiated allegations while providing no occasion for scrutiny of the detail of the criticisms.
236. ASCL commented: “We have had instances in which the responses to the inspectorate have been manufactured from a central source, been duplicated and the names of a number of members of staff applied to them so that multiple complaints emanated from one source and skewed the final outcome. At a general level, if staff are given the opportunity to make complaints anonymously, they may choose to do so. In a situation in which school leaders are accountable for high performance, increasingly they have to put staff under pressure and challenge underperformance. We have found that when there is a genuine challenge of underperformance, principals are subject to personal attacks in the circumstances that are offered by the staff survey.”
237. ACGS also commented: “An inspectorate questionnaire that seeks views from staff on the leadership in schools is a blunt instrument that can be used by those who have an agenda or a gripe. It has done damage in the past, and it would be good if that blunt instrument could be reviewed and replaced by something better.”
238. ETI disputed the above, indicating that it recognised the context in which questionnaire responses were received and treated responses with caution “..we take a very balanced view of the information that we get through the questionnaires and use them as lines of inquiry.”
239. ASCL indicated that if “.. a school is doing its self-evaluation properly, the questionnaires should be redundant as the issues should have been identified.” ACGS also highlighted the importance of structured feedback from stakeholders – referring to Kirkland Rowell surveys which are described as parental, pupil or staff perception surveys provided by a commercial company. The survey results are described as being benchmarked against schools of a similar type and are reported as being aligned with the inspection framework in the relevant jurisdictions of the UK. The surveys are also said to support self-evaluation in schools.
240. ACGS indicated that principals are “.. keen to hear what our staff have to say, but there is a context for it, and the context is very different if it is done in a Kirkland Rowell survey, which is confidential, or a staff well-being survey rather than in a standard inspection.”
241. Sir Robert Salisbury indicated that he believed that parent (and pupil) feedback is a vital part of school inspection, commenting that “...a school that has excellent self-evaluation will be talking to parents anyway. They should be interviewing all the parents..... Getting opinions from parents is part and parcel of what you should be doing anyway. I include in that opinions from students.”
242. The Committee noted that the habitual and indiscriminate use of anonymous questionnaires by ETI as part of the inspection process had fed the perception that inspection did not support principal-led improvement. The Committee noted with concern the suggestions that this practice could (in some cases) inadvertently make difficult industrial relations situations worse and undermine school leadership. That said, the Committee agreed with witnesses that regular independent opinion surveys of staff, governors, parents and pupils should be undertaken by schools. Members felt that if this was part of the School Development Plan

process it would provide parents, staff and ETI with assurance in respect of the effectiveness of the school and its leadership and also provide a useful platform for parental feedback.

243. The Committee also recognised that questionnaires were a useful tool which could allow the identification of underlying issues in schools. Members strongly felt that any changes in respect of the use of questionnaires should not limit or undermine the efforts of whistle-blowers or others to raise issues of importance. The Committee therefore believes that school inspectors should retain the option to use their own questionnaires when, in their professional judgement, they believe there is a need to do so.
244. The Committee therefore agreed the following recommendation:
- 6. The Committee recommends that anonymous questionnaires should only be included in a school inspection when the need for such a measure has been identified by inspectors and in the absence of a reliable, independent (parent, pupil, staff and governor) survey which has been undertaken by the school as part of the School Development Plan process.**
245. The Committee anticipates that ETI will work with schools and GTCNI to develop appropriate question sets and independent / 3rd party collection and evaluation methods for schools' parent, pupil, governor and staff surveys.

School inspections: Reports and descriptors

246. The Committee noted commentary from witnesses highlighting considerable concerns in respect of the impact of "bad" reports on staff morale and parental confidence – indeed it was strongly expressed that distorted reporting of ETI reports can undermine the latter and consequently significantly impact on the sustainability of schools. Some witnesses argued that it was this emphasis on school sustainability that has raised the stakes for school inspection and altered the focus of the school improvement process.
247. Teaching unions, in particular, strongly argued that the publication of inspection reports adds to the catalogue of unhelpful media interventions in education which includes unofficial and misleading GCSE and A-level league tables and brings little to parental understanding of the effectiveness of schools.
248. ETI conceded that: distortion by the media of inspection reports is unhelpful; this was not considered when the ESaGS policy was devised and that changes in inspection reports and descriptors are required. ETI commented on the development of ESaGS: "At that time, there was absolutely not the same press interest, for example, in inspection reports. I think that it was done with the right intentions in the interests of transparency, but we accept that, at this time, we need to review that."
249. GTCNI and other stakeholders suggested that a detailed, formative inspection report could be made available to the school only and that a high level more summative report could be subsequently published. GTCNI further argued that the terminology in inspection reports should be more constructive and should avoid phrases like "Unsatisfactory" or "Inadequate" which lend themselves very readily and without relevant context to misrepresentation by the media.
250. GTCNI commented: "We want to take away the language of inadequacy and dissatisfaction and move towards the language of being 'very confident', 'confident' or 'lacking in confidence'" which is used in other jurisdictions.
251. Parents Outloud highlighted the importance of understandable inspection reports and the key role they play in parental selection of schools: "Parents also have a right to good, up-to-date information about the quality of provision in each school. How else are parents supposed to make an informed decision on which is the best school for their child?"

252. Sir Robert Salisbury also stressed the importance of understandability in inspection report “It seems to me that a summary, written in straightforward language, ought to be at the front of all reports so that the key findings are shown and you can go on to read the detailed report if you want.”
253. Professor John Gardner agreed indicating “..That feedback has to be published in plain English and without the codes that have grown up within the institutions, particularly the inspectorate, where words are a little bit devious in what they are trying to convey instead of saying directly that there is a weakness. I mean that there should be more direct, plain English.”
254. CCMS also commented that “..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.”
255. ETI conceded that inspection report writing was a difficult task given the numerous audiences for the report’s findings. “When writing the reports, one of the challenges is trying to say something that makes sense to an advisory officer, a departmental official, a parent, a teacher and a pupil. They all want to read different things.”
256. ETI very helpfully referred to practices in Scotland where effectively 2 reports are generated. The first is a detailed confidential report shared with the school and the improvement service giving information on individual year groups and teacher performance. The second contains considerably less detail and is shared with parents setting out the school’s strengths and weaknesses. ETI highlighted its concern that this system provided less transparency for parents than ETI’s current practice of publishing a single inspection report.
257. The Committee recognised that school inspection can sometimes be viewed as a high stakes undertaking linked to the survival of a school. The Committee accepted that this context is largely outside of the control of ETI or of schools. The Committee noted reported misrepresentation of struggling or improving schools by the media and the resulting “inspection trauma” reported by schools.
258. The Committee believes that ETI’s inspection reporting practices should avoid inadvertently facilitating unfair and inaccurate media focus and should also recognise the new high stakes context in which many schools find themselves. That said, the Committee strongly endorses the need for providing understandable and useful information to parents on school effectiveness.
259. The Committee therefore agreed the following recommendation:

7. The Committee recommends that in line with the practice in other jurisdictions, alternative inspection report publication measures should be adopted – specifically two school inspection reports should be produced– the first should be a detailed, formative inspection report which would be made available to the school only; the second should be a plain English, high level, public domain summative report which informs parental understanding of a school’s strengths and weaknesses.
260. The Committee noted feedback from a wide range of witnesses including District Inspectors and Associate Assessors describing the evaluative descriptors: “Good”, “Unsatisfactory” etc. as unhelpful, often pejorative and obscuring inspection findings.
261. The Committee welcomed ETI’s indication that a review of inspection terminology is to be undertaken and that consideration is being given to more useful phrases which may be more difficult for media sources to misrepresent. “We are looking at the performance levels and the language because that is the feedback that we have had. Work is in progress to do that. The direction of travel that we are going in is that it will not be one word but it will be a statement.”

262. The Committee accepted that, regardless of the language used, ETI would continue to report without fear or favour in respect of poor or good school performance. ETI officials commented: “Nevertheless, whatever the wording is, at the end of the day, we will still have schools that are better performing than others. The language might be different, but the reality will be the same.”

263. The Committee agreed the following recommendation:

- 8. The Committee recommends that in line with the practice in other jurisdictions, less pejorative descriptors be adopted for public domain summative inspection reports and accompanied by plain English statements of a school’s strengths and weaknesses.**

School inspections: District Inspectors

264. The Committee noted commentary from witnesses highlighting the role of District Inspectors in providing pastoral support to schools as part of their improvement journey.

265. As indicated above, evidence to the Committee suggested that the role of the District Inspector varies somewhat across Northern Ireland – that said, most witnesses wrote or gave oral evidence about close supportive professional relationships and the positive influence of their District Inspector. GTCNI commented: “One of the things that our teachers are saying is that, because inspectors see so much good practice, they particularly value the district inspector.”

266. However, evidence from the District Inspectors and Associate Assessors suggested that the role of the District Inspector has altered with a much greater focus on the number of schools inspected; a reduction in pastoral visits and so-called “District Time” and District Inspectors having a different, less influential role in inspection teams. NITC also commented: “In a recent meeting with the chief inspector, she said that the minute a district inspector walks through the door of a school, they are in inspection mode. If that is the case, it changes the relationship completely.”

267. Other witnesses hinted that District Inspectors may be prevented or discouraged from adopting a more pastoral role owing to the increasingly high stakes nature of inspection or possibly owing to instructions from ETI management.

268. NIPSA – representing some District Inspectors – disputed the above indicating that District Inspectors see their “visits to schools as inspections leading to improvement in which the tone is very different — akin to that of a critical friend, providing objective opinions, support and challenge where appropriate.”

269. The OECD report confirmed that there was confusion in schools as to how the District Inspectors regular low profile visits differed from formal inspections. OECD also highlighted a challenge for ETI in respect of how it would integrate District Inspector knowledge systematically into its new risk-based approach to inspection.

270. Parents Outloud commented on the limited understanding of the District Inspector role outside of schools: “We appreciate that there is a role for district inspectors. The problem for us, as parents, is that it is not a transparent role.”

271. ETI officials highlighted resource constraints and confirmed the changing role for District Inspectors: “DE commissions 70% of our time, and that commissioning process has asked us to look at and to spend a significant amount of time on individual institution inspection.” Officials also advised that: “The district inspector is no longer the reporting inspector... The district inspector will be a member of the inspection team where that is possible, but it is not always possible if we are to balance that with equity of workload and other priorities in the inspection schedule.” “On balance, about 14% of our inspection days are allocated to district work.”

272. The Committee noted that much of the adverse feedback received in evidence to the inquiry in respect of inspectors actually related to the same individuals who also undertake the generally much-lauded District Inspector role. District Inspectors generally attributed hostile commentary from schools etc., in respect of inspections, to recent changes to their role in inspection teams. They argued, that as District Inspectors are no longer the Reporting or Deputy Reporting Inspector, they can not provide necessary school / district context for inspection findings. This view was supported by a number of witnesses to the Committee.
273. Some witnesses to the Committee – Associate Assessors and District Inspectors – highlighted the importance of corporate or policy memory and identified District Inspectors as critical to the maintenance of this function. They argued against a shift in focus for the District Inspectors from pastoral support to more “Ofsted-like” audit and inspection practices.
274. As indicated above, the Committee views inspection as a key component of the school improvement process. The Committee commends ETI for the introduction of the Associate Assessor role in support of the development of good practice and better understanding of inspection in schools. While welcoming consistency of approach and the managed use of inspection resources, the Committee believes that this must not be allowed to change the focus of the District Inspector role from an independent inspector and a ‘critical friend’ to schools who can share good practice. The Committee agreed that greater not less use should be made of the District Inspectors’ experience of relevant policy and understanding of school context.
275. The Committee therefore agreed the following recommendation:
- 9. The Committee recommends that in order to fully exploit the unique good practice experience and understanding of school context of District Inspectors, they should always have a role in the inspection of schools in their districts and should be allocated sufficient District Time to allow adequate provision of pastoral support for schools.**
276. The Committee recognises that in order to achieve the above, a new balance must be struck between the completion of formal inspections and the provision of school improvement support.

School Inspections: Immersion Education

277. Immersion education settings in Northern Ireland teach students through the medium of the Irish language. Unlike language teaching in conventional settings, all teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions are conducted in the Irish language only. All curricular materials for all subjects are also provided in the Irish language only.
278. The Committee noted suggestions of a perceived bias against Irish language immersion education. It was reported that ETI failed to provide Reporting Inspectors (who lead the inspection team) for Irish Medium Education (IME) schools who had any knowledge of the Irish language. It was also reported that inspectors had little or no understanding of the immersion education methodology and even suggested that poor English language attainment by some pupils was a consequence of the immersion methodology. Additionally it was indicated that the inspection of IME schools is generally undertaken in the English language.
279. CnaG reported: “Generally, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and I feel that the education system has displayed a lack of awareness at all levels about Irish-medium education.”
280. A representative of an IME school contended that better engagement and dialogue with ETI was required indicating that: “the only forum for this sort of discussion for practitioners is at the point of inspection. That is not the best place at which to engage with inspectors, because the inspection dynamic does not allow it.”
281. ETI rejected any suggestions of a bias against the immersion methodology and advised that the number of Irish language qualified inspectors was disproportionately large given the size

of the sector and that it undertook work with its counterpart in the Republic of Ireland so as to enhance its knowledge and appreciation of the IME sector. ETI advised that inspectors will always be provided who are proficient in Irish when required: “We will always have an Irish-speaking inspector on the team — at least one, if not more”.

282. The Committee noted research which compared inspection of immersion education in different jurisdictions. In Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland, inspectors are required to be proficient and to undertake the inspection in the relevant language. These jurisdictions also have language strategies which promote the uptake of the language and the development of the curriculum or curricular materials in the relevant language.
283. The Committee noted reported failures by ETI to provide inspectors of Irish Medium Education schools and units who are proficient in the Irish language and the reported practice of undertaking such inspections in English. Some Members felt that this did not sit well with the Department’s legal obligations in respect of the IME sector and compared poorly with the practices in other jurisdictions both in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.
284. The Committee therefore agreed the following recommendation:

- 10. The Committee recommends that the Department should review its inspection practices for the IME sector and bring them into line with the inspection of immersion education provision in other jurisdictions – specifically the requirement to undertake inspections of IME schools and units in the Irish language.**

Value added by schools

285. ESaGS identified the need for a common measure of the value added by schools. The Committee in its report on the Education Bill (2013) felt that a measure of the value added should recognise the impact of a low educational base and other factors and thus give a better measure of the school’s effectiveness as compared to a simple or banded analysis of raw examination results.
286. Witnesses to the inquiry argued that the concept of value added was simply currently not a feature of the inspection process. CCMS commented: “...we feel that the inspection process should be more holistic in its evaluation of the value added that the school has brought.... the inspection process should look for ways to measure those to some degree”
287. Other witnesses, including the teaching unions, argued that school effectiveness was largely determined by ETI on the basis of end of Key Stage and GCSE and A-level examination results. As a consequence, it was suggested that schools, whose intakes are dominated by pupils with poor previous attainment and whose subsequent attainment might be limited by socio-economic or other contextual factors, will inevitably not perform well in the school inspection process.
288. ETI disputed this and argued that its assessment of schools was much more broadly based than examination results and includes an evaluation of the value added and the related school context. “With the information that ETI already has, we are well informed about the context of the schools that we inspect. ETI uses a broad range of information to inform us about a school’s context. We use outcomes, attendance data that is benchmarked with schools in similar circumstances, enrolments and the number of pupils who take free school meals or who have special educational needs. We have inspectors’ district information and, at post-primary, we have the levels of pupils on entry. However, it is incumbent on a school to make the context clear. Inspection is not a one-dimensional activity: schools have their part to play too.”
289. As indicated above, an important contextual measure employed by ETI is the number of pupils with Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) in the school. ETI categorises schools using 1 of 5 FSME bands. It is argued that this gives a reliable and up-to-date measure of the

- socio-economic context of the school and its pupils. ETI argued that it makes a professional judgement on the value added by schools based on an assessment of a school's socio-economic intake and that it is entirely reasonable to expect a school even with a very high level of FSME pupils to perform at least as well as other schools in the same FSME band.
290. GTCNI and other stakeholders contended that FSME is not a useful factor for categorising schools and for predicting attainment or measuring the value added by schools. ASCL agreed indicating that “at present, we are banded in using the blunt measure of free school meals entitlement. Again, that does not always reveal the true picture of the challenges that many pupils and their families face in the school community and the value that the school adds to individual pupils.”
291. These and other stakeholders contended that a robust benchmark was required of the actual prior attainment of pupils at entry to a school and that this should be compared by inspectors with later attainment. It was argued that the aggregate of the pupil value added would give some measure of value added by the school – though GTCNI and others referred to crucial other factors which were outside of a schools’ control e.g. parental engagement, socio-economic status etc.
292. GTCNI and other stakeholders therefore argued that in order to properly assess the pupil value added, a standardised baselining assessment should be undertaken for all students at entry to primary and at transfer from primary to post-primary. GTCNI also argued that other factors must be considered in order to properly recognise the school context and that FSME was a poor measure of these other factors.
293. Professors Booroah and Knox identified a rubric for predicted attainment in schools based on prior pupil attainment and socio-economic background of pupils and other school factors. They contended that value added by schools could therefore be predicted and measured in a more useful way.
294. The OECD report indicated that although from 2013 more school context information is included in individual ETI inspection reports and that there is a “high degree of transparency in individual inspection reports on the school context”, in the absence of common objective measures of school / pupil context, “it is less clear how ETI accounts for school context in making judgements across schools and sectors.”
295. The Committee noted ETI's contention in respect of contextual value added that “mathematical calculation for value added based on questionable principles can lead to the entrenchment of low expectations and skewed views of schools.”
296. The Committee also noted similar concerns raised by Professor John Gardner in respect of contextual value added measures: “If you apply that kind of process, it creates a different kind of behaviour, which loses sight of the actual activities of the school, which are to improve learning and to enable every student to reach their full potential.”
297. The Committee as part of its consideration of the review of the Common Funding Scheme agreed to commission research on combinations of prior pupil attainment with other socio-economic measures including FSME to provide a useful understanding of school and pupil contexts. The Committee noted assertions that some school contextual measures and associated targeted funding may entrench underachievement and disincentivise improvement by schools. The Committee noted also that ETI contends that it currently employs certain other contextual measures e.g. attendance, enrolments and other District Inspector information. Pending the outcome of the commissioned research, the Committee agreed to reserve its position on the question of contextual value added measures.
298. Notwithstanding the above, the Committee felt that there was certainly merit in standardised baselining of attainment at key pupil junctures in order to inform the development of a common objective measure of pupil value added. The Committee felt that robust baselining would be the first step in properly recognising the value added for individual pupils.

299. As part of its scrutiny of this issue, the Committee also noted with some concern the OECD assertion relating to baseline measures at the end of Key Stage 2 (Levels of Progression) that “..there is an urgent need to build teachers’ trust in the new moderation system and to seek and communicate ways to minimise the reporting burden on schools”. OECD also suggested that teachers and school leaders should therefore have a larger role in the development of policies and in policy pilots. OECD indicated that “there is a need for a sustained communication of the rationale for the reforms to pupil assessment...there is a need to go further and to extend the media campaign in raising awareness of the importance of these long-term goals.”. OECD identified “ a significant challenge in building trust” in the Levels of Progression and called upon DE to engage a broad and representative cross-section of teachers in the improvement of Levels of Progression to ensure their commitment and ownership.
300. The Committee recognised the sensitivity in schools about the use to which baseline measures might be put. The Committee agreed that the attainment baseline should be primarily a formative measure used to support pupil development but that consideration should also be given to its use as a robust indicator of school effectiveness. The Committee agreed that careful consideration could be given to complementing this indicator with other appropriate context based information and that the Department should do all it can to build trust in respect of the use of this indicator.
301. The Committee therefore agreed the following recommendation:
- 11. The Committee recommends that a reliable standardised baseline of attainment at key pupil junctures be introduced in order to provide a common objective formative measure of pupil value added by schools in all educational phases. The Committee further recommends that the Department engage a broad and representative cross-section of teachers to determine the best use of the baseline and the selection of other factors in the development of a robust indicator of school effectiveness which would complement other existing measures.**
302. The Committee noted a number of references by ETI to the obligation on schools to highlight the value they have added to pupils: “Schools have a responsibility to demonstrate to the inspection team that they add value. However, if they do not, how can they say that an inspection did not take it into account?”
303. The Committee also noted a considerable level of frustration among witnesses in respect of ETI’s reportedly limited acceptance of the impact of context on attainment. The GTCNI survey for example found that, contrary to ETI’s assertions, only around 30% of principals felt that inspection took account of the value added by schools. The Committee noted Professor Gardner’s contention: “... the inspectorate needs to spend a great deal of time convincing schools that it takes a broad view of the attainment profiles.”
304. The Committee was surprised by the less than conciliatory language employed by ETI in respect of what is clearly a sensitive and complex issue. The Committee felt that in line with earlier recommendations relating to improving understanding of the inspection framework and in line also with the OECD report, ETI needed to do more to gain the trust of schools and inform them on how best they can explain their context and demonstrate the value that they have added.

Self-evaluation

305. A key element of ESaGS was the principle that most schools, through rigorous self-evaluation, were best placed to identify areas of improvement and to drive changes that would bring about better outcomes for all of their pupils. ETI advised that “There is no statutory requirement for schools to carry out self-evaluation, but the school development plan regulations, which are statutory requirements, state that the identification of areas

- for improvement should be informed by schools' self-evaluation. We evaluated school development planning as good or better in 75% of the primary schools that we inspected and 67% of the post-primary schools that we inspected. We found self-evaluation to promote improvement good or better in 75% of the primary and 55% of the post-primary schools inspected."
306. In evidence to the Committee, Professors Borooah and Knox were critical of the self-evaluation process for schools. They argued that as there were no incentives or sanctions for schools failing to meet self-evaluation targets, the process was unlikely to have any effect on school improvement. They also argued that self-evaluation was no substitute for targeted support and guidance for schools and that schools were not advised how to improve but merely shown how their educational outcomes compare with other schools from the same management type and with a similar free school meals profile.
307. The Committee also noted written evidence from some schools who indicated that self-evaluation, in the absence of proper training for principals and Boards of Governors, could only have a limited impact on school improvement.
308. The Committee noted commentary from ELBs who supported self-evaluation by schools commenting: "If your self-evaluation processes are working effectively, there should be no surprises in inspection; it should be a validation of what you are doing". ELBs also argued that more should be done to build "on the very good work that schools already do on self-evaluation and empowering them so that the model of inspection should, in our view, be very heavily driven by quality assuring the school's own assessment of its progress"
309. The Committee also noted that the OECD Report supported a more prominent role for school self-evaluation in the school improvement process. OECD welcomed ETI's approach to both clarifying expectations of the self-evaluation role within the school development planning process, and raising the profile of self-evaluation activities and results in the external evaluation process as a way of promoting a more effective self-evaluation culture in schools.
310. However, the OECD Report also indicated that "setting strategic or development planning requirements may not be adequate to stimulate an effective self-evaluation culture in schools." OECD also suggested that the current use of self-evaluation by schools provides "a good evidence base for introducing a more proportionate approach to school inspections."
311. ETI appeared to endorse OECD comments relating to a lighter touch inspection regime commenting: "To schools assessed as having an effective self-assessment process, a lighter touch of inspection can be applied: for example, the sustaining improvement inspection in very good and outstanding schools that we are piloting. This proportionate, risk-based approach ensures that resources are targeted where they are most needed and that good practice from good and outstanding schools is shared."
312. The Committee noted with interest evidence from Sir Robert Salisbury who indicated his support for self-evaluation and the possibility of a new role for the ETI inspection regime when the former becomes adequately embedded. "...where self-evaluation is absolutely part and parcel of the daily running of the school, an external inspection becomes almost an irrelevance and a helpful external audit and is not seen as threatening." However Sir Robert also strongly argued for increased formal inspection frequency.
313. The Committee agreed that there was much to be commended in respect of the self-evaluation process and its roll-out in schools. Members felt that the process of reflection and consultation with staff and most particularly parents sat very well with the school improvement process and the professional values of teachers and principals. Members agreed that schools were indeed best placed to drive their own improvement provided they had access to adequate levels of support.
314. The Committee noted however that self-evaluation appeared to be barely recognised or understood outside of schools or educational bodies and that parental understanding and

buy-in was therefore apparently very limited. The Committee was particularly surprised by this, given both ETI's commitment to self-evaluation and the Department's long-standing policy of encouraging and improving parental engagement in their children's education. The Committee agreed with OECD that more needed to be done, beyond setting School Development Plan regulations and providing guidance documentation, to stimulate an effective self-evaluation culture in schools and to develop an appreciation of its value among parents.

315. The Committee was encouraged by ETI's assurance that "District inspectors are already engaged with schools in supporting and providing a challenge to their school development planning and self-evaluation processes" and felt that in line with earlier recommendations more support, more guidance and more training should be provided to schools in this regard.

316. The Committee therefore agreed the following recommendation:

12. The Committee recommends that in line with the OECD findings, measures should be adopted to more effectively promote a self-evaluation culture supported by training and guidance for school staff and governors; advice from District Inspectors; and including greater engagement with parents.

317. The Committee felt that in addition to more understandable inspection reports, greater involvement in the self-evaluation process will provide parents with assurance in respect of the effectiveness of schools and the manner in which challenges are being addressed by school management.

318. The Committee was intrigued by references by ETI officials to a lighter touch inspection regime and the use of so-called Sustaining Improvement inspections which it is understood are being trialled for some schools. In line with its findings set out above, the Committee believes that a new balance is required between inspection and support – but that both are necessary and separate components of the school improvement process. As also indicated above, the Committee does not accept that increased frequency of inspection will automatically lead to school improvement or improved parental assurance.

319. The Committee agrees with OECD and educationalists that ETI should have a greater role in mentoring, auditing and quality assuring self-evaluation in schools. Members felt that this was best undertaken by District Inspectors who have an understanding of the context of the school. The Committee believes that a well embedded and therefore well understood and accepted self-evaluation culture underpinned in this way by District Inspectors might facilitate a future change of approach in respect of school inspection.

320. The Committee therefore made the following recommendation:

13. The Committee recommends that District Inspectors should take a greater role in the mentoring, auditing and quality assuring of self-evaluation in schools. The Committee further recommends that in the longer term, when self-evaluation is effectively embedded in schools, consideration should be given to a revised inspection regime.

Parents

321. The Committee considered evidence in respect of the limited understanding among many stakeholders of ETI's functions and the mechanics of school inspection. The Committee noted particularly a number of submissions highlighting concerns about limited parental understanding or engagement with schools and school improvement. Sir Robert Salisbury indicated that "...there is an enormous area for expansion in Northern Ireland for working with parents in schools".

322. Parents Outloud highlighted considerable frustration in respect of the poor quality of explanatory information for parents relating to inspections and also complained about experiencing more than a little difficulty in obtaining the most up-to-date school inspection

reports. The Committee noted the suggestion from Parents Outloud that ETI should offer assistance to parents who have concerns about their child's education and that this should be considered as part of the school inspection regime. The Committee also noted Professor Gardner's suggestion that ETI should provide collections of evidence to usefully inform the public and the inspection process.

323. The Committee strongly felt that parental engagement with the education of their children was of importance in all cases and particularly for those schools serving socially deprived areas or with poor levels of attainment. The Committee was very surprised to learn of extremely limited recent engagement by ETI with parents as indicated by ETI officials: "Our engagement with Parents Outloud was the first engagement that we had with any parental group in Northern Ireland."
324. The Committee very much supported the need to provide parents with understandable and current advice on the effectiveness of local schools. The Committee anticipates that its recommendations set out above in respect of inspection reporting; the use of questionnaires and parental engagement with self-evaluation will address some of these concerns. However the Committee also noted with interest OECD's criticism of DE's lack of an official communication channel with parents. OECD commented that there is no mechanism to ensure representational feedback on key policy developments. OECD therefore recommended the establishment of a consultation platform for parents – an established practice in other OECD countries.
325. The Committee agreed with OECD in respect of its recommendations relating to a parental consultation platform but also felt that more work is needed to determine how the inspection and improvement services can best interact with and engage parents.
326. The Committee therefore made the following recommendation:
- 14. The Committee recommends that, in line with OECD recommendations, the Department should establish a parental consultation platform and that this should be used to inform the development of understandable and accessible information on school inspection and school improvement for parents and should also be used to explore enhanced engagement options for parents relating to school and education policy.**

Perception problems

327. The recent OECD report asserted that ETI has well established inspection procedures with well understood decision rules – the basis and application of which were described as not being questioned by schools. In contrast to this, the GTCNI survey found moderate levels of dissatisfaction in respect of evidence-based challenges to ETI findings etc. Other witnesses queried the transparency of inspection decisions and the consistency of application of decision rules.
328. As above, much of the evidence to the inquiry was somewhat contradictory. Many schools and school leaders highlighted the positive impact of inspection and the professional and transparent approach adopted by ETI, District Inspectors and Associate Assessors. Other schools and school leaders related accounts of inspections and descriptions of related practices which could not be described as best practice.
329. The Committee sought to resolve the contradictions in the evidence that it considered. Members noted BELB's commentary that there is a "marked dichotomy between ETI's rhetoric of collaboration and professional discussion and the interrogative, data-driven, mechanical and perceived demoralising nature of the actual (inspection) process." The Committee also noted commentary from Professor John Gardner who professed to being a "fan of inspection" and who also indicated that ETI "...does not handle its outside perspective well. That may be

about resource or about a kind of institutional arrogance through which it thinks that it is top of the tree and does not need to explain who it is.”

330. The Committee felt that ETI’s “institutional arrogance” coupled with trust issues identified by OECD in respect of the Department of Education generally might explain the failure to communicate with stakeholders effectively and their varying perceptions of the effectiveness of ETI.
331. The Committee believes that its other recommendations – in respect of the realignment of school inspection with school improvement; enhanced engagement with parents and teachers; better inspection reporting arrangements; a more independent complaints procedure and better explanation of the inspection methodology – will go some way to address poor or inconsistent perceptions of ETI.
332. The Committee feels that in order to mark the significant changes that are proposed and as part of the process of persuading stakeholders that a more collaborative and conciliatory approach is to be adopted to school inspection for improvement in future, the ETI should be rebranded.
333. The Committee therefore agreed the following recommendation:

15. The Committee recommends that the Education and Training Inspectorate should be renamed as the “Northern Ireland Education Improvement Service (NIEIS)”. The explicit focus of the rebranded organisation would be improvement through inspection.

Statutory independence

334. ETI is not established in statute. It is a function of the Department of Education – the Chief Inspector is a member of the DE Departmental board. ETI provides inspection services to DE and other departments. ETI has assured the Committee that its professional evaluations are made and published independently of DE. The Committee has found no evidence to impugn this assertion though some submissions to the inquiry highlighted varying perceptions of ETI’s professionalism and integrity.
335. In evidence to the inquiry, ETI indicated that owing to changes to Departmental priorities it was obliged to reduce resource devoted to thematic reviews or area inspections in order to concentrate on institutional (presumably including school) inspections. District Inspectors confirmed and generally opposed this change in priority as did many schools and other witnesses to the inquiry. Some suggested that this change in policy coincided with the roll-out of the Area Planning process and that this had led to a different and high stakes environment for school inspections.
336. The Committee noted that some witnesses referred to the statutory independence of inspectorates in other jurisdictions and highlighted the ability of those organisations to comment on departmental policy and set their own agendas for inspection and improvement. Sir Robert Salisbury indicated: “...an independent inspection service would be my way of going forward. You find that Ofsted often says things that the Department in London does not want to hear, and it says them very forcefully.” CCMS indicated “the Education and Training Inspectorate needs to have sufficient autonomy to get on with its work, unencumbered to a degree by other influences”.
337. ETI commented that statutory independence would make little difference to its decision-making or operations except to increase costs: “There is no difference in terms of our operational independence to be able to make the decisions that we make about inspection. There are benefits from a financial perspective in that we can share human resources, finance and so on, but our decisions are absolutely independent on the quality of provision in schools and all the other areas that we inspect.” NIPSA – representing some District Inspectors – argued that statutory independence would undermine co-operation with the

Department of Education: “We believe that the ETI is best served by being within the Department but with a degree of autonomy, which it has.”

338. The Committee considered the roll-out of recent Departmental policy initiatives – including Computer-Based Assessment and Levels of Progression. In both cases as indicated by OECD, the Department and its Arms-Length Bodies (ALBs) had commendably sought the input and co-operation of schools. However, in both cases and rather less commendably the Department and its ALBs had failed to consider the feedback from schools – in some cases dismissing out-of-hand valid concerns and helpful suggestions for improvement. Faced with the considerable waste and disruption associated with aspects of these policy initiatives, the Committee feels that a new approach is needed. The Committee believes that a statutorily independent professional body is required which would: highlight good practice; identify improvement actions; set its own agenda for school improvement through inspection and comment not only on schools’ implementation of Departmental policies but on the policies themselves.
339. The Committee felt that although a statutorily independent school inspectorate might well have altered its inspection agenda to support the roll-out of Area Planning, it would have done so in a transparent manner which would not have skewed perceptions and raised the stakes for school inspection.
340. The Committee also noted and endorsed the OECD recommendation that ETI should develop its data analysis capacity and as a unitary inspectorate should undertake longitudinal studies of the impact of education policy on pupil progression in all phases of education.
341. The Committee recognised the complexity and range of options available in respect of the revised governance and budgetary arrangements associated with the establishment of the Northern Ireland Education Improvement Service in statute as an organisation which is independent of the Department.
342. The Committee agreed the following recommendation:
- 16. The Committee recommends that the new “Northern Ireland Education Improvement Service” be statutorily independent from the Department of Education and that research be undertaken to establish the most appropriate governance model for the new organisation. The new model should allow the independent organisation to inspect school effectiveness; advise impartially on DE policy and undertake supporting longitudinal data analysis studies of the effectiveness of education policy in all phases.**
343. A number of Members did not support this recommendation arguing that evidence based research should be undertaken into governance options for the Northern Ireland Education Improvement Service prior to a decision in respect of its independence from the Department of Education. These Members felt that although the establishment of a statutorily independent organisation might ultimately prove to be the most beneficial approach, evidence received during the inquiry did not necessarily support this and that consequently it was more logical to research and evaluate a range of governance options for the Northern Ireland Education Improvement Service and to defer consideration in respect of statutory independence.
344. Notwithstanding the above, the Committee generally felt that the preceding recommendations will address perception and trust issues relating to school inspection and help to establish a more collaborative relationship between schools, principals, governors, teachers, parents and pupils and the school inspection and improvement service.
345. The Committee agreed its report on the inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process at its meeting on 14 May 2014.
346. The Committee agreed to order the report to be printed at its meeting on 28 May 2014.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 1

Minutes of Proceedings

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24. 26 Feb 2014 – Oral evidence - Education and Training Inspectorate on Self-evaluation
25. 5 March 2014 – Oral evidence – Professor John Gardner
26. 11 March 2014 – Oral evidence – GTCNI on-line survey
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35. 28 May 2014 – Agreement of Report

Wednesday, 1 May 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Sean Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Sheila Mawhinney (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Ursula Savage (Bursary Student)
Caroline Perry – Assembly Research Officer (Items 5 and 6 only)

Apologies: Brenda Hale MLA

10:09am The meeting commenced in public session.

2. Chairperson's Business

10:11am Trevor Lunn joined the meeting.

10:14am Michaela Boyle joined the meeting.

2.4 The Chairperson referred Members to the Committee's previous discussion on the topic for a possible Inquiry. Members discussed Inquiries into: the School Improvement process and the role of the Education and Training Inspectorate; and into Integrated or Shared education.

10:19am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

10:23am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should prepare background papers on both of the subjects for consideration at a subsequent meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 22 May 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Brenda Hale MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Sean Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Christopher McNickle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Ursula Savage (Bursary Student)

Apologies: Jonathan Craig MLA

10:04am The meeting commenced in closed session.

1. Committee Inquiry – Terms of Reference

The Committee considered the draft Terms of Reference for an Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the school improvement process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commence this Inquiry immediately after Summer Recess.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Inquiry should also focus on the measurement of the value that is added by schools and that it would give further consideration to the draft Terms of Reference at its next meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 29 May 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Sean Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Christopher McNickle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Ursula Savage (Bursary Student)

Apologies: Jonathan Craig MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA

10:02am The meeting commenced in public session.

11:55am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

12:56pm Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the draft Terms of Reference for a Committee Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following Terms of Reference:

The Committee will:

- Review the effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement – considering particularly how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment;
- Identify the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the ELBs;
- Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection, the assessment of value added and improvement;
- Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process including the need for enhanced powers; alternative measures of achievement; improved governance; and transparency; and
- Report to the Assembly on its findings and recommendations by January 2013.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 19 June 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Christopher McNickle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: None

10:03am The meeting commenced in public session.

12:07pm Michelle McIlveen left the meeting

9. Forward Work Plan

The Committee considered its Inquiry into the Education Training Inspectorate and the school improvement process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commence oral evidence-taking on this Inquiry in October 2013.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 26 June 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Brenda Hale MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Christopher McNickle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: None

10:05am The meeting commenced in public session.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1 The Committee considered a draft Press Release regarding its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Press Release to be published.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 4 September 2013

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Christopher McNickle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Brenda Hale MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Sean Rogers MLA

10:02am The meeting commenced in public session.

8. Any Other Business

The Committee noted that the deadline for written submissions to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement process had been extended until the end of September.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the relevant joint submission from the GTC and NITC to be published by those organisations in advance of formal consideration by the Committee.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 18 September 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mervyn Storey MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA

10:01am The meeting commenced in private session.

1. Procedural Advice

Members considered a request in respect of a proposed confidential submission to the Committee's Inquiry on the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement process.

10:04am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

10:04am Pat Sheehan joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content in this instance to accept a confidential submission to its Inquiry. The Committee agreed that it would keep confidential any details of the submission which might identify the relevant witnesses.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 30 September 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Jo-Anne Dobson MLA

1:03pm The meeting commenced in private session.

1. Procedural Advice

Members considered further requests for submissions to the Committee's Inquiry on the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement process to be treated in a confidential manner.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to generally accept confidential submissions to the Inquiry when requested with relevant oral evidence taken in private; information that could identify witnesses removed from the report; and any Hansard proceedings redacted accordingly.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 9 October 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA.

10:07am The meeting commenced in public session.

10:21am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

5. Briefing from Assembly Research on the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Inquiry

10:25am A representative of Assembly Research joined the meeting.

Caroline Perry, Assembly Research Officer briefed the Committee on her research papers on “Assessing value added in school inspection and supporting improvement”; and “Approaches to school inspection” as part of the Committee Inquiry on the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

10:27am Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from Assembly Research on the educationally relevant measures of social deprivation employed in other jurisdictions identified in the research paper.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 16 October 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA.

10:03am The meeting commenced in public session.

5. Oral Evidence from the Education and Training Inspectorate on the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish written submissions and any additional material relating to the Inquiry, apart from the confidential submissions, on the relevant pages of the Committee's website.

10:43am The following witnesses from the Education and Training Inspectorate joined the meeting:

Noelle Buick, Chief Inspector; Faustina Graham, Assistant Chief Inspector; Paul McAlister, Assistant Chief Inspector; and John Anderson, Managing Inspector.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

11:13am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

11:21am Danny Kinahan left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request the following information from the Education and Training Inspectorate:

- an update on a school which was placed in the Formal Intervention Process in May 2013;

11:25am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

- information on the area based inspection undertaken across West Belfast in 2009, now being taken forward by the West Belfast Partnership Board;

11:43am Danny Kinahan returned to the meeting.

11:48am Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

- case studies of schools where practical advice from the Education and Training Inspectorate following an inspection has led to school improvement;

12:18pm Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

12:20pm Stephen Moutray returned to the meeting.

- a copy of the most recent evaluation of the ETI conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA); and
- information on the number of schools which will potentially be affected following the implementation of the proposed revisions to the Formal Intervention Process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an update on the consultation on proposed revisions to the Formal Intervention Process.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 23 October 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present:	Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson) Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson) Jo-Anne Dobson MLA Chris Hazzard MLA Stephen Moutray MLA Robin Newton MLA Pat Sheehan MLA
In Attendance:	Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk) Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk) Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor) Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Apologies:	Jonathan Craig MLA Michaela Boyle MLA Seán Rogers MLA Trevor Lunn MLA.

10:07am The meeting commenced in public session.

5. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Written summary of responses

The Committee noted a summary of the written responses to-date to the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

6. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral Evidence from the General Teaching Council NI

10:18am The following witnesses from the General Teaching Council NI joined the meeting:

Dr Carmel Gallagher, Registrar, General Teaching Council NI; Gerry Devlin, Senior Education Officer, General Teaching Council NI; Colm Davis, Principal, Tor Bank School; and Sharon Beattie, Principal, Dromore Nursery.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

10:41am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

10:57am Robin Newton joined the meeting.

11:23am The witness, Colm Davis, left the meeting.

11:35am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

11:53am Danny Kinahan left the meeting.

11:56am The remaining witnesses left.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to GTCNI requesting a copy of the questionnaire that it has recently circulated to teachers seeking views on the school inspection process and a summary of the responses to the questionnaire once this information is available.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to investigate the possibility of a meeting with Pasi Sahlberg (chairperson of the review panel of education experts appointed by the Minister for Employment and Learning to take forward the review of teacher training infrastructure in Northern Ireland) to discuss the Finnish educational experience.

11:57am Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

11:57am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

11:57am Robin Newton left the meeting.

11:57am As there was no longer a quorum, proceedings were suspended.

12:02pm The meeting resumed with the following Members present:

Mervyn Storey; Chris Hazzard; Stephen Moutray; Robin Newton; and Pat Sheehan.

7. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral evidence from INTO, NASUWT, UTU and ATL

12:02pm The following witnesses from INTO, NASUWT, UTU and ATL joined the meeting:

Nuala O'Donnell, Registrar, Senior Official, INTO; Karen Sims, Policy/Casework Official, NASUWT; Avril Hall-Callaghan, General Secretary, UTU; and Mark Langhammer, Director, ATL.

12:03pm Danny Kinahan returned to the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

12:50pm Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

12:53pm The witnesses left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NITC to request an update in respect of its review of the school inspection process and a copy of the NITC paper on the School Workforce Review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request the following information:

- an update on a reported planned review of the ETI complaints procedure;
- clarification in respect of suggestions that complaints against individual ETI inspectors do not lead to retraining or disciplinary measures but result in the relevant inspector simply being moved; and
- information on the advice issued to inspectors during the INTO industrial action which ceased in 2012; the impact on inspections at that time; and the ongoing consequences.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from Assembly Research on Parent Councils in Scotland.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 6 November 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies:

10.02am The meeting commenced in closed session.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee noted the following responses to the Committee's ongoing Inquiry:

- a response from the Department following the evidence session on 16 October 2013, including:
 - an update on a school which was placed into the Formal Intervention Process in May 2013;
 - a link to the area-based inspection report in West Belfast (2009);
 - a link to the report on Full Service schools (June 2013);
 - ETI case studies relating to 2 schools;
 - a copy of the most recent NISRA post-evaluation report on ETI; and
 - information in respect of the proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process.

10.26am Robin Newton left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the West Belfast Partnership Board to seek further information on the work that has been undertaken to support the findings of the area-based inspection, with a view to a Committee visit at a later stage.

Robin Newton returned to the meeting.

The Committee also noted the following further submissions to the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate:

- a response from the General Teaching Council NI following the evidence session on 23 October 2013;
- a response from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers following the evidence session on 23 October 2013;
- a copy of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council submission on the Workforce Review; and
- a submission to the Inquiry from the organisation, Altram.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a summary issues paper highlighting the emerging themes from the Inquiry at a future meeting and for the correspondence to appear on the Committee webpage.

6. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral Evidence from NIPSA

10.40am The following witnesses from NIPSA joined the meeting:

Tony McMullan, Assistant Secretary, NIPSA and Janette McNulty, DE Secretary, NIPSA.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

10.59am Michaela Boyle joined the meeting.

11.20am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

11.42am Robin Newton left the meeting.

11.43am Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

12.02pm Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

12.03pm Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

12.06pm Seán Rogers left the meeting.

12.08pm The witnesses left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NIPSA to seek:

- clarification on whether it believes that the 20% proposed reduction in the budget for the Education and Training Inspectorate is to be supported by increased self-evaluation within schools and the use of Associate Assessors;
- its comments on the Education Scotland inspection model; and
- examples of recommendations provided by ETI inspectors in respect of Development Proposals.

12.09pm Seán Rogers returned to the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek information as to how ETI determines the frequency of inspections and the size of its inspection teams.

7. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral evidence from the Education and Library Boards

12.10pm The following witnesses from the Education and Library Boards joined the meeting:

Kim Scott, Senior Education Officer, South Eastern Education and Library Board; Ray Gilbert, Senior Education Officer, North Eastern Education and Library Board; Paddy Mackey, Senior Education Officer, Western Education and Library Board (also representing the Southern Education and Library Board); and Gerry McGuinness, Senior Education Officer, Belfast Education

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

12.24pm Jo-Anne Dobson returned to the meeting.

1.03pm Michaela Boyle left the meeting.

1.04pm Seán Rogers left the meeting.

1.16pm The witnesses left the meeting.

1.16pm Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 13 November 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: None

9.45am The meeting commenced in closed session.

1. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral evidence session

The Committee considered evidence in closed session relating to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

9.49am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

9.52am Pat Sheehan joined the meeting.

10.03am Danny Kinahan joined the meeting.

10.28am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

Jonathan Craig declared an interest as a member of a Board of Governors of a school.

Danny Kinahan declared an interest as a former member of a Board of Governors of a school.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to refrain from identifying the relevant witnesses in any future written or oral statement.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification regarding the number of complaints (successful or otherwise) made against it in respect of school inspections to the NI Ombudsman and/or the Information Commissioner; and to ask for details of successful complaints.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification regarding the number of judicial reviews (successful or otherwise) made against the Department in respect of school inspections; and to ask for details of successful judicial reviews or judicial reviews which were the subject of a settlement.

- Agreed:* The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to ask for comment on the following:
- the suggestion that the principles of ‘Every School a Good School’ were in one case applied by ETI to a school retrospectively;
 - the suggestion that confidentiality is applied by ETI selectively in that it is afforded to complainants, but not certain staff members;
 - the reported practice of destroying evidence relating to school inspections by ETI following the completion of inspection reports;
 - how the assessment of school leadership by ETI is influenced by the non-compliance by staff with action plans and programmes recommended by ETI following an inspection report;
 - how the assessment of school leadership by ETI is influenced by staff complaints linked to the resolution of staff performance management issues; and
 - reports that where school leaders had complied with ETI requirements outlined in an inspection report, further requirements were put forward in subsequent reports.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to determine how ETI benchmarks its inspection activities; assesses Inspectors; and provides training and development for Inspectors.

11.09am Trevor Lunn left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite District Inspectors to an informal briefing event before the completion of its Inquiry.

11.10am The meeting moved to open session.

5. Matters Arising

The Committee noted the following information with regard to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process:

- Written submissions from St. Colman’s High School and Assumption Grammar School;
- Relevant extracts from previous reports of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman in respect of the destruction of records by ETI;
- Information from ETI on its complaints procedure, including the ‘Standards for Complaint Handling’ document; and
- Information from ETI on the impact of INTO/UTU industrial action on school inspections.

11.17am Seán Rogers left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask Assembly Research to produce a short paper comparing complaints procedures for school inspectors in other jurisdictions.

11.17am Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the correspondence would be published on its webpage.

6. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral Evidence from the Association of Controlled Grammar Schools and the Association of School and College Leaders

11.18am The following witnesses joined the meeting:

David Knox, Chairman, Association of Controlled Grammar Schools; Stephen Black, Member, Association of Controlled Grammar Schools; Frank Cassidy, Regional Officer, Association of School and College Leaders; and, Mr Scott Naismith, President, Association of School and College Leaders.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

11.19am Seán Rogers returned to the meeting.

11.24am Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

11.27am Chris Hazzard returned to the meeting.

11.27am Michaela Boyle joined the meeting.

11.32am The Chairperson, Mervyn Storey, left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson, Danny Kinahan assumed the Chair.

12.02pm The Chairperson, Mervyn Storey returned to the meeting and assumed the Chair.

12.24pm The witnesses left the meeting.

7. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral evidence from the National Association of Head Teachers

12.25pm The following witnesses joined the meeting:

Fern Turner, Regional Officer, National Association of Head Teachers; Clare Majury, NI President, National Association of Head Teachers; and Jonathan Manning, Principal, Edenbrooke School.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

12.29pm Jo-Anne Dobson returned to the meeting.

12.33pm Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

12.33pm Michaela Boyle left the meeting.

12.41pm Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

1.05pm Seán Rogers left the meeting.

1.24pm Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

1.32pm The witnesses left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek:

- further information on the weighting allocated in school inspections to end of Key Stage assessments as opposed to school pupil monitoring systems as compared to other inspection findings;
- commentary on suggestions of interference by ETI senior management with regard to the outcome of school inspections; and

- clarification as to the value placed by ETI on skills-based or vocational courses as opposed to academic courses when judging school performance.

9. Forward Work Programme

9.1 The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a briefing from Parents Outloud as part of the ETI Inquiry on 8 January 2014 and to also on that day consider, in private session, the issues raised by the Inquiry to date.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 20 November 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michaela Boyle MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Seán Rogers MLA

9.43am The meeting commenced in closed session.

3. Matters Arising

The Committee noted information relating to its ongoing Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process including:

- correspondence from NIPSA; and
- the Memorandum of Response to the Public Accounts Committee in respect of its report on literacy and numeracy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the information would be published on its webpage.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 27 November 2013

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:	Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson) Michaela Boyle MLA Jonathan Craig MLA Jo-Anne Dobson MLA Chris Hazzard MLA Stephen Moutray MLA Robin Newton MLA Seán Rogers MLA
In Attendance:	Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk) Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk) Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor) Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Apologies:	Mervyn Storey MLA Trevor Lunn MLA Pat Sheehan MLA

9.36am The meeting commenced in closed session.

2. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral evidence session

The Committee considered evidence in closed session relating to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

9.48am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

10.13am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

Jonathan Craig declared an interest as a member of a Board of Governors of a school.

10.27am Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

10.42am The meeting moved to open session.

3. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral Evidence from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) and Gaelscoil na bhFál.

10.43am The following witnesses joined the meeting:

Dr. Micheál Ó Duibh, Chief Executive Officer, CnaG; .Áine Andrews, Principal, Gaelscoil na bhFál; and Roisin Brady, Board of Governors, Gaelscoil na bhFál;

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

10.44am Jo-Anne Dobson returned to the meeting.

11.44am The witnesses left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission Assembly Research to produce a short paper on language immersion systems and the related inspection regimes in Scotland and Wales, and other relevant jurisdictions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to seek information on the number of Education and Training Inspectorate staff who

are trained to assess Irish Medium Education schools; how training for ETI staff with regards to Irish Medium Education is accessed; and for a copy of the template Management and Reporting System (MARS) report used as part of the inspection process in all schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite District Inspectors to an informal briefing event on the evening of Thursday 23 January 2014.

7. Matters Arising

The Committee noted the following information relating to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process:

- a summary of evidence received in private session on 13 November 2013;
- further correspondence from Mr Lyle Cubitt; and
- a response from the Department of Education on the size of inspection teams and the frequency of inspection visits.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the last two items would be published on its webpage.

The Committee noted that Parents Outloud is scheduled to brief the Committee on its submission to the Inquiry on 8 January 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the written submission from Parents Outloud to the Department of Education so that it could respond to the claims and questions raised. The Committee also agreed that the relevant response would be shared with Parents Outloud prior to the briefing on 8 January 2014, if time permitted.

8. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School improvement process - Departmental briefing on the responses to the consultation on the revised Formal Intervention Process

The Committee noted with dismay that, owing to the late receipt of briefing material from the Department, it was not possible for Members to properly scrutinise and respond on this important issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer the briefing; and also agreed to write to the Department to highlight its disappointment regarding the late receipt of papers, and encouraging the Department to comply with the agreed protocol for providing information to Assembly Committees.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 4 December 2013

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Stephen Moutray MLA

10.01am The meeting commenced in closed session.

10.49am The meeting moved into open session.

10.53am Robin Newton left the meeting.

5. **Matters Arising**

The Committee noted correspondence from the West Belfast Partnership Board relating to the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the West Belfast Partnership Board to seek confirmation that the new Education and Training Forum has been established; and to ask the Clerk to report back on provisional arrangements for a visit to consider relevant educational interventions which are being promulgated in West Belfast.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the correspondence should be published on the Committee's webpage with the other Inquiry papers.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 11 December 2013

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Chris Hazzard MLA

9.38am The meeting commenced in public session.

9.41am Danny Kinahan joined the meeting.

4. **Matters Arising**

The Committee noted the following information relating to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process:

- a summary of the confidential evidence received during the closed evidence session of 27 November 2013;
- an Assembly Research paper on school inspection complaints procedures; and
- a response from NIPSA regarding budget cuts, the use of Associate Assessors and Development Proposals.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the correspondence should be published on the Committee's webpage with the other Inquiry papers.

The Committee noted a response from the Department to Committee queries relating to complaints; judicial reviews; confidentiality and benchmarking but also noted that a query with regard to how the Inspectorate weighted pupil attainment data had not been answered.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write again to seek clarity on this point.

9.45am Pat Sheehan joined the meeting.

5. **Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral Evidence from Professors Borooah and Knox**

9.46am The following witnesses joined the meeting:

Professor Colin Knox, Professor of Comparative Public Policy, University of Ulster; and
Professor Vani Borooah, Professor of Applied Economics, University of Ulster.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

9.49am Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting.

10.05am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

11.05am Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

11.06am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

11.09am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

11.11am Danny Kinahan left the meeting.

11.11am The witnesses left the meeting.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted that an informal evening event with ETI Associate Assessors was scheduled for the evening of Wednesday 19 February 2014.

Agreed: Members agreed to advise the Clerk of their availability for this event.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday, 8 January 2014

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Jacqueline Holt (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA

10.01am The meeting commenced in public session.

4. **Matters Arising**

10.03am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

10.04am Robin Newton joined the meeting.

The Committee noted the following submissions relating to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the School Improvement Process:

- a response from the Department to Committee queries relating to the inspection of Irish Medium Education schools and a copy of the Management and Reporting System (MARS) template;
- an Assembly Research paper on immersion education; and
- a submission to the Inquiry from a retired teacher.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek information on the Irish language fluency of its Irish Medium Education inspectors.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the submissions should be published on the Committee's webpage with the other Inquiry papers.

5. **Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Oral Evidence from Parents Outloud and Sir Robert Salisbury**

10.05am The following witnesses joined the meeting:

Dr Liz Fawcett, Northern Ireland Representative, Parents Outloud; Roisin Gilheany, Parents Outloud; and Sir Robert Salisbury, educational consultant.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

10.08am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

10.11am Pat Sheehan joined the meeting.

11.40am The witnesses left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek:

- an update on a reported new parental questionnaire process which is said to be under trial by ETI;
- a breakdown of ETI's financial and personnel resources in respect of the sectors which it inspects;
- the number and nature of specialist inspectors in ETI;
- clarity on the information and paperwork requirements that ETI requests from schools prior to an inspection; and
- an estimate of the uptake of self-evaluation among schools.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to seek its views on the benefits or otherwise of increased independence for ETI from the Department in-line with other jurisdictions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission Assembly Research to produce a paper setting out governance arrangements for OFSTED and Education Scotland and also describing the governance of inspection arrangements in Finland.

6. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process – Oral Evidence from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)

11.47am The following witnesses joined the meeting:

Terry Murphy, Head of Education Standards, CCMS; and Malachy Crudden, Senior Education Advisor, CCMS.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

12.34pm The witnesses left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to CCMS to seek a copy of the guidance it provided to Catholic Maintained schools on the self-evaluation process.

The Committee noted that at its next meeting it was to consider, in private session, an issues paper on the Inquiry. It was further noted that the requirement for further evidence sessions or possible Committee visits would be considered at that time.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted that an informal evening event with ETI Associate Assessors has been scheduled for 19 February 2014 and considered a draft invitation letter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to issue the invitation letter to the ETI Associate Assessors.

The Committee noted that it is to receive evidence from Professor Gardner at its meeting on 5 March 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to meet the relevant travel and accommodation expenses for Professor Gardner.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to meet at the earlier time of 9.30am on 15 January 2014 so as to consider the Inquiry issues paper.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Forward Work Programme.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 15 January 2014

Senate Chamber

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Jonathan Craig MLA

9:35am The meeting commenced in closed session.

1. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School improvement Process – Written briefing – Inquiry Issues Paper

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education in response to its queries relating to scoring / weighting in respect of ETI assessments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note this correspondence and for it to be published on the Committee's webpage.

9:37am Danny Kinahan joined the meeting.

The Committee considered a paper summarising issues relating to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

9:55am Pat Sheehan joined the meeting.

10:02am Danny Kinahan left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that in order to inform its understanding of the school self-evaluation process it would undertake an appropriate school visit.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education to request:

- further information on schools which undertake assessment by other 3rd party organisations e.g. Investors in People etc.; and
- further information on the procurement, independence and suitability of EMQC Ltd which undertakes the customer service review of the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should draft interim recommendations, based on the issues discussed, for the Committee's further consideration.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to revise the end date for its Inquiry to Spring 2014.

10:22am The meeting moved to open session.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 22 January 2014

Senate Chamber

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Trevor Lunn MLA

10:02am The meeting commenced in public session.

4. **Matters Arising**

The Committee noted a paper from Assembly Research (RaISe) about Parent Councils in Scotland commissioned as part of the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the School Improvement Process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the RaISe paper on Parent Councils in Scotland to the Department for comment.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to invite Assembly Research to provide Members with an oral briefing on the research papers provided to-date in respect of the Inquiry into ETI and the School Improvement Process.

The Committee noted a paper from the General Teaching Council Northern Ireland (GTCNI) giving its response to the OECD report on assessment and evaluation frameworks.

Agreed: Members noted that Departmental officials were scheduled to brief the Committee on the OECD report at the meeting on 12 February 2014 and agreed to forward the GTCNI paper to the Department for comment at that briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the papers should be published on the Committee's webpage with the other Inquiry papers.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to invite GTCNI to brief the Committee on the findings from its on-line survey on perceptions of the ETI, at its meeting on 26 February 2014.

10:18am Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

10:24am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

10:31am Chris Hazzard joined the meeting.

10:56am The Chairperson suspended the meeting.

10:58am The meeting resumed.

11:23am Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

11:43am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

12:02pm Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted that its informal briefing event with District Inspectors would take place on Thursday 23 January 2014 at 6pm in Room 115 with a slightly amended format.

12:08pm Stephen Moutray rejoined the meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 5 February 2014

Senate Chamber

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

10:34am The meeting commenced in public session

10:35am Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

10:36am Chris Hazzard returned to the meeting.

10:47am Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

4. **Matters Arising**

The Committee noted further information relating to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

This included:

- a draft summary of the issues raised at the informal briefing event with District Inspectors' on 23 January 2014;
- further information from Parents' Outloud following their oral briefing on 8 January 2014, including that organisation's transcript of the Chief Inspector's interview on Radio Ulster, also on 8 January 2014;
- a response from the Department to the Committee's queries regarding IME inspectors, parental questionnaires, ETI resources, data requirements and self-evaluation; and
- a response from the Department on ETI independence; third party assessment of schools; and the customer service review undertaken of ETI by EMQC Ltd.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the draft summary of the informal briefing event on 23 January 2014 with the District Inspectors for comment; and to forward the draft summary to the Department of Education for information.

11:01am Stephen Moutray returned to the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the most recent submission from Parents' Outloud to the Department for comment.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity on:

- the qualifications, teaching and school leadership experience of ETI Inspectors;

- the apparent increases in ETI's budget;
- the ratio of ETI inspectors to the actual number of school visits as compared with other jurisdictions;
- the Chief Inspector's reported remarks on Radio Ulster relating to the frequency of "sustaining improvement" inspections;
- why District Inspectors are no longer the Reporting or Deputy Reporting Inspector for inspections of schools within their districts; and
- whether District Inspectors have seen a reduction in so-called "District Time".

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write again to the Department to seek its view in respect of increased independence for the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the correspondence from Parents' Outloud and from the Department with regard to the Inquiry should be published on the Committee's webpage along with the other Inquiry papers.

The Chairperson advised Members that Antrim Grammar School had kindly agreed to facilitate a visit at lunchtime on Tuesday 4 March 2014, during which staff will explain the self-evaluation and inspection process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive, in the coming weeks, a briefing from junior ETI officials on self-evaluation and the school inspection process. The Committee further agreed that at this briefing it would defer more general questions on ETI and the School Improvement process until the evidence session with the Chief Inspector on 12 March 2014.

5. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process – Formal Intervention Process – Consultation Feedback

11:07am The following departmental officials joined the meeting:

David Hughes, Director of Curriculum, Qualification and Standards Directorate and Karen McCullough, Head of Standards and Improvement Team.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and was recorded by Hansard.

11:11am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

11:36am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

11:55am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

11:58am Seán Rogers left the meeting.

12:00pm Robin Newton left the meeting.

12:07pm The Departmental officials left the meeting.

12:07pm Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity on:

- the number of schools that responded to the consultation which are in, or have recently been in, the Formal Intervention Process; and
- further information on the seven schools which will enter the Formal Intervention Process once the revised policy is introduced.

12:08pm Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

12:08pm Robin Newton returned to the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reserve its position on the proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process pending the conclusion of its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

12:09pm Chris Hazzard returned to the meeting.

12:11pm Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

12:12pm Pat Sheehan returned to the meeting.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold its meeting on 26 February 2014 at the West Belfast Partnership Board, following which WBPB will present informally to Members on its Education and Training Forum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Forward Work Programme.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 12 February 2014

Senate Chamber

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Maeve McLaughlin MLA

9:34am The meeting commenced in public session.

4. **Matters Arising**

The Committee noted further information relating to the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement process including:

- a Departmental response on Parent Councils; and
- Assembly Research briefing papers on inspection notification and information requirements; and governance issues and budgets for inspectorates in other jurisdictions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the relevant papers should be published on the Committee's webpage with the other Inquiry papers.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 19 February 2014

Senate Chamber

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: None

10:04am The meeting commenced in public session

10:14am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

3.4 Associate Assessors

The Chairperson reminded Members about the Committee's briefing event with Associate Assessors due to take place that evening as part of the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Members noted a further submission from Parents' Outloud amending previous information relating to the frequency of school inspections; and a response from the Department on the question of independence for the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Agreed: The Committee noted the relevant papers and agreed that they should be published on the Committee's webpage with the other Inquiry papers.

Members noted correspondence from the Department identifying schools in Belfast judged by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) as being adept at self-evaluation.

11:22am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

11:04am Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

11:30am The Chairperson left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson assumed the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

11:30am Chris Hazzard left the meeting

7./8. Departmental Briefing – Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – Next Steps; and Departmental Briefing - Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Report on Evaluation and Assessment.

11:40am The following Departmental officials joined the meeting.

David Hughes, Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards; Dale Heaney, Head of Assessment and Qualifications Team; Gayle Kennedy, Head of Statistics and Research; and Karen McCullough, Head of Standards and Improvement Team.

The Departmental officials provided a briefing on agenda items 7 and 8, and this was followed by a question and answer session. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

11:55am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting

12:16pm Trevor Lunn left the meeting

12:29pm The Departmental officials left.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department regarding the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012 - Next Steps briefing, to request a response to questions which remained unanswered; and to also request a response to concerns regarding the teaching of science within primary schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department regarding the OECD Report on Evaluation and Assessment to request a response to questions which remained unanswered; and to also request commentary on the GTCNI response to the OECD Report.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to give further consideration to another oral briefing on both agenda items pending receipt of written answers to its questions.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 26 February 2014

West Belfast Partnership Board

- Present:** Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA
- In Attendance:** Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)~
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies:** Jonathan Craig MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Seán Rogers MLA

10:04am The meeting commenced in public session.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1 The Committee noted a draft summary of the issues raised at the Associate Assessors' informal briefing event on 19 February 2014, held as part of the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process. The Chairperson noted that this had been a useful evening, and thanked those Members who participated.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share an amended version of the draft summary, with the Associate Assessors for amendment and with the Department of Education for information.

- 4.2 The Committee noted further information relating to the Committee's Inquiry including a response from the Department relating to the consultation on the Formal Intervention Process; and further information from ETI including a copy of the "Inspection Leading to Improvement" document, and another document entitled "The Role of the District Inspector".

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the relevant papers should be published on the Committee's webpage with the other Inquiry papers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek further information on the role of Associate Assessors in particular in respect of their involvement in inspection teams.

5. Departmental Briefing: Inquiry into ETI and the School Improvement Process – Self Evaluation

10:14am The following Departmental officials joined the meeting:

Noelle Buick, Chief Inspector; Faustina Graham, Assistant Chief Inspector; Heather Jackson, Managing Inspector; and John Anderson, Managing Inspector.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and was recorded by Hansard.

11.23am Danny Kinahan joined the meeting.

11.53am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

7. Assembly Research Briefing - Inquiry into ETI and the School Improvement Process – Recap of Inquiry Papers

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer the briefing from Assembly Research.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted that the Registrar of GTCNI may be unable to attend the meeting scheduled for 5 March 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the GTCNI on-line survey of perceptions of school inspection and improvement as either an oral or written briefing and, if time permitted, to include the deferred briefing from Assembly Research at the meeting of 5 March 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme as amended.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 5 March 2014

Senate Chamber

Present:	Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson) Jo-Anne Dobson MLA Chris Hazzard MLA Trevor Lunn MLA Stephen Moutray MLA Robin Newton MLA Seán Rogers MLA
In Attendance:	Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk) Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk) Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor) Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Apologies:	Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson) Jonathan Craig MLA Maeve McLaughlin MLA Pat Sheehan MLA

10:06am The meeting commenced in public session

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Inquiry into Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

The Committee noted further correspondence from the Education and Training Inspectorate relating to the Committee's Inquiry.

5. Non-Departmental Briefing: Inquiry into Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

10:13am The following witness joined the meeting.

Professor John Gardner, Deputy Principal (Education and Students), University of Stirling.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and was recorded by Hansard.

10:48am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

11:01am Robin Newton left the meeting.

11:12am The witness left the meeting.

11:13am The Committee moved to closed session.

6. Inquiry into Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process – Consideration of draft recommendations

The Committee considered a paper outlining draft the recommendations of its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

11:29am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

11:46am The Committee moved to open session.

7. Assembly Research Briefing - Inquiry into Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process – Recap of Inquiry Papers

Agreed: The Committee noted a revised Assembly Research paper regarding Inspectorate Funding and Staffing Levels and agreed to again defer the relevant oral briefing from Assembly Research.

8. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process - General Teaching Council NI (GTCNI) Online survey: Perceptions of ETI and school Inspection

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer the briefing from GTCNI until Tuesday 11 March 2014.

11. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek information on the Investors in People accreditation for the Education and Training Inspectorate, including detail on the following areas: strategic planning, effective management, culture and communication, developing people and managing performance.

The Deputy Chairperson advised Members that an informal briefing with parents, governors and pupils from Crumlin Integrated School had been arranged for 1pm in Room 277 on 12 March 2014.

12. Date, Time, Place of Next Meeting

The Committee will meet on Tuesday 11 March at 12.30pm in Room 21 to receive evidence from GTCNI on its online survey of teachers' perceptions of the Education and Training Inspectorate.

[EXTRACT]

Tuesday 11 March 2014

Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Jonathan Craig MLA

12:33pm The meeting commenced in public session

2. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process – Briefing from the General Teaching Council NI.

12:33pm The following witnesses joined the meeting

Dr Carmel Gallagher, Registrar, General Teaching Council NI; Colm Davis, Principal, Torbank Special School; and Bryan Jess, Principal, Carrick Primary School, Lurgan.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and was recorded by Hansard.

12:36pm The Chairperson left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

The Committee consequently lost its decision-making quorum but, under the provisions of Standing Order 49(5), continued to hear evidence.

12:48pm Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting.

12:57pm Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

1:01pm The Chairperson returned to the meeting and resumed the Chair.

1:04pm Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

1:21pm Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

1:28pm Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

1:39pm Seán Rogers left the meeting.

1:40pm Danny Kinahan left the meeting.

The Committee consequently lost its decision-making quorum but, under the provisions of Standing Order 49(5), continued to hear evidence.

1:49pm The witnesses left.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 12 March 2014

Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Pat Sheehan MLA

10:42am The meeting commenced in public session.

10. Inquiry into Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process – Final Departmental Briefing

11:03am The following officials joined the meeting:

Noelle Buick, Chief Inspector; Faustina Graham, Assistant Chief Inspector; John Anderson, Managing Inspector; and Heather Jackson, Managing Inspector.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session and was recorded by Hansard.

11:50am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

12:07pm Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

Jonathan Craig declared an interest as the Chairperson of a Board of Governors of a school.

1:01pm Danny Kinahan left the meeting.

1:38pm Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

1:44pm The officials left the meeting.

1:44pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 19 March 2014

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

9.40am The meeting commenced in public session.

9.45am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

9.47am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

4.3 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

The Committee noted a press article, sent by the General Teaching Council NI, which referred to a recent report by the Policy Exchange on school inspection in England.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 26 March 2014

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Seán Rogers MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Robin Newton MLA

10.04am The meeting commenced in public session.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School improvement Process

The Committee noted a submission from an Associate Assessor to the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this submission to its Inquiry report, and to publish the information on the Committee's webpage along with the other Inquiry papers.

The Committee noted further correspondence from the Department of Education which clarified that ETI does not share draft school inspection reports with colleagues in the Department. However the Committee also noted that this response appears to contradict an answer given by the Department to AQW 26136/11-15.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this correspondence to its Inquiry report, and to publish the information on the Committee's webpage along with the other Inquiry papers. The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to request an explanation as to why the information appears to contradict the answer given to AQW 26136/11-15 in October 2013.

The Committee noted further confidential submissions to the Inquiry.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 2 April 2014

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

- Present:** Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA
- In Attendance:** Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies:** Maeve McLaughlin MLA

10.05am The meeting commenced in public session.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School improvement Process

The Committee noted further Departmental correspondence with regard to its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this submission to its Inquiry report and to publish the information on the Committee's webpage along with the other Inquiry papers.

10.19am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

10.46am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

11.11am Jonathan Craig left the meeting.

11.27am Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

11.37am The officials left the meeting.

11.37am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

11.39am Jo-Anne Dobson returned to the meeting.

11.40am The Chairperson left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

11.41am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

11.48am The Chairperson returned to the meeting and resumed the Chair.

11.56am Chris Hazzard returned to the meeting.

12.03pm Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

8. Draft Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

12.21pm Seán Rogers left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a draft report of its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process at its meeting on 9 April 2014.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 9 April 2014

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Sharon Young (Clerical Officer)
Emma Swan (Clerical Officer)

10.01am The meeting commenced in public session.

10.03am Chris Hazzard and Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

10.14am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

11.02am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

11.10am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

11.35am The Minister and the Departmental officials left the meeting.

11.36am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

11.37am Chris Hazzard left the meeting.

11.38am Trevor Lunn and Seán Rogers left the meeting.

11.40am Seán Rogers, Trevor Lunn and Jo-Anne Dobson returned to the meeting.

11.45am Chris Hazzard returned to the meeting

11.48am Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

11.52am Robin Newton left the meeting.

11.52am Stephen Moutray returned to the meeting.

5.2 Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Members noted correspondence from the Department providing further clarity on the sharing of draft inspection summaries.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the correspondence to its inquiry report and to publish the information on the Committee's webpage, along with the other inquiry papers.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 30 April 2014

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Emma Swan (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Chris Hazzard MLA

10.00am The meeting commenced in public session.

10.01am Danny Kinahan joined the meeting.

10.02am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting.

10.11am Jo-Anne Dobson joined the meeting.

11.40am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

12.01pm The Chairperson left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

12.06pm Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

12.09pm Seán Rogers left the meeting.

12.17pm Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting.

12.37pm The Committee moved into closed session.

10. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process – Consideration of Draft Report

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the draft report on the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process until the meeting on 7 May 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that relevant excerpts of the draft report be shared with the Department of Education so as to confirm factual accuracy.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.39pm.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 7 May 2014

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present:	Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson) Jonathan Craig MLA Jo-Anne Dobson MLA Chris Hazzard MLA Maeve McLaughlin MLA Robin Newton MLA Seán Rogers MLA Pat Sheehan MLA
In Attendance:	Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk) Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk) Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor) Emma Swan (Clerical Officer)
Apologies:	Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson) Trevor Lunn MLA Stephen Moutray MLA

9.31am The meeting commenced in public session.

9.33am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting. The Committee consequently lost its decision-making quorum but, under the provisions of Standing Order 49(5), continued to hear evidence.

9.36am Pat Sheehan joined the meeting and the Committee regained its decision-making quorum.

10.03am Maeve McLaughlin joined the meeting

10.04am Jo-Anne Dobson returned to the meeting.

10.32am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

10.37am Seán Rogers left the meeting.

10.42am Robin Newton left the meeting. The Committee consequently lost its decision-making quorum but, under the provisions of Standing Order 49(5), continued to hear evidence.

10.51am Seán Rogers returned to the meeting and the Committee regained its decision-making quorum.

10.53am Maeve McLaughlin left the meeting. The Committee consequently lost its decision-making quorum but, under the provisions of Standing Order 49(5), continued to hear evidence.

11.01am Jonathan Craig joined the meeting and the Committee regained its decision-making quorum.

11.03am Pat Sheehan returned to the meeting.

11.37am Seán Rogers left the meeting.

11.38am Maeve McLaughlin returned to the meeting.

11.47am Seán Rogers returned to the meeting.

11.52am The Committee moved into closed session.

10. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process – Consideration of Draft Report

Members considered a draft report of the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process, and suggested amendments.

11.53am Jo-Anne Dobson left the meeting.

12.13pm Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should amend the draft report in line with Members' comments and that the final report should be available for consideration at its next meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 14 May 2014

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Chris Hazzard MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Emma Swan (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Robin Newton MLA
Jonathan Craig MLA

10.03am The meeting commenced in private session.

1. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process – Agreement of Inquiry Report

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note confidential tabled correspondence relating to ETI.

Members considered the draft report of the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process.

Agreed: Members agreed the Executive Summary and Summary of Recommendations, with minor amendments.

Agreed: Members agreed paragraphs 1 to 53 of the Introduction section, with minor amendments.

Agreed: Members agreed paragraphs 54 to 151 of the Consideration of Evidence section, with minor amendments.

Agreed: Members agreed paragraphs 152 to 323 of the Findings and Recommendations section, subject to agreement by correspondence of text relating to Recommendation 16.

10.38am The meeting opened in public session.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 28 May 2014

Greenmount Agricultural College

Present: Mervyn Storey MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Kinahan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Jonathan Craig MLA
Trevor Lunn MLA
Seán Rogers MLA
Pat Sheehan MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Paula Best (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Sharon McGurk (Clerical Supervisor)
Emma Swan (Clerical Officer)
Alicia Muldoon (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Chris Hazzard MLA
Maeve McLaughlin MLA
Stephen Moutray MLA
Robin Newton MLA

10.00am The meeting commenced in private session.

1. Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process – Agreement of Inquiry Report

Agreed: The Committee noted a further confidential submission to the inquiry and agreed that as it did not affect any of the findings or recommendations, it would not be included in the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for an extract from the minutes of the meeting of 28 May 2014 to be included in the appendices of the inquiry report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the inclusion of Appendices 1 to 7 in the inquiry report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the report would be the Fifth Report of the Education Committee to the Assembly for the current mandate.

Agreed: The Committee ordered the report to be printed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to submit the following motion to the Business Office:

‘That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Education on its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process [NIA 132/11-15] and calls on the Minister of Education to implement the recommendations contained in the report’

10.04am The meeting entered public session.

[EXTRACT]



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 2

Minutes of Evidence

Contents

1. 16 October 2013 – Oral evidence – Education and Training Inspectorate
2. 23 October 2013 – Oral evidence – GTCNI
3. 23 October 2013 – Oral evidence – NITC
4. 6 November 2013 – Oral evidence – NIPSA
5. 6 November 2013 – Oral evidence – ELBs
6. 13 November 2013 – Oral evidence –ACGS/ASCL
7. 13 November 2013 – Oral evidence – NAHT
8. 27 November 2013 - Oral evidence – CnaG/Gaelscoil na bhFal;
9. 11 December 2013 – Oral evidence – Professors Borooah and Knox, UU
10. 8 January 2014 – Oral evidence – Parents Outloud/Sir Robert Salisbury;
11. 8 January 2014 – Oral evidence – CCMS
12. 5 Feb 2014 – Oral evidence - DE on Formal Intervention Process
13. 19 Feb 2014 – Oral evidence – DE on PISA and OECD Report
14. 26 Feb 2014 – Oral evidence - Education and Training Inspectorate on Self-evaluation
15. 5 March 2014 – Oral evidence – Professor John Gardner
16. 11 March 2014 – Oral evidence – GTCNI on-line survey
17. 12 March 2014 – Oral evidence - Education and Training Inspectorate

16 October 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Ms Michaela Boyle
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Sean Rogers
 Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Mr John Anderson	<i>Education and</i>
Mrs Noelle Buick	<i>Training Inspectorate</i>
Mrs Faustina Graham	
Mr Paul McAlister	

1. **The Chairperson:** I welcome to the Committee today Noelle Buick, the chief inspector; Faustina Graham, an assistant chief inspector; Paul McAlister, an assistant chief inspector; and John Anderson, a managing inspector. You are all very welcome. We are glad that it is not the Education Committee that is being inspected. This is a matter of grave importance, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss it. Noelle, do you and your team want to make some comments, and then we will have questions?
2. **Mrs Noelle Buick (Education and Training Inspectorate):** Thank you very much. Good morning, Chairman and members.
3. On behalf of my colleagues in the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), I would like to thank you for and welcome this opportunity to present our views on the work of the inspectorate and the school improvement process and, later in the process, to hear your recommendations for what we can do better in the interests of learners.
4. I will talk for about 10 to 12 minutes, if that is OK, Chair.
5. **The Chairperson:** Yes.
6. **Mrs Buick:** By way of a short introduction, I will outline the nature of the work that we undertake. You will have read in our submission that we are a unitary inspectorate in the Department of Education. We carry out work mainly for three Departments: the Department of Education (DE); the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL); and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). The inspection of schools, as you probably know, is set in legislation, and all that we do is underpinned by our corporate values and principles. Our main function is to inspect and report on all education and training provision, focusing particularly on statutory provision. We also provide evidence-based policy advice to the three Departments, evaluate the effectiveness of key policies and, through the chief inspector's report, report on the quality of education system-wide.
7. We undertake institutional inspections as well as a wide range of inspection surveys. As you know, most of our inspectors are deployed as district inspectors, with responsibility for a group of organisations. We have just over 60 inspectors in the inspectorate. All inspectors have extensive experience as practitioners and have held substantial management responsibilities at senior level in the organisations from which they have been recruited. I have to say that I continue to be impressed by our inspectors' professionalism, experience, expertise and commitment to improving provision for learners.
8. Most of our inspection teams also include associate assessors (AAs) who are practising principals and vice-principals or senior managers in their organisations. We currently have over 200 associate assessors. We recently undertook a recruitment campaign, and we had over 200 applications for about 90 places. It is a mutually beneficial role: AAs bring currency of the sector to

- inspection, and that complements the inspection experience and skills of my colleagues, and, in turn, AAs, as senior leaders and managers in schools, get a deeper understanding of the evaluative process, with a view to strengthening their school's self-evaluation process, and have an opportunity to see at first hand good practice in other schools. Their involvement builds capacity for improvement in the sector, and AAs consider it very effective professional development. Most AAs are members of teaching unions, so, indirectly, it gives teaching unions — many of which, I know, you are going to meet later — an involvement in the inspection process.
9. I am immensely proud of the work that we do and the contribution that inspection makes to improvement. Again as you know, our mission is to promote improvement in the interest of learners, and we take that very seriously. The learner is at the centre of all our work and the decisions that we make, and we see ourselves as advocates for the child. We firmly hold the view that inspection is at the centre of raising standards for all learners. It promotes improvement by ensuring that best practice is highlighted and that poor provision is identified and improved. It assures parents that their children are safe and well educated. It also provides the government with evidence-based policy advice and robust accountability mechanisms.
10. 'Every School a Good School' states that sustained improvement comes from within a school, and we see our roles as catalysts for and enablers of improvement. There is a strong link between internal self-evaluation and external assessment undertaken through inspection, so inspection is a continuum of improvement; it is not something that sits apart. The quality indicators that inspectors use are transparent and are published in 'Together Towards Improvement' and can be used by schools in their own self-evaluation. Inspection includes mainly first-hand evidence to identify, promote and effect improvement in education.
11. Inspection findings are not based on perceptions but on robust, qualitative and quantitative evidence collated over a number of days. It involves a strong focus on teaching and learning through classroom observations, a review of the quality of pupils' work and interviews with key staff, governors and pupils themselves. With that evidence set against the experience of the inspection team, judgements on how learners are progressing are made. Inspection teams' judgements are totally independently made without fear or favour. It is important to note that we are not looking for anything that should not already be in place in a school.
11. Inspection can make a difference. For example, since April 2010, we have carried out a total of 238 follow-up inspections, and in approximately 80% of those, there has been an improvement of at least one performance level. That means that the quality of provision for pupils in those schools has improved.
12. Similar improvements have been identified in schools that have entered the formal intervention process (FIP). Since 2009, 3,400 primary school pupils and 6,300 post-primary pupils have attended schools in formal intervention. That is a total of nearly 10,000 that have been attending schools that are not good enough. However, because schools have exited FIP, 1,600 primary and 1,700 post-primary — a total of 3,380 children — are now getting a better standard of education. Inspection has played a key role in improving provision for those pupils, and that really matters to the life chances of those children.
13. We do not walk away from schools at the end of the inspection process. We provide support through the interim follow-up visits and inspections. The extent of that follow-up process depends on inspection outcomes. The follow-up process is highly regarded as being supportive, constructive and effective.
14. The effectiveness of our own work is independently and externally evaluated

- through the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), and the feedback is largely positive, with over 80% of respondents saying that inspection contributed to improvement in outcomes for learners in their organisations. We continually evaluate our own processes and procedures to build on strengths and to identify areas for improvement. As a result, the organisation has been awarded the customer service excellence award for the past eight years in a row. This involves the assessor meeting and interviewing some leaders of the organisations, chosen at random, that have recently undergone inspection activity. In addition, the business practices of the organisation were reviewed by a DE internal audit in 2011, and that resulted in a very positive evaluation.
15. I will take a few minutes to look in detail at specific areas identified under the inquiry's terms of reference. First, the effectiveness of the current inspection models and effecting improvement. I believe that our current models of inspection are effective. The Cabinet Office has stated that any inspectorate that can demonstrate achievement against the 10 principles of inspection will be at the forefront of best practice. I believe that ETI can demonstrate that it more than meets the 10 principles.
 16. So, let us look at the 10 principles of inspection. We have a strong focus on promoting improvement, provision for learners and their achievement and standards. We take a learner view. We are proportionate to risk. We encourage self-evaluation, leading to improvement. We are evidence based. We are transparent and open about the processes that we use. We have a regard for value for money and continuously review our practice. I am sure that throughout the sessions we will have an opportunity to demonstrate further how we adhere to those principles.
 17. As a continuously improving organisation, we do not expect less of ourselves than we do of those that we inspect. As a direct result of the feedback that we have received, since September 2013, we have made some changes to inspection. For example, the inspection notification time is now two working weeks instead of four. Inspection findings are reported on a Friday on whole-week inspections so that schools do not have to wait over the weekend to receive the outcome of their inspection. Prompt feedback is provided after lessons so that teachers do not have to wait until the end of the inspection to learn the findings. These improvements are aimed at reducing some of the apprehension that might have been associated with waiting for the inspection to start and receiving feedback.
 18. The revised post-primary inspection was introduced in September 2013. We now have a greater focus on self-evaluation that demands less paperwork being provided by the schools and aims to be more collaborative. In primary schools, the short and focused inspection has been streamlined into one inspection that lasts two or three days, depending on the size of the school. Our reports are shorter now, so that we can turn them around more quickly. However, they are still backed up with detailed feedback throughout and at the end of the inspection. Since September 2013, we have been using a running record of evidence on all of our school inspections, and we trialled those in post-primary schools last term. We intend to begin sharing that with schools in the future, when we have perfected the process. Last week, in work-based learning, we also trialled having a nominee from the provider that was being inspected attend all of our meetings, including the moderation meeting. We intend to trial that more widely sometime in the future to see if it works for all parties. We are also undertaking a review of performance levels that we use on inspection, and we have already done some early work on this. We will be discussing these with the sector in early 2014.
 19. To move on to the term of reference around value added, what is important

- here is not the model of value added that is used, as there are many schools of thought about what is an effective value-added model. It is more important that a school knows what progress its pupils are making and how that information informs planning for teaching, learning and meeting individual pupils' individual needs, as well as setting realistic and challenging targets for the whole school and by subject. Where schools use standardised tests — for example, Progress in English (PiE), Progress in Maths (PiM), Middle Years Information System (MidYIS) and the Year 11 Information System (YELLIS) — the inspection team samples the data to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's processes in distinguishing between low and underachievement and how they are using that information and data to make sure that each pupil achieves to their full potential.
20. The critical judgements that inspectors make about value added are based on the quality of pupils' progress relative to their baseline starting points. ETI does not use a prescriptive, formal value-added system, but instead accepts and scrutinises all of the assessment information, such as outcomes for standardised tests and teacher assessment, that the school wishes to make available. The overall trends in the school's internal and external performance indicators are tracked and benchmarked against the performance of pupils in the school and the performance of pupils in schools with a similar free school meal entitlement.
21. I think it is fair to say that the Department continues to consider the most appropriate arrangements for introducing robust measures of value added to assess pupils' progress and school performance. There have been well-documented issues, as I am sure you will know, associated with the development of contextual value-added measures in other parts of the world. Of particular concern is the risk that the use of such measures entrenches low expectations for the most disadvantaged young people and masks underachievement. Although the concept of contextual value added appears attractive in promising to show the differences that schools can make, in reality such measures are very complex and can be difficult for stakeholders to interpret.
22. The new end-of-key-stage assessment arrangements include an expectation that, as well as achieving the expected level by the end of each key stage, pupils will progress by at least one level between each key stage. By capturing the progress made by pupils between each key stage, the new assessment arrangements should provide a measure of value added by schools. I want to emphasise that, although data is important in our inspections, the process of inspection is not data-driven but rather is data-informed. We have a strong focus on teaching and learning, looking at pupils' work and interviews with staff, pupils and governors. I am sure that we will get a chance to talk about that a little bit later.
23. The schools performance data that I was talking about is discussed with the senior management team, which has the opportunity to provide its interpretation of the context of the organisation. That, in turn, is set in the context of the inspector's own experience and judgements on the quality of pupils' achievements and standards. Again, I am sure we will talk more about value added as we go through the meeting.
24. I would like to move on to talk about the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties. The 'Chief Inspector's Report — 2010-2012' indicated that, overall, the education system across Northern Ireland achieves good value, but its outcomes are too variable. Inspection evidence indicates that, although there is a range of factors impinging on schools experiencing difficulties, the most important are poor leadership and management, low expectations of the teachers and managers, and the poverty of aspiration among parents, pupils and the wider community. However, while any of those can apply in certain

- circumstances, inspection evidence indicates that the most significant issues in those circumstances are the quality of leadership and management, and the capacity of the school for rigorous and honest self-evaluation leading to sustained improvement.
25. High-quality leadership in a school will build on the smallest strengths in order to bring about improvement. There are no examples of schools that we have inspected where we did not find some evidence of good practice. In many schools inspected, either individual teachers or coordinators were managing to achieve good outcomes despite the socio-economic circumstances of the school. Where the quality of leadership was poor, we found that the senior leadership team did not have the capacity to analyse the problems or plan strategically and realistically for improvement.
 26. The need to improve the outcomes for learners in English and mathematics across all sectors remains a priority. Of particular concern are the standards achieved by pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Only 34.1% of all school leavers entitled to free school meals achieved five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and maths, in 2011-12. Although that is an improvement from 2010-11, there is still a great deal of work to be done in order to ensure that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds fulfil their full potential.
 27. The ETI recently published a report of schools with relatively high levels of free school meals in which good standards are achieved by pupils, particularly in English and maths. That was done to identify elements of good practice. Since September 2013, we have also been directly supporting 20 schools in which there is a gap in the outcomes of five A* to C GCSEs and including English and maths. Two inspectors will work on that project full time to support those 20 schools, and they will be supported by two seconded AAs, one for English and one for maths.
 28. In some schools in which the quality of education is poor, the school community has difficulty accepting the validity and fairness of an inspection of performance level. We do not underestimate the difficulty in accepting that provision is not good enough when schools believe that they are doing their best. However, in focusing on the needs of learners, the ETI has no option but to comment on the lack of impact that that hard work is having on pupil's achievements. That is always done with a view to making things better for everyone in the longer term. As I mentioned, we are considering a review of the performance levels used at the conclusion of inspection reports and, in particular, the terminology used in those descriptors.
 29. I will now move on to talk about the models of inspection in other jurisdictions. I mentioned that our inspection approach adheres to the 10 principles of public service inspection. We are part of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI). In fact, I attended its meeting in Edinburgh last week. We constantly review aspects of the work of inspectorates across other countries and evaluate how effective those would be in Northern Ireland. In addition, over the years, the ETI has participated in inspection activities with other inspectorates in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and in other European countries. Recently, other inspectorates have indicated their interest in the development of our sustaining improvement inspection model, which I am sure we will talk about a little bit more later.
 30. The last of the terms of reference is to look at the need for enhanced powers, alternative measures of achievement, improved governance and transparency. A key feature of all of our inspection activity is to build capacity within the organisations inspected. The ETI seeks to achieve that outcome by promoting processes of evaluation that will endure beyond the period of inspection by helping to establish improved ways of working through professional

- dialogue and identifying, reporting and disseminating examples of outstanding practice from which others can learn. I believe that we have been very effective in building capacity in the sector through, for example, our collaborative inspection work, our inspection reports, the use of associate assessors, the role of the district inspector, the dissemination conferences that we have recently undertaken, and the examples of good practice that are featured on ESaGS.tv, to name but a few.
31. I move on to the powers of the inspectorate. The Education Bill that was introduced to the Assembly clarifies and modestly enhances the functions and powers of inspectors. The ETI notes and supports the main changes as being necessary and proportionate. However, even with that enhancement, the powers of inspectorates in other jurisdictions are still considerably stronger than those of ETI.
 32. As I said, the ETI keeps its processes under continuous review and is always open to new ideas or views. The ETI is aware of the need to retain the professional support of the education system. The introduction of a formal intervention programme and the associated media coverage resulted in some schools expressing their difficulty in accepting the validity or fairness of an inspection performance level. It is worth mentioning that, between 2009 and 2013, the inspection models that we use have not changed. With the new introductions that we have made in 2013, we are aiming to be even more collaborative in how we inspect.
 33. Finally, the ETI consults with stakeholders in the design, development and review stages of all its processes and work. I am sure that we will get an opportunity to talk about that later.
 34. **The Chairperson:** Thank you for that detailed opening comment, Noelle. I will just take you back to your last comments in relation to the changes that are beginning to appear. The cynic in me — not that I have ever been accused of being one — would say that
- there was no change in the inspection regime for a number of years, but then, when the Education Committee determines to have an inquiry, all of a sudden we have altered inspection arrangements and guidance issued to governors consulting on the changes to the formal intervention process. Is this a case of the ETI trying to get its house in order before we get to the end of an inquiry?
35. **Mrs Buick:** The intervention process is a DE policy. So, the changes that we are making to the formal intervention process are set aside from the changes that we are making to inspection. We started making changes to inspection in September 2011. As part of our staff development, we have two days on which we review our practices and principles. We started to implement the changes that we would like to make and decide how we might go about doing that. You cannot just change the inspection process overnight; it takes time. My colleagues all know that I would like it to have been even faster, but it takes time to develop, trial and consult on models; that is a really important part of our process. So, no, it is not a response to the inquiry; we have had that in place since 2011.
 36. **The Chairperson:** There are a number of specific things that I want to get to. This is the commencement of a process for us. Noelle, you made a comment about the ETI being transparent and open throughout the process. As I am sure you noticed, I tabled a question asking the Minister what arrangements exist between his Department and the Education and Training Inspectorate once a school inspection has been completed. The response was that the inspection team shares the key findings with departmental colleagues once the inspection has concluded. However, it seems that the practice is that, prior to the final report being published, there are ongoing discussions with the Department. I will not name the school, but you will be well aware of one special school that was inspected recently. In the inspection report, you

made recommendations as to what could be done to help and assist. When I asked the Minister what actions were being taken as a result, this was the response:

"I have noted the recommendations contained in the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) recent inspection ...

In the first instance, the departmental officials have been liaising with the ETI regarding the inspection report, and in particular the recommendation regarding the possibility of collaborative working."

37. How can we see or access the recommendations or discussions that take place between the ETI and the Department before the final report is published? Therein lies the mist; therein lies the concern. We are told that what happens, in some cases, is that the report that is given verbally to the school is completely different from what ends up in the written report. Why should that be the case if the process is transparent, which, according to you, it is?
38. I should say that the district inspectors are held in the highest regard. It was remiss of me not to say that at the start that, if there is one value in our system that we need to maintain, it is our network of district inspectors. I, and schools that I have spoken to right across the country, value greatly the district inspector. However, over the past number of years, there seems to be an increasing concern that there is a breakdown between what happens with the district inspector when an inspection is initiated and the report itself. That leads me to be worried about the comment that, from your perspective, the process is transparent and open. There seems to be a number of issues.
39. **Mrs Buick:** You raise a number of issues in your question. I will try to take those in the order in which you raised them.
40. First, there is no mist between us and the Department. We inspect without fear or favour. The outworkings of the recommendations that we make may well inform policy, and we may well give policy advice related to that. We may well then inspect the effectiveness of that policy. With regard to the verbal report, we aim to give accurate feedback at all times through the inspection. We have good liaison with the schools that we inspect throughout the inspection process, but it is a fact that the verbal report is more detailed than the inspection report. That is why one of the things that I outlined in my speech was that we are hoping to produce the running record and to leave that with the school. It is a process that we are beginning to trial and hope to perfect. That may clarify some of the points that you raise. They are points that have been raised before, and we have had a lot of internal discussion about that matter. The verbal report lines up with the final inspection report, but there will be more detail, and rightly so, at the verbal report.
41. You are quite right that the district inspector role is highly regarded. They will have a significant role in the follow-up inspection process, which is considered constructive, effective and thorough, and they know their schools well. I would like to spend more time on the district inspector activities, but we have a budget that we have to adhere to. We give the maximum amount of time that we can give to district inspector activities, but it is within a budget envelope that we have. Faustina may want to add to that.
42. **Mrs Faustina Graham (Education and Training Inspectorate):** I am aware of the Assembly question to which you refer. Truthfully, looking at the number of inspection reports that go through our hands, in our directorate dealing with schools, the processes that would have been described in answer to that question are exactly what happens in the Department. Colleagues in the school improvement team in the Department will receive the same information that the school receives. In other words, at the verbal report back with the school, we leave a summary sheet, which is a short,

- one-page document that sums up the findings of the inspection. That is left in confidence with the school, and that is exactly the same information that is passed on to the Department. After that, we work through our processes and the inspection report is published. There is no contact between ourselves and colleagues in the Department before the publication of that report. The process will be continued in schools where there is an entry into the formal intervention process, because that will kick-start a process, but it is clearly outlined in annex C of Every School a Good School what the process is. We follow it to the letter, and we have to, given the volume of reports that we deal with.
43. **The Chairperson:** How that plays out in practice is not the case. I will not name the school, but I am sure that you will be aware of it when you hear the comments. A school was inspected, and the principal said that it was “inherently unfair and unjust” that the school did not have the opportunity to question or challenge the inspectors’ findings on the basis of evidence. He went on to say:
- “The first opportunity we are allowed to comment on the findings is after the publication, at which point our personal and professional reputations and the reputation of our school have already been irreparably damaged if not thoroughly destroyed.”*
44. How do we address that? That is not a mist or a perception; that is a fact by a principal in a school that was inspected. In another school, and, again, I am not naming it, the principal has now taken early retirement as a result of the inspection, and, unfortunately, he has suffered physically as a result of the process because he believes that he was made the scapegoat for the issues that were raised.
45. There has to be transparency and openness through the process. None of us likes inspections. None of us likes to be inspected on anything. Members of the Assembly get inspected as to how many paper clips we have and all sorts of things, but that comes with the territory, and we accept that. However, this is a situation where genuine concerns are being raised and where it is a real person and a real school. The other one that I referred to is a real school and a real individual. How do we prevent that?
46. **Mrs Buick:** I will respond, and, again, Faustina might like to come in to add to my response. I could give you hundreds of other examples of schools that are entirely happy with the process. I outlined in my introduction that it is sometimes very hard for schools to accept the outcome of an inspection if it is not what they expected, especially if they have been working hard. I would say that there is every opportunity for a school to provide evidence throughout the inspection process, and we will look at all the evidence that is provided. There is also the opportunity for a school to respond through the factual accuracy check; the report goes to the principal through the factual accuracy process. We would hope that any complaints are resolved before an inspection is completed, but there is quite a thorough complaints process if a school really is not happy with the outcome of an inspection. We have to inspect without fear or favour. If a school is not serving its pupils well, we must make sure, for the benefit of those pupils, that we say so. As I demonstrated, over 80% of schools that have gone through the follow-up process have improved. That impacts on learners, and, at the end of the day, they are the important people. They are at the centre of this process. Faustina, is there anything that you want to add?
47. **Mrs Graham:** Obviously, it is not our intention, in any shape or form, to find ourselves in the circumstances that you outlined. As Noelle said, we work very hard before the inspection. You mentioned the role of the district inspector. The reporting inspector will discuss any concerns with the school, particularly with anyone who has difficulties at that time with the inspection process, and when we are in the school, we will be sensitive to those situations. We try to discuss and mediate the findings across the

- three days of the inspection. We meet the principal of the school every day to discuss the emerging findings, so that, by the end of the inspection process, the findings, we believe, should not come as a surprise. That does not, for one minute, take away from what you just read to us. The important thing for us is that we are always extremely open to finding ways of improving our communication and making the process as constructive as possible. If, as a result of this inquiry, you can assist us with that, we will be entirely open to accepting your recommendations. We want to ensure that we do not change the evaluation, because, as Noelle pointed out, the primacy of the learner and the child is the most important thing for us, but if there are better ways that we can convey the findings, so that people do not find themselves in the situation that you just described, we would be open to hearing them.
48. **The Chairperson:** Trevor wants to come in on this point, but I just want to say this before I lose my train of thought. That may not be the inspectorate's intention, Faustina — I do not believe that there is that intention — but the reality is that this one school raised issues that, if you take Noelle's comment, should have been addressed, along with any inaccuracies and concerns, at the factual accuracy stage. However, it seems as though something broke down somewhere, and the principal of that school has ended up making very critical and, I have to say, very damaging comments. If it is only one, it should be addressed. The good shepherd went out to find the one sheep that was lost, because he knew that the other 99 were safe and sound. I have to say that I worry about such situations. It was not just a glib comment; very serious accusations were made.
49. **Mrs Graham:** Which, I think, we accept, but I would not accept that it was not factually correct; it is perhaps how we convey it. I think that we are very willing to improve on how we convey the findings. To say that something is factually incorrect — we provide the school with an opportunity before publication to comment on the factual accuracy.
50. **The Chairperson:** Trevor wants to come in on this point, and then we will go to other members.
51. **Mr Lunn:** I just want to get clarity on this. You keep the school informed of — I think that you used this term — the emerging findings, but it seems to me that the school does not have an opportunity to see the finalised report before that is published. That is perhaps where they are different.
52. The Chair of the Public Accounts Committee is here today. She would know, as would Sean, and as I know from my experience, about the way in which the Audit Office deals with the situation. Effectively, it shows the final report to the institution being investigated and to anyone who was a witness to a particular inquiry to make sure that it is accurate. It also gives them an opportunity, before the thing goes public, to correct misapprehensions. You do not accept that you are falling down in that respect, but is that perhaps where the problem lies?
53. **Mrs Buick:** Mr Lunn, we afford schools the opportunity to see the report pre-publication for a factual accuracy check. It is not to reopen the evaluative judgements that have been made, but it is certainly to check any points of factual accuracy. They have that opportunity, in the same way in which the Public Accounts Committee would afford us that opportunity to do so.
54. I go back, Mr Storey, to that particular school. If an issue is raised with us directly, we try incredibly hard to mediate and find a way forward with those schools. We try very hard to make sure that they are not left feeling that they have not been well served by the inspection process. John very recently attended a meeting of governors at a school that was not satisfied with the outcome of an inspection to explain again in more detail and to reach a

- consensus point at which the governors accepted that the outcome of the inspection was right and valid.
55. **The Chairperson:** Noelle, I think that you probably know the school that I am referring to. It might be useful if the Committee was given an update on where we are currently at with that school. I am quite happy to give you the name of the school afterwards.
 56. **Mrs Buick:** Yes. I am entirely happy to discuss that with you.
 57. **Mrs Graham:** The school has submitted its action plans, and we are about to visit it.
 58. **The Chairperson:** On the point that Trevor made, the Department of Education, prior to the publication of a report on the early years fund, had a discussion with the organisation about the final outcome of the report. It gives money to that organisation. It clearly has those discussions. There seems to be a breakdown or a misunderstanding. The purpose of this inquiry is to find out what exactly the practice is, how it is interpreted and how it is put into place. It is useful that we have this discussion.
 59. I want to ask one other simple question. You said that the inspectorate is data-informed rather than data-driven. What is the attitude of the inspectors to the computer-based assessment (CBA) in our schools, which caused us grave concern? You said earlier that you look at the value added based on PiE, PiM and other systems in place, which have not cost us the millions of pounds that the computer-based assessment has. It seems that the inspectorate looks at that as a good model and tool to deal with the issue of identifying the needs of children. Will you clarify for us what the inspectors' attitude is towards computer-based assessment?
 60. **Mrs Buick:** I will start, and maybe Faustina would like to come in. Our position is that we will look at the data that the school provides for us. We expect a school to be able to know what progress its pupils are making and to take action on foot of that information.
- CBA is a diagnostic tool that came after the interactive computerised assessment system (InCAS). The established principle was that we would not ask for InCAS results. It was to be the same principle for CBA. If a school wants to provide us with that information, we will use it, but we do not specifically ask schools to provide it for us.
61. **The Chairperson:** You advise the Department. There is always the issue around independence, which we are raising concerns about. You advise the Department on policy, or you make a comment on policy. I find it absolutely astounding that we have a situation in which the inspectorate says, "We had an agreed working practice that we would not ask about InCAS, and we are going to carry that on with the computer-based assessment." That is a laudable position for the inspectorate to have, but the Department has put in statute a requirement to have those assessments, and the chief inspector, who goes into schools to see how the assessment is being done, says, "We do not want to see that; we are not going to ask you for it".
 62. **Mrs Buick:** That is not quite what I said, Chair. I said that we will use —
 63. **The Chairperson:** It comes across that way. We have a policy from the Department. As far as the inspectorate is concerned, if the school does not provide the information, it will not ask for it.
 64. **Mrs Buick:** That is true. We will use the information that a school provides for us, but we expect a school to be able to demonstrate to us that it knows about the progress of its pupils.
 65. **The Chairperson:** Yes, but by using not computer-based assessment but PiE and PiM, which you have historically always used.
 66. **Mrs Buick:** It is by using whatever tool that they think is most appropriate for their pupils. Faustina was involved in the CBA assessment that we did, so perhaps she will elaborate.

67. **Mrs Graham:** In February and March, we very quickly responded to the concerns from the Education Committee, and the Minister commissioned us to do a piece of work. We would probably have been undertaking that in the upcoming year anyway, because, as Noelle said, we were not looking at computer-based assessment in individual organisations, because the nature and purpose of computer-based assessment was to encourage the use of assessment for diagnostic purposes, not for summative assessment. It really was to look at how what you were finding out in November in your school was going to inform the teaching and learning process subsequent to that. For that reason, the Department was not collecting the statistics from computer-based assessment, nor were we looking at it as a prerequisite that someone should share with us. Nevertheless, it was our intention that, when the new NINA and NILA was embedded, we would look at computer-based assessment. We are standing back this year to allow that to happen and for people to become comfortable with it.
68. Instead, we set up a piece of work in February and March. We sent a questionnaire out to all primary schools at that time. Around 50% of primary schools responded to that questionnaire, and, on foot of that, we sent inspectors accompanied by associate assessors. So, any school that was visited was visited by an inspector and an associate assessor to look at the reality of what happened on the ground with computer-based assessment this year. Obviously, the implementation of that was not good enough, and that has been accepted by everyone. Our recommendations to the Department reflected that, as things move forward, it is very much about working with the sector and with the profession to ensure that people are content with what is replacing what we currently have, in particular the issue about the procurement process requiring to be carried out on a three-year basis. All of those things cause problems to schools. Even if the resulting computer-based assessment is good, it will still cause problems on that three-year basis. So, we did respond very quickly and listened to the voice of the profession in what we fed back to the Minister and the Department.
69. **The Chairperson:** We could go a long way on this one. You undertook a piece of work on behalf of the Department. The issue is that, as far as the inspectorate is concerned, if you do not ask for computer-based assessment information, you will not receive it. So, my question is this: why do we have it when the inspectorate is content about what is already there as assessment tools? That is a policy issue for the Department, and we have been pursuing that for some time.
70. **Mrs Graham:** Schools do share the information with us, because we are looking at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. It is just not something that we require them to do. Schools have been very open with InCAS and, in the current year, NINA and NILA, sharing that information.
71. **Mr Newton:** I thank the delegation for coming today. I will be a bit selfish and particular, if I may. I represent East Belfast, and I am sure that you know that there are high concerns about underachievement in east Belfast. I have been pleased with some of the responses from parents recently in that they have stepped up to the mark to provide the teachers with what, I think, is absolutely necessary assistance to get the standards up. That is true of one school in particular. Last week, we had some discussion around the area plan for east Belfast, and there are some of us who think that it is not a plan that is fit for purpose. Those very difficult circumstances have an impact, particularly on Orangefield High School, Dundonald High School and the merger, or potential merger, of Newtownbreda, which is a South Eastern Education and Library Board school, and Knockbreda, which is a BELB school. I note that all references are to working with “the” school or “a” school to help improve the situation. Given the area-based plan,

- do you have a role in advising how that situation can be addressed in a holistic manner as opposed to an intervention in one, two or three schools as individual schools?
72. **Mrs Buick:** I will begin on that, and then, as those are post-primary schools, perhaps John would like to comment.
73. We would have inspected all those schools, and we inspect what we see and what the quality of provision is like for pupils in the school at that time. Our role in area planning would merely be that, if a development proposal was put forward for a school, we would comment on that development proposal. That is entirely our role, in that we inspect the school and make a determination about the quality of provision. If a development proposal comes our way for comment, we would comment on it. However, we have no role or locus in the area planning process.
74. **Mr John Anderson (Education and Training Inspectorate):** As you know, five major indicators are used as part of area planning. The inspectorate's input is really into one of those and part of one of the others. Determined by the school budget, pattern of enrolment and accessibility of the school, our input is an evaluation of the quality of provision. To a certain extent, we can contribute to making evaluations about the effectiveness of the leadership, management and governance of a school, but that is not the whole part of that particular criterion. So, that is that particular part. An inspection report will never close a school.
75. In the case of those particular schools, they work together. Several of those schools are part of an area learning community. When we are inspecting or, as happened recently, following up inspections in those schools, we are aware of that. We talk to pupils who are attending courses in one of the other schools and see pupils in the school who are attending from another school. So, we are interested in how the curriculum provided to those pupils is being broadened by how effectively those schools are engaging in the area learning community to provide the entitlement framework at Key Stage 4 or beyond. That is absolutely part of our inspection when we look at any one school: we look at how it works with other schools so that the curriculum that is provided is as suitable as it possibly can be for the aptitudes, needs, interests and abilities of the pupils of that school.
76. **Mr Newton:** Given the fact that three of the schools mentioned are in close proximity, it would seem to me to be a consultation role at least. However, really, your role is very minor in that situation in area-based planning.
77. **Mrs Buick:** That is not our locus to be involved in. As John said, the criteria for sustainable schools are very clearly laid out. Our role is absolutely to look at the quality of provision for those young people and, as I said, to comment on the development plan. I think that it is right and proper that that should be our role.
78. **Mr Newton:** Even though, as John said, you look at the pupils, you are actually looking at those schools as individual schools, rather than at the impact within an area. The impact on east Belfast is huge.
79. **Mrs Graham:** We have done some work on area-based inspection. One piece of work that we did was in west Belfast in 2009. As a result of that work looking at underachievement in that locality and looking across primary, post-primary, some of the youth provision in the area and non-formal education generally, we wrote a report at that point. Subsequently, the west Belfast community partnership board picked up the gauntlet, so to speak, in responding to the inspection report and providing work across the area to try to look at improving standards. That is not formally the work that we do, but we have kept in touch with that work, as far as we possibly can. My understanding is that the east Belfast partnership board has liaised with west Belfast to see what it has done and how it has worked with

- the organisations. That type of work, where communities see that what is happening for their young people in the whole area is not good enough, has real potential for the future. So, we have done three pieces of work like that, but, again, as Noelle said, looking at how the provision across a geographical area and sectors is providing for young people comes down to resourcing. It is very interesting work for us to do, but it is quite resource intensive.
80. **Mr J Anderson:** It so happens that, at present, in all of the schools that you named, there is concurrent inspection activity. In every case, there are follow-up inspection activities going on. I forgot to add that part of schools working together through an area learning community benefits not just the pupils, in terms of access to provision, but the staff. We are always pleased to see and comment positively on instances where staff from different schools are working together to improve the quality of their provision, for example, in careers education or whatever it might be. That is the case in some of those schools as well.
81. **Mr Newton:** We would all want to see schools working together in that holistic manner. It seems to be that what I would describe as a voluntary action by the west Belfast partnership has proved to be a good model that others are now looking at. One might have thought that there would be a learning exercise there somewhere along the line. I know that that is not your role, as you have explained.
82. **Mr J Anderson:** Similarly, we looked in north Belfast, where schools are collaborating. Again, particularly on the point that you made at the start, their outreach to parents is very effectively supporting the pupils' learning. There are good case studies around, which other parts of the Province are interested in looking at and taking lessons from. We have found some of those lessons in other schools.
83. **Mr Newton:** It may be useful if the Committee could be provided with those pieces of information.
84. **The Chairperson:** John, to pick up on your comment that an inspection report will not close a school: it will certainly put the first nail in the coffin. That difficulty has arisen. I do not know how we get to a better place in dispelling the concern that people have. It looked very suspicious that there was an inspection in that school in the context of what was going on around that school. I could name schools that have undergone inspection and, in an area planning context, believe that they were targeted specifically because there was an area planning issue. We want to get to the bottom of how we deal with that issue, because it is prevalent out there at the minute.
85. **Mrs Buick:** I can absolutely dispel that myth. You know that Every School a Good School states that it is not about institutions; it is about the learners — the pupils — in those schools. We will inspect as we find in those schools, and if the quality of provision is not good enough, we will say so. There is no hidden agenda here. We have a proportionate risk-based approach to inspection, and we will inspect schools as we find it fit to do so. There is no agenda here.
86. **Mr Paul McAlister (Education and Training Inspectorate):** The one factor that I do not believe that the Committee, nor we, have any control over is how the media handle information that we put into the public arena. Mr Newton mentioned the importance of parents assisting teachers. A lot of that parental assistance, and, indeed, the way in which pupils engage with teachers, comes from the confidence that they have in the teachers and the professionalism that the teachers show. Serious damage is caused if that is eroded publicly and unfairly by the media, and it is certainly not something that we would ever want to happen when we put information into the public arena. We feel that the relationship between a teacher and a pupil is so special that it deserves to be treated with an extra layer of respect than, perhaps, any other job. We find that some of the reporting

- of the information that we put into the public arena is not helpful in that regard.
87. **Mr Moutray:** Thank you for your attendance. What support is given to the governors of a school that has been inspected and deemed to be inadequate or unsatisfactory? A principal is there day and daily to deal with the issues; governors are there for maybe a couple of hours a month, yet they play a critical role.
88. **Mrs Buick:** I will start, and John will come in. As part of the follow-up inspection process, our role as an inspectorate is to carry out an interim visit or interim visits to that school to monitor progress against the actions identified. The school will also access support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS), and it will provide a range of support, or broker support from other agencies if that is required. That might entail support for governors if we have identified that area as one for improvement.
89. Support is provided for governors through one of the education and library boards. You will be aware that, in September 2011, the Minister asked us to look more closely at governance, with the aim of identifying where there is good practice among governors and sharing it, and we have been doing that for the past year. We have identified where there is good practice in the way in which governors work, and we hope that that is being shared. You will also know that the Department is setting up a governor support service. It is doing some preliminary work around the setting-up of that service to provide support for governors.
90. **Mr Moutray:** Therefore, you believe that there is an inadequate level of support for governors.
91. **Mrs Buick:** Like with everything else, there could be greater support for governors. We all know that governors are volunteers. When they come on as new governors, they may not have the skills and expertise to be able to challenge and support principals.
- Therefore, anything that can be done to strengthen that is an absolute positive. We value highly the work that governors do. In most instances, we find that governors are providing the necessary support and challenge for the schools.
92. **Mr Moutray:** Do governors have a direct line to people such as you if they have questions on the back of an inspection?
93. **Mrs Buick:** The district inspector is linked with the school, and district inspectors will liaise with whomever in the school wishes to liaise with them. We attend governors' conferences and talk about inspection. Last year, the Department and the inspectorate undertook a whole series of engagement events with governors to talk about inspections, budgets and challenges, and those events were very well received. The intention is that they will be continued, because governors found them very beneficial.
94. Paul reminds me that we had 10 conferences. We were out for 10 nights talking to governors, and we found that engaging directly with governors was beneficial for us, too.
95. **Mr J Anderson:** Advisory officers from the boards will attend board of governors' meetings. Part of the evaluation and action plan is that the governors need assistance in understanding the process of action planning and their role to monitor and to ensure that the leadership of the school is provided with the necessary leadership to address the issues identified. As was indicated in an earlier discussion, we always go the extra mile and go back to boards of governors with the reporting inspector — in some cases, I have gone as well — where the findings have been a surprise to them, and where they were not as aware of the state of play in the school as perhaps they might have been, to explain the evidence and why it led to the evaluation.
96. Chairman, you asked how we could avoid those extreme situations. Part of the answer lies in having very good, and we

- aim to do that throughout the inspection so that nothing comes as a surprise. All opportunities are there to provide evidence during the process so that the undesirable situation does not arise where someone says, "But I have more evidence." We also have to explain the situation to the governors. In the case that you mentioned at the outset, they refused to allow us to do that, so we did not have the opportunity to talk through the findings.
97. **The Chairperson:** On that point, it might be useful, Noelle, if you can supply the Committee with examples. The Committee will talk to schools that have had a very positive experience of the inspection process. Can you supply us with a sample of schools that were deemed to be unsatisfactory and satisfactory, and where the inspectorate suggested that schools do A, B and C? That would give us a flavour of the practical assistance or advice that could be given.
98. You referred to CASS. In most board areas, CASS has been well and truly decimated, and it may be that the school finds it difficult to access a particular intervention that would assist in addressing the problem. It would be interesting for the Committee to see examples of what is being said or the advice that is being given to improve certain situations so that we have some sense of it.
99. **Mrs Buick:** Are you talking about the recommendations for improvement that we make in inspection reports?
100. **The Chairperson:** Yes, or in the feedback that goes back to the school. When you go back to a school, you say that there are things that you think it could do. What is the feedback? We would like real, meaningful examples so that we have a sense of what that is.
101. **Mrs Buick:** I am very happy to do that, Chair. That is no problem. To clarify, the recommendations are very clear in the inspection report. Through the interim follow-up process, we provide a letter to the school on progress against those actions. Then, of course, we have the follow-up inspection process. Therefore, there is a very clear protocol for supporting schools from our inspection side, and then for having the follow-up inspection, which is publicly reported. Certainly, with the schools' permission, I can give you some of those interim follow-up letters.
102. **Mrs Graham:** The letter is given in confidence to the school to allow the school to use it without it being in the public domain.
103. **The Chairperson:** Yes. We do not need the names of any schools, but we would like to be given a flavour of what the advice might be in practical terms, because, on a lot of occasions, we talk in generalities.
104. **Mr J Anderson:** You would like some examples of where it works relatively effectively, and some where it takes longer.
105. **The Chairperson:** Exactly.
106. **Mr Lunn:** I will take a different tack for a while. In your preliminary statement, Noelle, you mentioned the Education Bill. I am not asking you to comment on the Bill, because it is still just a proposal, but were you consulted on the sections that provide what you refer to as clarification of your role and powers?
107. **Mrs Buick:** A lot of the Bill was drafted before I took up my post as chief inspector, but, yes, we had involvement in those clauses.
108. **Mr Lunn:** The Committee has had a lot of discussion about this. This is not a view that I share, but some people think that if the Bill goes through in its present form, it will extend your powers considerably. The word "draconic" has been used. What is your comment on that?
109. It seems to me to be drawing together all the various strings. Down the years, your powers have been based on various orders and regulations. The Bill is clarifying where you stand at the moment. I cannot see that it gives

- you the power to do anything that you could not do in the first place, except in matters of detail. Is that a fair comment?
110. **Mrs Buick:** I think that you are right. It is clarification of some of the work that we already carry out, and there is a modest increase in our powers around the opportunity to be able to access documentation. I am sure that you will know that our powers are still not nearly as strong as those of the inspectorates in the other jurisdictions with which we have closest association. The Bill contains a modest increase in our powers around documentation. The rest is just clarification.
111. **Mr Lunn:** Is it an update on electronic and computer-based documentation, rather than paper documentation, which perhaps was not clear before?
112. **Mrs Buick:** Very rarely do we not have access to anything that we want to look at in schools. It is highly unusual. I know that there have been circumstances around the action short of strike, but that was a unique set of circumstances. On the whole, I think that the powers will make very little difference to our work on the ground.
113. **Mr Lunn:** Is it the case that, at the moment, a school could refuse to show you certain documents but under the Education Bill as proposed would have to?
114. **Mrs Buick:** I suppose that that is the difference, but we find that schools are very open. They share their information with us quite openly and willingly.
115. **Mr Lunn:** OK. That is all that I wanted to ask you. Thank you.
116. **The Chairperson:** Noelle, I think that a lot of people would find your definition of “modest” —
117. **Mr Lunn:** I knew that I would not get away with that.
118. **The Chairperson:** Trevor is being very diplomatic about it, but I think that it is a power grab. Why do you need additional powers, if all that they mean is that you will be able to do what you believe you can do already? Why do you need the power to confiscate a photocopier? Why do you need those powers?
119. **Mrs Buick:** I hope that we would not take away a photocopier.
120. **The Chairperson:** Well, it is a means of gaining information. It would allow the inspector to inspect any aspect:
“including teaching and learning; management and staffing, equipment, accommodation and other resources”.
121. What is all that about? If you already have what you believe to be substantial powers, I cannot understand why there needs to be what are pretty detailed powers, yet you described them as “modest”.
122. **Mrs Buick:** I think that it brings us closer to the inspection powers in other jurisdictions. It absolutely does not bring us anywhere near the powers of, say, Scotland and England, where it is an offence to obstruct an inspection. It is right that we should look at what is happening in other jurisdictions. If we find that our powers are some way behind those, we should perhaps be looking at taking steps to improve them.
123. **The Chairperson:** Would the answer to that not be that we should have an independent inspectorate on the same basis as that which pertains in England, as opposed to the arrangement whereby the Department of Education and the inspectorate are really one and the same thing, according to Chris Stewart when he last came before the Committee? The inspectorate is the Department.
124. **Mrs Buick:** We are embedded in the Department, as you know, but whether we are independent of the Department or part of it makes no difference to the powers. The powers are related to our work and to carrying out our inspection duties.
125. **The Chairperson:** The last time that I saw the Bill, which was some time ago, clause 46 required inspectors to produce a short report following an

- inspection. That report must be shared with the Department and the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) and the board of governors of the school. The Department can publish the report in a manner that it deems appropriate, and the board of governors of the school is obliged to produce and publish a statement of action that it is to take on foot of the report. That is a fair increase on the current practice.
126. **Mrs Buick:** I would say that all those things are already happening —
127. **The Chairperson:** Why do we not just ignore the inspectorate in the Bill and concentrate on what I believe the legislation was originally intended for, which was to deal with an over-duplication of resources? Why did the Department feel it necessary to include in a Bill that was about the reorganisation of management issues a clause specifically to enhance, according to your definition, modest powers to the inspectorate?
128. **Mrs Buick:** We are part of the quality assurance system for the education system in Northern Ireland, for which the Department is responsible. We should be part of any Bill that reorganises not just the Department but the wider education system. It is important that we are part of the Bill. If, on reflection, it is considered that our powers are less than those in other jurisdictions, why would we not look to have them strengthened? We should be part of the Bill. The Department is accountable for the quality of education that is provided to children and young people, and we are part of that accountability mechanism. I do not see any tension with the inspectorate being mentioned in the Bill.
129. **Mr Lunn:** I do not want to start a row, but —
130. **The Chairperson:** Go ahead.
131. **Mr Lunn:** — the fact that the clauses about the inspectorate are in the Bill is really neither here nor there. It is a good opportunity to upgrade, consolidate and clarify the role of the inspectorate.
- Whether that is done by a separate Bill or as part of an important piece of education legislation is irrelevant.
132. You made a comment about taking away photocopiers. I mean, come on.
133. **The Chairperson:** OK. We will see.
134. **Mr Lunn:** The Bill mentions taking away documents.
135. **The Chairperson:** OK. Thanks for that clarification.
136. **Mr Rogers:** You are very welcome. Thank you for the briefing and the documents that you gave us. It reminds me of the big red book that we used to get.
137. John, it is worth saying at the start that, over the years, the inspectors whom I dealt with were highly professional and hard-working. I appreciate what the Chair said about some teachers having issues after inspections and some schools perhaps having an increase in absences owing to stress and the like.
138. The other comment that I will make is about the inspectorate and the perception of independence. When you appoint your associate assessors, they cannot inspect their own school, but there is a perception out there that you are part of an organisation that you inspect.
139. Let me get on to my questions. There are a few left yet. You said at the beginning that inspection is a continuum, not something that is set apart. I certainly agree with that. In the interests of promoting improvement in the self-evaluation process, do you believe that there needs to be a closer link between inspection and curriculum?
140. **Mrs Buick:** Can you clarify what you mean?
141. **Mr Rogers:** If you compare the system with what is in Scotland, there is a closer link there between curriculum and inspection. Should you have that input into curriculum development, and so on, as a result of the work that you do?

142. **Mrs Buick:** OK, thank you. I will answer that as best I can. First, I will comment on your comments. We have many good teachers in our system, and we should be rightly proud of the work that our teachers do. As Faustina said, we hope that, on any inspection, we deal sensitively with any issues that are raised. We would really not want people to be in a position in which they were unhappy with the process, although they might be unhappy with the outcome. We work incredibly hard to make sure that that does not happen.
143. You mentioned Scotland. The arrangement here as it stands is that the inspectorate sits within the Department of Education. The arrangements in Scotland, where Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) sat outside the, if you like, curriculum organisation, were changed, and HMIE is now part of Education Scotland, where you have the inspectorate and the curriculum support working very closely together. That was Scotland's particular arrangement. I was with the Scottish inspectors last week, and there is a very clear distinction between the role of inspection and the role of curriculum support, although inspectors can identify curriculum support that is required from the other part of Education Scotland, so that part is joined up. However, the decision-making part is very separate.
144. I do not have a particular view one way or another. Our role is to evaluate the quality of provision in our schools, and I see that as rightly and properly our role. In my introduction, I mentioned that in one area — English and maths provision in post-primary schools — we have two inspectors directly providing support to a group of 20 schools, supported by two expert practitioners in English and maths. I suppose that that small part of our work is closer to some of the work that happens in Education Scotland, but our role at this time is really as evaluators and inspectors.
145. **Mr Rogers:** Related to the point that Stephen made earlier, do you believe that there is sufficient support for the principal when a school or a teacher is deemed unsatisfactory?
146. **Mrs Buick:** Faustina might want to pick up on that, but there is a process if a principal or a teacher is considered unsatisfactory. The procedures for that have just been reviewed and revised in consultation with the unions. The whole process is meant to be supportive not punitive, and the new arrangements make that absolutely clear. If a teacher or principal's work is found to be unsatisfactory, a programme of support needs to be provided for that teacher or principal. That external evaluation of progress is included in the procedure. I think that the new procedures emphasise what was always there but was not always clear — the supportive nature of the procedures.
147. **Mrs Graham:** Furthermore, over time, with the introduction of performance review and staff development (PRSD) in particular, it has become clearer that the role of performance management is first and foremost with the school. It really is down to the governors working with the principal in the first instance to ensure that leadership is of appropriate quality, and, subsequently, the principal working with the remainder of the staff. It is unfortunate when we get to the stage at which a request is made to the ETI to come in and evaluate the competence level of either a principal or a teacher in the school. I would like to think that increasingly that will not happen. I do not believe that it should ever get to that stage. Support needs to be put in place before principals or teachers reach a stage at which they are overwhelmed by the job that they have in hand and cannot find the wherewithal to move their own professional development and competence forward. No one comes into teaching who cannot do the job; rather, over time, something happens, and a teacher or a principal can lose his or her way. That has to be stopped by professional development before it reaches the stage at which someone's work is evaluated as being unsatisfactory. That is not the way that it should be. Professional development for

- teachers should address those issues along the way and, in particular, provide one-to-one support, as you said. I think that our system is becoming better at doing that, although it is not perfect, obviously. Increasingly, it should not require inspection to evaluate the quality of individual performance.
148. **Mr Rogers:** As a principal, where do I get that support?
149. **Mrs Buick:** From our perspective, the district inspector will provide support to principals. I know of examples where the principal asked the district inspector whether he could talk about a particular issue, and the district inspector was very happy to do that. That is one vehicle for providing support for principals.
150. Principals have their own networks. There are associations of principals that get together and share good practice. Certainly, that is another avenue from which they can get some support. Being the leader of an organisation is a very challenging job. Hopefully, the principal and the chairman of the board of governors work closely together, with the chair providing support to the principal. Those are some examples of where support may be had.
151. **Mrs Graham:** In the past three to four years, where principals and teachers have had their work evaluated as unsatisfactory, in each instance in which we have been able to re-evaluate that work, those principals and teachers' work has returned to a satisfactory level of competence. The formal way of providing that support is through the Regional Training Unit (RTU) and the education and library boards' CASS. The Chair made the comment about the depletion of those services, so that is more difficult.
152. However, when we write an evaluation of an individual's work, we make it very clear where those competences need to be supported in order to improve someone's practice to a satisfactory level. Equally, as Noelle said, within the school, there may be the expertise so that someone can be supported by, for example, a peer or a head of department. However, ultimately, the formal requirement lies with RTU for principals and with CASS for individual teachers. In truth, when we have re-evaluated principals' work over the past three years, they have returned to a satisfactory level of competence. Therefore, that support, when it has been required, is working, even though I understand that you are making the point that it is perhaps more difficult to access than has been the case in the past.
153. **Mr McAlister:** If I can just add to that, the employing authority also sometimes gives support to principals. Mention was made earlier of the governor support service that is being set up. A school development service is also being set up. We are possibly at a stage of transition, with the boards being depleted and those other services being provided. We are probably at an interim stage at present.
154. **Mr Rogers:** Leading on from that, do you feel that the lack of high-quality staff development is impeding school improvement?
155. **Mrs Buick:** We would say that staff development is really very important. One of the initiatives that the Department is implementing is continuing professional development (CPD) for Key Stage 3 teachers. The package of support that is being provided will enhance that. There are many opportunities for specialised support. We have the project to support teachers who are teaching special educational needs through the Stranmillis project, as we call it — although that is probably not the right title. Enabling teachers to take two master's modules and providing whole-school training around issues such as dyslexia are other forms of support. There is a pilot project in early years, and training is being provided to help teachers identify special needs at an earlier stage. There are a lot of activities around providing training for specific

- aspects of a teacher's role, and those are very important and very significant.
156. However, we have seen some good examples of whole-school training, where good practice in a school is shared among the whole school's staff. That is very effective. We also invite teachers to our dissemination conferences. We had separate conferences for primary and post-primary at which a teacher, a teacher's work, a teaching department or the provision was identified as very good or outstanding. Workshops were run for teachers and principals to attend, and those were incredibly successful. Although there is always more that could be done, there is quite a lot happening for teachers and principals to avail themselves of.
157. **Mr McAlister:** To add to what Noelle said, we work with ESaGS.tv. It was originally NEELB.tv but has been rebranded. When a school gets an evaluation ranked very good or outstanding, the ESaGS.tv unit is in regular contact with us. It does a short film piece with key members of the senior management in the school about, for example, teaching that was noted as being of particularly high quality by the inspection. Therefore, there are opportunities for schools to see visual examples of what good practice looks like and to hear from people who have taken a school on the improvement journey.
158. **Mr Rogers:** I am concerned that if we have one post-primary maths adviser in a particular board area, that person will find it very difficult to meet the needs of all the mathematics teachers in the board. It takes me back to my original point about the independence of the inspectorate. In a savings delivery plan, your departmental colleagues decided to cut £15 million from staff development, and they met their targets for that last year. My real concern is that we do not measure the impact of that in the classroom. The target for the next couple of years is something like £20 million.
159. CASS has been described a number of times as having been depleted. Until we really invest in ongoing staff development for our teaching population, we will not really raise standards to an efficient level. I think back on my own teaching career, and there was ongoing staff development, and whatever else. Yes, it is good to see good practice on the TV, and so on. However, if a teacher in my school is having particular issues with mathematics, for example, there is nothing better than for a mentor to come in and sit down with him or her and work through a plan of ideas. That person can be someone to whom the teacher can lift the phone and call. In two or three months, the mentor might come back in and see how the teacher has developed. That one-to-one coaching is really what we need, but I know that it is a money issue.
160. **Mrs Buick:** I do not disagree with you, Mr Rogers. You establish the good principle practices of continuing professional development. What we see in the area learning communities is really good sharing of good practice among schools. Teachers actually go into schools to watch lessons being taught by someone who is an expert practitioner in a particular area. I mentioned the maths and English project in which our inspectors will support the 20 schools that we have identified. We intend to run seminars for those schools. We will invite heads of maths and English departments from across the Province to those events.
161. I do not disagree with anything that you have said. However, there is a lot of work being done. The area learning communities in particular seem to be very good at identifying particular strengths and sharing those across the community.
162. **Mr Rogers:** Before I leave teacher development, I must say that the report said that the massive investment in leadership development through the professional qualification for headship (PQH) has not led to significant improvements in schools.

163. **Mrs Buick:** I will pick up on that and then ask John to come in, because he was very involved in that leadership survey. You are absolutely right: when we did that survey, there was no correlation between PQH and improvement in inspection outcomes. However, there were aspects of the PQH that were identified as very strong; for example, coaching, mentoring and time spent in schools. Those parts of the PQH are very strong. However, an issue was identified about the fragmentation of staff development and career development for teachers from when they start as initial teacher educators. Again, we have identified that there are issues to be addressed. John might want to pick up on some of the detail.
164. **Mr J Anderson:** Noelle has already summarised that fairly well. You mentioned coaching a moment ago. In fact, one of the strengths that we found in the revised programme for PQH was the coaching and mentoring aspect. However, we were not so much looking at the quality or effectiveness of one particular course; we were looking at whether that had made an impact for schools that were struggling in difficult social contexts to provide good results and outcomes for their pupils.
165. As for the other part of your question, Sean, one of the other things that we said as a consequence of that report is that there is not a sufficiently clear continuous line of professional development from initial teacher education through induction and right throughout the career that enables the type of staff development that, in the past, came from the large number of external specialist subject advisors that there were across Northern Ireland. They are simply not there any more to the same degree. Therefore, the emphasis falls very much more on the school and the kind of coaching that you talked about. When we inspect a school, we are looking for a culture and an open-door policy whereby staff are willing to share their best practice with each other.
166. There is never a school in which we do not find good practice. No matter what the outcome for that school, there is always good practice. The question is often one of balance and whether the capacity in the school is good enough to take it forward, and, very often, it is. However, if the culture of sharing were there in the school, a teacher who has still got more to learn could be provided with that individual help very effectively within the school. In inspections, we are very interested in finding out whether or not we can say that about a school and whether it is, indeed, internally self-sustaining.
167. The point remains that we have to address the larger picture of career-long professional development and lifelong learning for teachers as a professional development line. We raised those questions in a number of review reports that we published recently, including the one that you have just mentioned.
168. **Mr Rogers:** Does the inspectorate have any plans to set up a complaints and appeals procedure?
169. **Mrs Buick:** We have a complaints procedure. It is on the website and the details are provided to all schools before an inspection takes place. We reviewed that procedure in September 2012, so it is a new procedure. There is a well-documented complaints procedure.
170. **Mr Rogers:** So a school can appeal against a decision.
171. **Mrs Buick:** It states very clearly in the complaints procedure that you cannot appeal against a decision just because you do not like it or you have changed something after the inspection. As I described to the Chair, there are ample opportunities to provide evidence during an inspection. We expect that all the evidence will be provided, that there will be professional dialogue, and that any difficulties will be ironed out during the inspection process. That is absolutely the best way for any issues to be addressed.

172. **Mr Rogers:** We talked about ESA. Are there plans to make the complaints procedure statutory?
173. **Mrs Buick:** Not that I am aware of; no.
174. **The Chairperson:** You would not want to make it statutory. That is the nub of the issue, Noelle. There were two complaints last year. The number of complaints has fallen progressively from eight to seven to two. Since 2007, not one complaint has been upheld. I will be facetious and say that that procedure is not worth the paper that it is written on, because the criteria do not allow you to question the result. It is like the police investigating themselves. We have gone through turmoil in this country because people have not been happy about the police investigating themselves. We had to get the Police Ombudsman, and we now have ombudsmen for all sorts of things. This is a classic example. We have a very serious issue for teachers in our schools. We have an inspection regime, and we do not have a statutory format. Then, we are told, "If you are not happy, you can go to the ombudsman". The ombudsman cannot change the decision. The ombudsman can only investigate the process unless a legal point is discovered that can be challenged. By that stage, the person has got so disgruntled and so dissatisfied with the process — he or she faces a legal bill to take the whole thing to court — that they will decide that it is not worth it and walk away. That is not very fair.
175. **Mrs Buick:** I am disappointed to hear that view. Our complaints procedure has two stages, and the investigation is carried out by an investigating officer who has not been part of the inspection process. That is a very challenging process, and, quite frankly, if we have determined that we have got it wrong, we will hold up our hands and say so. We have a very robust moderation process that the associate assessors will be keenly aware of because they are actually at the moderation, but quite a lot of dialogue takes place before any evaluations are awarded. We also have our own quality assurance process, whereby inspection reports are looked at by the managing inspectors like John and by the assistant chief inspector, Faustina. All the way through, there is a robust quality assurance system, and the strength of that is reflected in the very few complaints that we have received. I do not see that as negative; I see it as a positive sign that our moderation and quality assurance process is working. Lots of things happen on inspection that our inspectors are very adept at dealing with. If an issue is raised or if a principal wants us to look at an additional piece of evidence or an additional class, we will absolutely do our best to do so. I do not see it as a deficit model; I see it as positive.
176. **The Chairperson:** I want clarity on one point, Faustina. Who can initiate the inspectorate coming into inspect the principal and teachers?
177. **Mrs Graham:** The chair of the board of governors of the school.
178. **The Chairperson:** How many of those have there been in the past number of years?
179. **Mrs Graham:** Not a big number. It is probably in single figures. In that situation, the chair of the board of governors writes to the Chief Inspector and requests an inspection of an individual's work. In writing that, it is expected that the chair of the board of governors will let the Chief Inspector know what action the school has taken and why they feel that they need an individual inspection of a principal or a teacher's work.
180. **Mr Lunn:** A total of 25 complaints in five years does not seem too serious to me. Are the complaints largely based on the conclusions of the reports or are they based perhaps on the attitude of inspectors or things that happen during the process?
181. **Mrs Buick:** They are based on a range of things. It might be a view that we did not look at all the evidence or it might be to do with the conduct of the inspectors. I could not say definitively

- that they are about one thing because they are all different.
182. **Ms Boyle:** Thank you for your presentation. To some extent, my questions have already been asked, but I want to dig a bit deeper on Sean's point. Noelle, you said earlier that schools have the opportunity to provide further information during an inspection. You said that robust models of quality assurance are built in. Can you give me some examples of how the process does or should work in communicating that information back and forward between yourselves and the schools? We have heard time and again that schools — I am only echoing what they are saying — do not feel that they have the opportunity to provide that further information. I am looking for an example of how that should be communicated. What is the process for that? You mentioned the guidelines, the protocols and the process. Are all your inspectors aware of the robust models of quality assurance that need to be given to schools?
183. Self-evaluation from schools is key, and contributes to your inspections. Again, I am echoing what schools are saying. I have heard them say that they have felt that their self-evaluation report has been ignored in the outcome of your deliberations in an inspection. How accurate or inaccurate is the information given to you by schools? How effectively do you use it in reaching the outcome of an inspection?
184. **Mrs Buick:** I will start off and then John will come in on some of the detail, as he attends moderation meetings and he makes sure that he sees his team working on an inspection at least once a year. I believe that there is good dialogue with the principal of the school during an inspection. Inspectors meet the principal at least at the end of every day, if not more often. That is an opportunity for us to signal to the school the direction of travel of our findings. It is an opportunity for the principal to raise whether we have seen x, y or z, and for us to pick that up and deal with it. That very good professional dialogue that happens during an inspection gives that opportunity for additional evidence that a principal or a school or head of department wants us to look at. John might elaborate on that.
185. In respect of our quality assurance models, I hope that all our inspectors know the quality assurance process, and I believe that they do. They absolutely do. There will be dialogue with the managing inspector. If an inspector wishes to discuss an aspect of an inspection during the inspection, if the managing inspector is not there, they will be on the telephone. There is very good communication in that respect and support is provided for inspectors.
186. Self-evaluation is central to our inspection process, and the new model of inspection for post-primary centres on self-evaluation. John will talk about that. We see self-evaluation and internal and external evaluation as very closely linked. There may be instances where our inspection outcome does not agree with a school's self-evaluation; it may be the case that a school has not analysed its performance data well enough, has not really been totally self-reflective. There will be circumstances where there are differences in outcomes.
187. **Ms Boyle:** Will there be an opportunity to discuss their self-evaluation with you?
188. **Mrs Buick:** Yes; absolutely. Through the professional dialogue that takes place not only with the principal but with coordinators, teachers and a whole range of staff, there is an opportunity to discuss all aspects of self-evaluation. I will bring John in to add some detail if necessary.
189. **Mr J Anderson:** You have asked a lot at once, so forgive me if I take a bit of time. I will go back to the Chairman's first question about how we make sure that the inspections work well and that there are not any problems. I said that part of the answer is dialogue, and part of the answer to your question is that there is constant dialogue going on during the inspection. While inspectors are inspecting, they are sharing with

- senior leaders in the school — those with responsibility and indeed class teachers — what they are seeing, why they are seeing it and what else they should be seeing while they are there that will enable the school to put its best foot forward. Before that occurs, we are very clear about the quality indicators that are used for inspection, and we have been since the mid-2000s. We published ‘Together Towards Improvement’. We revised it a few years ago, and it is tailored to each sector. We take every opportunity to promote ‘Together Towards Improvement’ so that everyone is aware of it. It is used in courses that we provide, it is used in guidance that we give to schools, the advisory service uses it in training that it provides for schools, and it is used in initial teacher education. In every way we can, we make people aware that there are agreed quality indicators on which the inspection work is based so that the school is completely aware of all the things that will be looked at. Therefore, they are aware of the nature of the evidence they are required to share with the inspectorate about the work that they do.
190. Secondly, we have a preparation day when we visit the school in advance of the inspection. The reporting inspector and sometimes even the deputy chief will go to the school for a day, and they will meet the principal, the senior leadership team and somebody from the board of governors. They explain the process and what will be done. They will work with the school on planning visits to lessons and so on. I interviewed, at the start of this term, the principals of the first three post-primary schools that were inspected. Without exception, they said that that was a very reassuring exercise. Teachers were, naturally, apprehensive when they heard that the inspection was due. However, when the reporting inspector met all staff, they all said that they were reassured and their nerves were, to a degree calmed, although not completely, of course. They will still be apprehensive on the first day, with people attending their lessons. However, they find that reassuring.
- Therefore, there is great clarity about the quality indicators, the process that will be used and the nature of evidence.
191. As the chief indicated, we make it very clear to schools that we are bringing the inspection event, which is just part of an ongoing process with the school, alongside the school’s self-evaluation and that we are making the school development plan central to the inspection. That plan is a document that contains the school’s intentions, its priorities, how it will monitor progress in terms of improvement, and how it will decide whether the effort it is putting into improving aspects of provision that it determined with its governors to be priorities is working effectively.
192. I cannot comment on a school saying, “We felt that our self-evaluation was ignored.” It will depend on how effective it was, but I can generalise to a certain degree. We sometimes find that action plans and monitoring plans are not directly focused on the effectiveness of learning. They may be distracted by issues that are not central to improving the learning experience, provision and outcomes for pupils. Secondly, sometimes they use secondary rather than primary evidence; it is not first-hand. The advantage of inspection work is that schools are increasingly using the same methods in their self-evaluation, observing practice in lessons, looking at pupils’ written work, talking to pupils, understanding what they learned and how they are getting feedback from the teacher, through assessment, to be more effective.
193. Sometimes, we find a discrepancy between what we see to be good practice and what the school feels is good practice, which may not be the same. However, we are trying to do that work through constant discussion and dialogue with a school so that we are evaluating not only how effective we think the school’s self-evaluation and improvement process is, but are trying to contribute to building the capacity in the school while we are there to help them to develop their ability to be more effective self-evaluators, using first-hand

- evidence and focusing on the key issue, which is the interaction between the learner and teacher in the classroom.
194. **Ms Boyle:** Do you accept that some schools would say that there is a significant variation in the commentary that they receive from ETI inspectors? What measures does ETI take through spot checks to ensure that the inspection system is understood, applied and communicated consistently to all schools?
195. **Mr J Anderson:** I think that I partly answered your second question when I explained the provision of the 'Together Towards Improvement' publication, the preparation day, and explanation of the process.
196. **Ms Boyle:** Can more be done?
197. **Mr J Anderson:** Of course. More can always be done. You can never have enough communication or dialogue. I asked three principals at the start of term how we could improve the dialogue and their engagement in the inspection. They all said, "We could not have coped with any more discussion and dialogue with the Inspectorate. They were constantly working with me, telling me what they were seeing, and asking me whether there was anything else that they needed to see in the inspection."
198. I believe that we are very good at communicating during an inspection. We do our best to provide information in advance, from documentation through publicity and preparation days, and through all the type of professional development that the Chief Inspector mentioned. You asked me whether I accept that there is a difference in view. I tried to explain that, sometimes, we find that some schools are not as far down the improvement journey as others. Some are very effective at self-evaluation. When you bring inspection alongside that, it validates and affirms that school. Other schools are not in the same position and may be further back on that journey. Therefore, when you bring inspection into the school, you are hoping and aiming to build the capacity in the school to understand how they can be more rigorous in their own self-evaluation so that they become genuinely sustaining schools when it comes to improvement. That is certainly our objective.
199. **Ms Boyle:** Do schools, outside the inspection, communicate with ETI for other reasons or on other matters throughout the school term?
200. **Mr J Anderson:** Yes; through the district inspectors. We discussed earlier the role of the district inspectors, who are highly valued in the continuing communication. It is not just district inspectors. We have very limited time to conduct inspections because of the pressure on our resources. We are all specialists in something, and specialist inspectors get occasions to go to schools to work with their departments and give feedback about their specialism. An inspection is an intense event in a continuing programme and process of working together with schools.
201. You also asked about moderation. Inspectors are highly aware of the need to be very rigorous in challenging themselves when the team comes to an overall evaluation of the school as a whole. You must recall that, in almost every instance in which those moderation meetings take place, an associate assessor attends as well — in other words, a senior teacher or principal from another school.
202. **Ms Boyle:** The curriculum changes so much so often, so they obviously get enhanced training as well.
203. **Mr J Anderson:** The AAs say to us that it is the most effective training that they receive of any kind. It is mutually beneficial: it benefits them and it benefits us considerably. It also benefits the school because there is a peer in the team.
204. You asked about moderation. The associate assessor is in that moderation meeting. If schools were aware of the extent of effort that is put in and self-challenge that goes on in

- the moderation meetings to ensure that the evidence supports the evaluation and that the evaluation is justified by the evidence, AAs say to us, without exception, that schools would be very reassured if they were aware of just how intensively we do that and how much we challenge ourselves. That is only the first level. Beyond that, as Noelle indicated, I attend those meetings, I will look at those reports and I will ask for self-evaluations on the reports. The assistant chief looks at that as well. There is a constant process in the organisation of moderation and self-evaluation of what we do, how we do it, and of quality assurance. Our colleagues are very aware of that; they are on their toes all the time.
205. **Mr Kinahan:** I am very sorry that I had to nip out. Thank you very much for your presentation. I will start by saying that I fully appreciate how important inspection is. The presentation is demonstrative of a really thorough professional body, but, all the way through this, I get the impression that you are not really interested in the one or two little complaints that come in about the process needing tweaking. I will go into that more. It is a very good organisation that is doing very well, but I just get the feeling that it is not that interested in some of the minor problems, which are absolutely huge to the schools.
206. I apologise if certain things were discussed when I was out of the room. There is still a fear factor. We have extremely good district inspectors — really good people. In the past, when I have raised the issue of the fear factor, it has often been said that maybe the teacher is not up to the job if fear is that strong. We have to try to get that out of the system so that everyone works together. In your changes that are coming through the system, I cannot see what has happened to the actual publication. One of the elements of the fear factor is about whether it is still going to be published on the web in as thorough a way as it is at the moment. Are you going to keep the notes and the details, or will it just be a nice softer summary that a school is under inspection with a list of the problems? I am trying to explore that.
207. I am jumping around matters, but one of the main complaints that we get is that teachers do not feel that their principals are being asked beforehand about the factors that they want to be dealt with. You come in and inspect the whole school, but you do not focus necessarily on what the principal wants you to look at. Moving from that to continuous professional development, you sort of sidestepped the point that Sean made earlier. One of the messages that we get from all the schools at the moment is that very little training is going on because there are no funds, no support and no time, because we are throwing so much at them. When it comes to you inspecting and judging them, that needs to be taken into account. That message needs to go back to the Minister just as strongly.
208. I will move on to the governors, who, when we went to the primary school meeting in Hillsborough, you probably felt — I am not sure of the right word — not quite anger. They are all volunteers. Are you working nicely and comfortably with governors on your changes so that they are all on board with how you are doing it and what you are doing with the principals that they work with? Alternatively, as it seemed at that meeting, did you say to them, “This is what you are going to do because the Minister has told us so”? It needed to be cosier so that you are all working together.
209. When it comes to complaints, would you consider looking at a system whereby, after every inspection, schools are automatically offered a comments form so that they no longer have that fear factor and you are working with them all the way? I am sorry for putting it in those terms, but it just that the feeling that I get from the whole presentation is that you are all phenomenally good at your job and are very much working through it; however, the little things really matter to people.

210. **Mrs Buick:** OK. There is quite a lot in there —
211. **Mr Kinahan:** I know.
212. **Mrs Buick:** I will do my best to make sure that I answer. I will start at the end first, on your comments about inspection. NISRA carries out an independent inspection survey that is sent to all the schools and providers that we inspect. That is sent to NISRA, which collates it independently. Therefore, there absolutely is an independent opportunity for schools and providers to give their views on inspection. I gave the statistic earlier that 80% of the respondents said that inspection leads to improvement. The outcomes are really very positive. We also have a system of customer service excellence whereby the assessor visits a random sample of schools and providers that we inspect and carries out face-to-face interviews to ask those schools and providers about our role in supporting them, if you like, as customers. Were we sensitive to their needs? Did we listen to what they had to say? Did we treat everybody fairly? All those aspects are covered, and we have had that customer service excellence system in place for eight years. We try incredibly hard to get independent feedback, and, when we have asked for it, we have come out of that demonstrating that we are sensitive as well as professional.
213. **Mr Kinahan:** Do you think that the people who are being asked the questions and filling in the forms are confident that they are dealing with a totally open and free process that will not come back on them in their role as a teacher? The feeling is that this is government inspecting government.
214. **Mrs Buick:** No. NISRA is an independent surveyor. You cannot get more independent than that, as is the customer service excellence assessor.
215. **Mr Kinahan:** It may be independent, but can comments that you make to it backfire on you?
216. **Mrs Buick:** I am not sure what you mean.
217. **Mr Kinahan:** As a teacher, if you want to be totally open—
218. **Mrs Buick:** Absolutely not. We are not that small-minded.
219. **Mr Kinahan:** Well, I hoped that you would say that. I say that as a marker; that is all.
220. **Mr J Anderson:** We do not know who said what. We get the comments but we do not know who made them.
221. **Mrs Graham:** We did exactly what you outlined. We gave out a comment form after an inspection, and the outcomes from that were very positive.
222. **Mr Kinahan:** Good, thank you.
223. **Mrs Graham:** That was in the past. Then we were told that the outcomes were very positive because people were telling us what we wanted to hear. Therefore, we moved to having that done independently. It was first done by PwC, but the cost of that over time became difficult and we moved to having NISRA do the evaluation. There are benefits and disadvantages in both approaches. Obviously, if somebody had concerns about the outcome of an inspection, where we were handing out the forms it would come to our attention more immediately. On the other hand, overall, people felt that the best approach was to have it done independently, and we do not know who says what, so we cannot follow up on the outcomes. However, overall, they are very positive.
224. **Mrs Buick:** I hope that you feel reassured that that is independent. At all times, if somebody raises a point with us, we do not — how did you describe it? — take it out on them, come back on them, or whatever. That will never happen.
225. **Mr Kinahan:** It does not have to be you; it is the whole education system that is sitting there for the Minister.
226. **Mrs Buick:** We are absolutely open to accepting any feedback that a provider

- or a school wants to give us, and we are very happy to receive that directly. We have attended many conferences with principals and teachers, and we get a lot of feedback from schools. We are really pleased to receive that. It is important to us as part of our process. I will carry on in a moment. Paul, did you want to come in?
227. **Mr P McAlister:** When we receive our customer service excellence award, although we have been awarded it consistently, the assessor would always give pointers that we should look at how we might improve even further. Repeatedly, the assessor has asked whether there was some way that we could devise a mechanism to follow up complaints or areas that people are unhappy with about the inspection service. With the information that comes through NISRA being anonymous, we have always said to the assessor that we do not want to sacrifice anonymity in order to follow up. NISRA prides itself on maintaining the anonymity of people who give information. It is a bit like a catch-22 situation: we value anonymity so much so that people can feel free to give information and we then have to have that conversation with the customer service excellence evaluator on each occasion.
228. **Mr Kinahan:** If I am wrong, I am sorry. As long as you keep reviewing, checking and working through it.
229. **Mrs Buick:** We are a continuously improving organisation. That is absolutely what we do. I hope that I will not miss any of your points. You mentioned the fear factor that is associated with inspection. John described our pre-inspection dialogue with all the schools that we inspect. We take up opportunities to speak to schools, principals and teachers to explain the inspection process. We had a very good meeting with the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) in February at which we went through the inspection process. That was very well received.
230. A principal told me, and I absolutely agree, that his job when the inspection letter arrives on his desk is to reassure his staff that it is part of a validation and assessment process. It is not something to be fearful of. We do a good job. All that inspectors ask for is to see you doing your daily job. We are not asking for any information or activity that is not happening in the school as a normal activity. So, I think that principals have a strong role in supporting their schools through the inspection process. We try to be incredibly sensitive and have lots of professional dialogue as we described. We work very hard on that.
231. With regard to CPD, I hope that Mr Rogers does not feel that I sidestepped the question on lack of training. Lots of training opportunities are available. It would not be the case that one type of training would suit everybody. The mix and range of opportunities that are available for staff training are appropriate because they are tailored to specific activities. However, I do not doubt, as I said, that more could be done with regard to training. I advise teachers to look at our inspection reports because, in them, we highlight good practice in teaching and learning. Looking at them can help to improve practice as well as the work through the area learning communities, the specialist training —
232. **Mr Kinahan:** You have given the same answer. The point that I am trying to get across is that all schools are under pressure. If the information that I am getting from many of them is right, CPD is not happening because they have not got the time. Therefore, it is not judging teachers and schools; it judges the system that comes down from the Minister and everything that is coming into place. So, they have so many things being thrown at them and so many cuts coming on board that they do not have time to do training. Therefore, when you judge them, you should not judge them on not having done the training; you should be looking at it and asking how you can get them more time and resources so that they can do their CPD

- training. That is what I was trying to get across.
233. **Mrs Buick:** Days are set aside in the school calendar specifically for training.
234. **Mr Kinahan:** Yes, but it is not happening. They have not got the time and resources to do it because one teacher is away or the cuts have come in. That is what I am trying to get across.
235. **Mrs Buick:** Well, they are set aside for that purpose. John, do you want to come in?
236. **Mr J Anderson:** I just want to underline that point. In teachers' terms and conditions, the way in which the school year is organised, and so on, time is set aside.
237. **Mr Kinahan:** Yes. That is right. You have set all the rules nicely in place —
238. **Mr J Anderson:** So, there cannot not be time.
239. **Mr Kinahan:** — but it is not happening.
240. **Mr J Anderson:** I am not sure what your evidence is based on to say that it is not happening.
241. **Mr Kinahan:** I need to then go back to every single school and get them to come to me. I will happily send them an e-mail and ask them to tell me. What I am trying to get across is that you may have put all the right rules in place and you may be judging it on those rules, but the poor people who are being judged cannot do it —
242. **Mr J Anderson:** Let me —
243. **Mr Kinahan:** — because —
244. **Mr J Anderson:** Sorry, I cut across you. My apologies.
245. **Mr Kinahan:** I can see where you are coming from.
246. **Mr J Anderson:** As I said in my response to Sean, we find during our inspections that schools make time because they have time allowed to share practice. The most effective schools are characterised by a culture of openness and willingness to do that. That culture is not well embedded in every school, as Sean will understand, but the time is there. It is the culture that is the issue.
247. I absolutely agree that the number of specialist advisers is not what it was in the past; there is absolutely not that same resource, but increasingly, the capacity is in the schools. In response to Mr Newton's question, I said that we increasingly find teachers sharing within the area learning community. So, if the resource is not there, schools come together for staff development in the area learning community. If the expertise and the capacity is not in one school, it can often be found in another school in that area learning community with which these schools are partners. There are other answers. It is not what it was in the past.
248. **Mr Kinahan:** No, but please be aware that there is a whole other side to this.
249. **Mrs Graham:** We pride ourselves on evaluating the quality of provision in any school based on the circumstances in which that school is operating. You mentioned earlier, Chair, the whole business of resources and accommodation being in the Bill, and my thoughts are that we do that anyway. We comment on those things. For example, if accommodation or resources are not sufficiently good for that school in delivering the curriculum and doing the best in the interests of the children, we will say that. Schools often welcome the fact that we are saying those things. We will look at how that school is operating and whether it is doing its best in the circumstances in which it finds itself. If that shows that people have not had sufficient staff development or professional development, we will say that, too. In being advocates for learners, we are also advocates for teachers on behalf of the learners, and we would never walk away from saying that in any school.
250. **Mr Kinahan:** OK, good.
251. **Mrs Buick:** The final point was around governors. We recognise that governors are volunteers, but unlike volunteers in

- many other sectors of the community, they have a statutory obligation. It is a very important obligation as they are responsible for the quality of education in the school. We have strengthened our inspection of governance in response to the Minister's request, but as I explained earlier, one of the focus areas of that particular inspection methodology is self-evaluation by governors so that they can determine what aspects of their work they carry out well and what aspects of their work they need more training on. Work is being done to set up the governors' support service to enhance the training that is available to them, but we cannot lose sight of the fact that governors have a really important role in a school. When a governor takes on that role — I have been a school governor; I know what it is like — they have to accept that that is part of their role and responsibility.
252. **Mr Kinahan:** I agree with that, and yes, they need to be tested, but are you actually sitting down with them and working out the nice way of doing it, if I can put it that way? You have to produce a set of guidelines that they have got to be happy working with. You cannot just tell them, "That is what you have to do."
253. **Mrs Buick:** In general, the feedback that we are getting is that the self-evaluation guidelines are helpful. We spoke to governors at 10 conferences — you were at another event where we talked to governors — and I think that we are very open in explaining the inspection process and what our expectations of governors are.
254. John, you wanted to come in.
255. **Mr J Anderson:** Indeed. I surveyed the schools last year in which we are now commonly using the self-evaluation questionnaires for governors. They had a lot of comments to make about that process, about the complexity of the language sometimes and other things that we need to think about. However, the common comment that they made, without exception, was that they found the process of being asked to reflect on and self-evaluate how well they worked as governors to be valuable. Most, but not all, had not done that before. Some of them came back and said that they had been doing it and gave us their self-evaluation reports, which was great, but that was not common.
256. You asked three other questions; I do not know whether you wanted to get a response to those.
257. **Mr Kinahan:** Am —
258. **Mr J Anderson:** I have a note, if —
259. **Mr Kinahan:** Go on.
260. **Mr J Anderson:** Is that —
261. **The Chairperson:** Yes.
262. **Mr J Anderson:** You asked whether we talk to the principal and focus on what he or she wants. Again, the answer to that comes through the school development plan being central to the inspection. The school identifies priorities; I should have said that when I answered your question about staff development time. It cannot do everything, but it needs to determine what its top or top two priorities are and focus on those. We certainly have a discussion with the principal about what the priorities in the school development plan are and to what extent we, in our inspection, can look at the appropriateness of those priorities. We can consider whether they are the right priorities and how effectively the school is progressing them. We will give the principal feedback, because that is part of our evaluation. So, that dialogue is there.
263. You asked whether we still publish our reports. We do. We publish them on the web. That has not changed.
264. The first thing that you said was that we seem not to be worried about minor problems. Of course we are worried about minor problems. That set the tone for the opening conversation this morning, when we talked about a major problem in one school. Of course we are, because it is in those cases that we learn most about whether we have

- worked as effectively or as appropriately as we can.
265. Any union official will be able to say, and I am sure that they will, that there are individual cases where they have problems that they are pursuing in the interests of their member, but we are saying that, in the context of all the inspection work that we do, that needs to be put in proportion. It is not the case that we are not worried about those. We are certainly worried, and we will always seek to learn lessons from anything that we could be doing better.
266. **The Chairperson:** I have one final question on an issue that is of grave concern out there. I understand that the Department has a policy for the new arrangements for formal intervention. That is a policy that DE is pursuing, so has the inspectorate a view on this proposal? Basically, it would move a lot of schools from the position where they were designated as satisfactory to, after September 2013, having 18 months to improve to being designated as good. What is the inspectorate's view on that?
267. **Mrs Buick:** First, the formal intervention process has been given negative publicity as being punitive. It is meant to be a supportive process, and, if a school enters the formal intervention process, the key aspect is that the school is provided with support. We have seen many examples of schools that have gone into the formal intervention process and come out again stronger and providing a better education for their learners.
268. We do have an issue with what you could call coasting schools, as I think you described them in your publicity. Something needs to be done to provide additional support for those schools. It is an area that is out for consultation, and no decisions have yet been made. I think that some action is needed to help schools that are coasting to enable them to raise their performance to good. After all, our quality threshold is that every school is a good school.
269. **The Chairperson:** Do you believe that the timescale that has been given on this issue is adequate? If a school remains as satisfactory, it will move straight into formal intervention.
270. **Mrs Buick:** There are a number of inspection outcomes where a school is allowed to be designated as satisfactory before it moves into the formal intervention process. If it is designated as satisfactory twice, it may move into the formal intervention process on the third occasion. I think that, if a school is just trundling along at satisfactory, action to provide additional support, not anything punitive, is the right action to take.
271. **The Chairperson:** Has the ETI given a formal response to the Department on the issue?
272. **Mrs Buick:** We have not made a formal response.
273. **The Chairperson:** So, other than basing it on your comments here today, Noelle, how can we see a formal response from ETI to this consultation? The changes would have a major impact on the work of ETI. It is a bit like the issue of the common funding formula. If this was implemented as proposed, how many schools would end up in formal intervention?
274. **Mrs Buick:** I think that we are jumping the gun a little here, because the outcomes of the consultation process have not been —
275. **The Chairperson:** Noelle, that very attitude is the reason why, out there today, there are hundreds of primary-school principals who are nearly beating the doors down in this place about the common funding formula. The Minister said that we are not to worry and that it is only a consultation; nothing is going to happen. They still want to know the answer. If it was implemented, what will the implications be? I think it a fair question to ask. If this was implemented as proposed — and it is only a consultation, only a proposal — how many schools would be affected?

276. **Mrs Buick:** First, it is a consultation and there is no point in having a consultation if you are going to decide what the policy is going to be without taking into account the outcomes. I have not seen the outcomes of the consultation, so I am not in a position to comment any further on that.
277. **The Chairperson:** Surely the inspectorate knows how many schools in the system are satisfactory? If, according to these proposals, they do not make progress, they will move to formal intervention. We could have a ballpark figure without naming schools. Surely somebody in the Department could sit down and work out how many schools will be affected. Are they that naive?
278. **Mrs Graham:** It would be a very small number.
279. **Mrs Buick:** We can provide you with the number of schools that are satisfactory, but that is not the issue. A school has to be satisfactory on a number of occasions before it is considered to enter the formal intervention process. Certainly, there is no issue with giving you the number of schools that are satisfactory. In fact, there may have been an Assembly question submitted, and you may have that information.
280. **Mrs Graham:** It is also important to remember that our statistics indicate that 80% of schools that have a follow-up inspection improve. Therefore, in any scenario, quite a small number of schools will be involved. But we will have the —
281. **The Chairperson:** I have no doubt that this is another issue that we will be coming back to.
282. **Mrs Buick:** Mr Chairman, it is about school improvement. It is meant to be enabling for schools and for the learners in those schools. At the end of the day, it is about making sure that the provision for learners in schools is the best that it can possibly be.
283. **The Chairperson:** In conclusion, have you any comment about comparisons with Finland? Finland is always held up to us as a great example of how it should be done. There is no external inspection process there. In the document that you sent to us, you state:
284. “Inspection is at the centre of raising standards for all learners.”
285. Is not the quality of teaching that is at the centre of raising standards?
286. At last, the Department has found such a place in the world. It used to be Montgomery County, but now, all of a sudden, it has become Finland. I was amazed to discover that Finland has no inspection process. That raises the question of how they evaluate — self-evaluation, and all that — but that is an issue for Finland. They have no external inspectorate.
287. **Mrs Buick:** I have two comments. I do not know whether you saw the headline in January: “Northern Ireland is the new Finland”. That was based on the outcome of the TIMSS and PIRLS results, which were incredibly positive.
288. **The Chairperson:** That headline was probably just to do with the weather. *[Laughter.]*
289. **Mrs Buick:** It was to do with the TIMSS and PIRLS results, in which we came out, as you know, highest among the English-speaking nations. So, there really is not a direct correlation between having an inspectorate and the quality of teaching and learning in the way that you describe.
290. Finland has quality improvement agencies, but it all happens at the local level. They do not have a central inspectorate as we have. There is quality assurance taking place in Finland, but it is not a central inspectorate in the way that we are. However, there is quality assurance happening there, as there is quality assurance happening here.
291. It is a completely different landscape. The pupils are all taught in the same school from age seven to 16, and all the teachers have master’s qualifications. The languages of Finland and Korea, for example, are easier to learn than

other world languages, because they are spoken absolutely as they are written. There is a homogeneous socio-economic landscape. There are 101 reasons why Finland is top of the league tables, but I am not sure that you can say that one of them is that it does not have an inspectorate.

292. **The Chairperson:** Noelle, if that is the reason that Finland is so successful, Ulster Scots should be the language that all our children are educated in in Northern Ireland. I can tell you what the outcomes would be then: we would really beat them. *[Laughter.]* On that point, I genuinely thank you. The meeting has gone on longer than we anticipated, but I believe it was worthwhile for this reason: it is a very important issue. That is the reason why I was keen to have this inquiry. We are not holding it for any other reason but to ensure that we improve upon the processes that we have. I thank you and your staff for the time that you gave us this morning. We look forward to continuing this engagement through the process of the inquiry.

293. **Mrs Buick:** Thank you very much.

23 October 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Chris Hazzard
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Ms Sharon Beattie	<i>General Teaching</i>
Mr Colm Davis	<i>Council for Northern</i>
Mr Gerry Devlin	<i>Ireland</i>
Dr Carmel Gallagher	

294. **The Chairperson:** I welcome Dr Carmel Gallagher, the registrar general of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI); Colm Davis, the principal of Tor Bank School; Sharon Beattie, the principal of Dromore Nursery School; and Mr Gerry Devlin. Thank you, Carmel, for the extremely useful report that was provided to us, which is a response to the evidence. It is always good for members of the Education Committee, particularly the Chair, to have pictures instead of words. Your presentation will help us to understand these things better. Please make your comments, after which members will ask questions. I apologise for the fact that some members are away on other business, which means that our numbers are slightly depleted, but that in no way lessens the importance of the issue that you are presenting to us.

295. **Dr Carmel Gallagher (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland):** Thank you very much, Chairman. You have introduced my colleagues, but I want to say that I am very grateful to the members of my council: Sharon Beattie, who is a nursery principal from Dromore; and Colm, who is the principal of Tor Bank School, which is a special needs school. We had hoped to be joined by a primary and a post-primary

representative, but they are too busy doing the real work back at school. Gerry, however, has very kindly come along to support us.

296. I am the registrar, obviously. There is a leaflet in your packs that outlines the five important things that we do and our message to schools. We are involved with registration, and we hope that, as we become an independent body in a few months or a year, we will be involved in regulation. We do research, and we want to be heavily involved in professional development. In particular, we want to be the voice of the profession on professional issues.

297. I will talk about my own background. I have been with the council for a just year. I was a history teacher during probably the worst years of the Troubles and was the author of the first multi-perspective history book on Northern Ireland and its neighbours since 1920. So, I know a lot about this Building. My background is in curriculum development; I led the development of the revised Northern Ireland curriculum, which I hope you are familiar with. I would have liked to have led on the assessment front; unfortunately, I was not able to do so, but I still hope that we can help you influence that agenda. Most importantly, my PhD is in the development of policy on curriculum and assessment back from Mrs Thatcher's time right up to the present day. I am passionate about the potential of the Northern Ireland education system to be a great system. We are just the right size and have really talented teachers, and if we cannot do it here, I do not think that we can do it anywhere. We are all here today to give that message.

298. I thank the Committee for initiating the inquiry. We think that it is a hugely important undertaking, and that is why we spent so much time on our submission, which is a 50-page

- literature review. We do not expect you to read it all, although we hope that Peter and the research team have read it. We provided you with a two-page summary and a little summary that we sent out last week to schools. It is a complex issue, which is why, as Mervyn said, I produced a few pictures and a few slides. I am mainly a visual learner and think that pictures and diagrams help. I promised Peter that we would have only five, but that was a wee bit of a lie, and we have slightly more at 19. We will skip through some of them very quickly. We hope to keep you for about only 15 or 20 minutes.
299. Before I begin, I want to register the fact that this submission is endorsed by the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council, and many of my union colleagues are sitting behind me. I am very grateful that they are here, and they will give you a separate presentation shortly. It is also endorsed by the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) in Northern Ireland — in other words, all the universities and the teacher training colleges — and it is also now endorsed by virtually every school in Northern Ireland. Over the past three days, we conducted a survey into the perceptions of inspection and school improvement. During that time, we received 1,383 responses and counting, which is phenomenal. We asked for only one per school, so I suggest that we have the voice of everyone. In a sense, we hope that we are speaking today on behalf of the whole profession. The Committee has touched a raw nerve, and we hope that your deliberations will help to soothe some of those frayed nerves in the future.
300. I will take you to slide 2 of my presentation, which is a nice infected slide with a germ as the picture. The term GERM, or Global Educational Reform Movement, was coined by Pasi Sahlberg, who was the last chief inspector of Finland and is now an internationally renowned thinker and adviser. In fact, we are delighted to say that he is heading up the current Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) review of teacher education. We hope to have him as a GTCNI speaker fairly soon, and we imagine that the Committee would also like to hear him speak. In his view, coming from the country that leads the international league tables, GERM has spawned a global virus of measurement, so much so that international assessments are treated as a measure of the health of education systems through things such as the progress in international reading literacy study (PIRLS) and the trends in international mathematics and science study (TIMSS). We are very healthy in that sense, though those are quite traditional assessments. The one that we really want to be best at is the programme for international student assessment (PISA), which is the more 21st-century thinking assessment done by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Frighteningly, success in those assessments is not so much about what happens in schools as it is about the equity in the school system and how fairly the system provides for all young people.
301. I will move to slide 3 and use a football analogy to try to get some of the points across. The slide presents you with a world cup of 20 countries. I could provide you with PIRLS, TIMSS or PISA slides, but they would all just relate to that one assessment. The source of this slide is McKinsey and Company for 2010, and it takes into account the World Bank educational statistics, International Monetary Fund (IMF) figures, UNESCO figures as well as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS. You can see how those 20 countries are doing. The United States has the highest investment in education per head but has relatively low performance, whereas heading up the league table is Finland, which is the third highest in investment, followed by Ontario, Hong Kong, Germany etc. Interestingly, one place that is not on the slide, because this is a 2010 slide, is Shanghai in China, which has, I believe, overtaken or is alongside Finland. The interesting thing is that Shanghai is just one city

- in China, as is Hong Kong. We have to be careful, because these league tables are not gospel or rocket science; in fact, they are open to a whole lot of questions. Indeed, people might have even questioned whether the OECD should have allowed Shanghai figures to be published as a representation, and there are suggestions that there has been a lot of practising for exams in Shanghai. In Wales, which did not do terribly well the last time round, there are suggestions that there has been a lot of practising for PISA.
302. Hugh Morrison — you might know him from Queen's University — has challenged the whole validity of all those international figures. However, the message is that often they are not interpreted properly. For example, Michael Gove keeps on talking about England slipping down the league tables when, in fact, its performance has not changed; it is just that more countries have come in. So, it might be number 26, but that is because we have small places such as Liechtenstein and goodness knows where else coming in that are performing slightly better. The other thing to remember is that these are not league tables either; they are not ordered by rank. For example, in 2002, we came fourth in PISA, but when I discussed it with Professor Tony Gallagher at Queen's, he said that we were between fourth and fourteenth, because there was no statistical difference in the measures. So, the message is to take everything that is measured with a large pinch of salt.
303. Turning now to the international league tables on what is known as the standard bell curve where you always get the outliers at the front and those who are dragging behind at the back, you will see that Finland and Shanghai are in the premier league. Ontario heads up division 1, but note the places that are in division 2 — Japan and Germany, which are leading industrial nations. I suggest that we are in fairly good company; we do not have anything major to worry about. There is the whole business about the fact that we are not top of the world. We would need a massive investment to get to Finland's position, along with a whole change in ethos and attitude. So, we must remember that the measures are constructs. They are all approximations, and they need to be treated with a huge amount of caution.
304. Slide 5 details what I call the Northern Ireland primary and post-primary league. This information comes from the chief inspector's report for 2010-12. You will see that the primary sector is in the premier league and that 78% to 82% of primary schools, by our chief inspector's reckoning, are doing very well. That is the good news story.
305. If you look at the post-primary sector, you will see that 68%-plus are doing fairly well. If we look at the negative side — the red lines — we see, reported by the Department of Education (DE), a growth in special educational needs, and that 20% to 25% of children will, at some stage in their education, have a special need. Contrast that, gentlemen, with the idea that we have to get 100% of children performing well.
306. The chief inspector's reckoning is that 18% of the primary schools inspected are not doing well, which is potentially quite a small number, and 32% of post-primary schools. I am not saying that we should congratulate ourselves for doing very well, but we need to take the whole thing in the perspective of the whole system. Although it may be said that schools need to be pressurised to improve, I suggest that we are hardly in a crisis. We have to acknowledge that we have a fourth division problem, down there at the bottom, which tends to involve controlled secondary schools with pupils from highly deprived areas.
307. I will now get to the uncomfortable message, which is on the next slide in my presentation, that talks about player power, children power and whether they can get themselves out of the relegation zone. We have to realise that the largest differential in performance lies outside the school field. It is basically down to family and socio-economic community

- background, particularly parenting and, most of all, the educational qualifications of parents as role models. That affects children's language, their ability to learn at school and the development of all their aspirations. Add to that the peer effect, which is what we call the "significant others", in children's lives — the young ones who they run around with, so to speak. My mother used to say, "Show me your friends and I'll tell you who you are". The message here is that, if they are separated from better-off peer influences at the age of 11, you are relegating those children to low aspirations. They end up, as the phrase goes, being influenced by the lowest common denominator.
308. As we put pressure on our schools, the uncomfortable and shocking fact is that, statistically, the school effect is between only 5% and 18%. So, we have all this massive pressure when, in fact, the influence is really in the early years through parenting and in neighbourhoods. However, we do not want to be totally depressed by that because the good teacher effect, or, I should say the great teacher and the great school effect, can be up to 50%. However, it is all about the mix in the school, which is an uncomfortable message for some parties.
309. Slide 6 represents what I call the selection zone — you know what selection means in this society — or the transfer window or the fixed transfer window at age 11. The slide shows the problem to be in the central zone — the iris of pupil, that is, the pupil, their parents and peers. That is the issue that we need to try to fix. Moving outwards, the white zone is the system and all its interconnected components. The message here is that these systems do not stand alone. In other words, curriculum and thinking skills within the curriculum, assessment, examination, Programme for Government targets and inspection are interconnected and they all affect each other. So, tinker with one and you affect the others.
310. I would say — would I not? — that we had great curriculum reform, that is, a great revised curriculum that is hugely successful and popular with our schools. At its centre, we put 21st-century thinking skills and personal capabilities, and we then went and distorted it all by narrow assessment, a focus on targets and forgetting the things that we wanted to promote. We have an examination system that needs to move into 21st-century mode, and it is all driven by narrow league tables, inspection and government targets that are driven by the Assembly and DE. What I am saying is that the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is a symptom of a larger global problem.
311. Slide 8 is about what we are trying to do about the problem. People have to try to get their head around the fact that we have a promotion/relegation zone there in the middle. No matter what you do to the system, the bell curve always stays. There will always be somebody doing better and somebody doing worse. You cannot cut off the bell curve; it will always be there.
312. So, what do we do to improve the bell curve? Right now, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) initiative is working — represented at the middle line, which I call the promotion/relegation zone — at trying to push children at level 3 over that line and into level 4, or push children who are at level D in school at GCSE into level C. However, people have not grasped that pushing against that effort is a range of inhibitors that are to do with comparability criteria in exams; the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) upholding standards; Mr Gove's demands that exams are made harder; and moderation systems, which are there to ensure that children do not get a level 5. So, basically, you can push all you like, but there is a reverse push that says that those standards cannot improve.
313. I sit on the advisory group for the OFMDFM initiative. On a number of occasions, I asked whether the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) could make

- a statement to say that the exam standards will rise in line with these efforts. However, the exam standards have to be kept in line with the English exam standards etc. We do not realise that, often, what we are trying to do is to game the system; when, if you look at the yellow part of the diagram, you can see that the fourth division is being neglected. Those are the children who are not going to make it over the line. They are the children who need all the help, and we say that those children need that help from their very earliest years. Some would say that it starts in the womb.
314. I will outline Goodhart's law. Goodhart was a former Governor of the Bank of England, so I hope that you will believe him when he says:
- "If you make the target the object of accountability people will find ways to meet the target ... The clearer you are about what you want, the more you are likely to get it, the less likely it is to mean anything."*
315. It is no guarantee of improvement. In other words, we can game the numbers, but we are not necessarily changing the system.
316. I will move on to the issue at hand, which is ETI and the tensions between inspection for improvement — the model of ETI — and inspection for accountability. The issue here is that it is very difficult to square that circle. If you want to improve, you need to be a little more gentle regarding accountability. A very good report has just been published by Andy Hargreaves and Boston College, which looks at the effective use of data. It says is that it all depends on the nature and scope of the data considered. Here, we have no baseline data; our data is too narrow. We need much broader data, which the Committee has called for in its report. The culture of how that data is used also matters. Here, it is used to make judgements and hold people to account. The fairness of the indicators used to compare institutions or schools is also a factor. It is not an even playing field, so it is not fair. The way that the data is collected, interpreted and acted on is another factor. Schools have been telling you, particularly regarding assessment, that it has become very bureaucratic and burdensome. Most important of all are the consequences attached to performance. As you will see in the little leaflet that I gave you, we did a survey on that. Basically, if you are going to hold schools to account on the basis of their levels, schools will be in a position of feeling that they might, could or should manipulate those levels. Many schools do not do that, but the issue is that we create distrust. The shocking figure from that assessment survey was that less than 1% of schools believe that the levels are reliable. You cannot put in a moderation system that is going to make that any better; you would be moderating from now to kingdom come. So the tension can be resolved only when there is a consensus about the accurate, meaningful, fair, broad and balanced use of data and the collaborative use of data for improvement. Improvement is not only the responsibility of schools but the responsibility of everyone, including DE and the Assembly, which provide the resources.
317. It is little wonder that we got 1,383 responses and counting to our survey. In fact, the number was going up so fast that I thought that there was a glitch in the system, and I had to contact the researcher to ask whether the figure was not simply multiplying itself. The responses are still coming in online. We know that teachers are responding to the survey at 2.00 am, 3.00 am and 6.00 am because the times show up. That is our hard-working profession.
318. I will bring you a full summary of the survey in due course. Yesterday, I went through about 200 comments. The survey was not leading, as far as we could do that, and we did not ask schools how they had come out of their inspection surveys. We did not want that to influence what they were writing. We had 15 or 20 positive comments about inspection, and it was clear that those schools had done outstandingly well.

- However, the vast majority of responses expressed concerns about the attitude of the inspectors or their experience; the lack of an opportunity to challenge the inspectors; the fact that they felt that the inspection was contrived; there was inconsistency in the judgements; the inspection was data-driven; there was insufficient feedback and follow-up support; and there was a general lack of transparency and value added.
319. I will round off with our recommendations on the terms of reference. When we submitted the report to you, we said that there were only perceptions in the system about inspection. We now have the evidence to say that, according to the schools, inspection appears to be risk-based and data-driven. There is a fear that there is a deficit model. I felt enraged when I read the new proposals for formal intervention, which state that if a school remains “satisfactory” and does not improve to “good”, it will virtually be relegated to “unsatisfactory”.
320. We want to point out the deficit language of “unsatisfactory”. Indeed, I would almost call it the deficit language of Every School a Good School. What school would not want to be a good school? We want every school to be a great school. In the 21st century, Count, Read: Succeed is not really hugely aspirational when we see Scotland talking about its Curriculum for Excellence and 21st-century confidence. There is an image of a surfer on slide 10 because, at the heart of the curriculum, we put the idea that our young learners would be surfing the 21st-century knowledge era, managing information, problem solving and decision-making, being creative, managing themselves and working with others. Those skills are at the heart of our curriculum, and they are the skills that the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and Invest NI want. The First Minister and deputy First Minister are bringing companies to Northern Ireland to get those skills. Those are the skills that kids want to get on with. Last Friday, I spent the evening with 150 teachers at TeachMeet, which is a self-generated in-service course that is all about young people learning programming language and ICT boot camps. There is great energy among our teachers if they could just get on with it.
321. The terms of reference ask about the approach to value added: basically, it is absent. We do not have proper baseline measures. I spoke to representatives from one school where its free school meal figures have gone down from 42% to 36% simply because parents were not filling in the forms. The school says that, if it were judged properly, its free school meals potential is nearer to 60%. Parents are not filling in the forms because they have to do so every year, and they have to go to a social security office and so on, and kids are saying that they do not eat the meals anyway. It is not a reliable figure, nor is using grades A to C at GCSE a fair measure for all schools when some schools are taking in children scoring 132 in an intelligence quotient, and other schools are taking in children with a score of 68. If you were to look at the census figures, you are talking about levels of deprivation with a difference of from one to 871.
322. We also worry about how value added is or is not calculated and the effect sizes of one or two children distorting the figures. I was on a board of governors, and one or two children performing at a lower level skewed the entire performance level of the school.
323. The third term of reference asks about gaps in the system. We use the analogy of the Underground as a joined-up system. We say that we need to “mind the gap” because there is a huge gap in early diagnosis and parenting; insufficient support for early years; and insufficient link-up between curriculum, assessment, thinking skills — you will notice that that is my mantra — examinations, inspection and funding. We are making a plea for a change management strategy. We understand that things have to change and that the system is in transition, but we want some joined-up thinking and a proper

- school support strategy. Do we have to wait for the Education and Skills Authority (ESA), or can we consult on it now and get into gear, whether or not ESA happens? Most of all, we want a teacher development strategy because the view is that a system is only as strong as its teachers.
324. The fourth term of reference asks for alternative approaches, and I have given you a balance analogy between what seemed to be a right-wing punitive approach by Ofsted — I may be unfairly placing ETI along that spectrum, but some commentary from schools is that they feel that inspection is done to them and not with them — and, on the other side of the balance, we have Ireland, Scotland, which is seen as a much more supportive system, and Finland, where, as you know, they do not have an inspection system at all.
325. Finland may be a bridge too far for you, Danny, in particular. Last week, I heard you say that you very much supported inspection, and we understand that there has to be accountability, although some systems can have self-evaluation agencies. If we are to retain inspection, we want inspection alongside support, very much as is the case in Scotland. The ETI is partly aligned with the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS). Can it be fully aligned with CASS and the regional training unit (RTU) for leadership, and with C2k, in a Learning Scotland scenario, either as part of or separate from ESA? The danger is that if ESA is delayed much longer, we will be sitting with nothing, so something could be done in the meantime.
326. I will now turn to our recommendations. I will not go through them all, because you have our submission and our summary. We are looking for a supportive model and a much more streamlined process with supportive language. We want to take away the language of inadequacy and dissatisfaction and move towards the language of being “very confident”, “confident” or “lacking in confidence”, which is used in Scotland, because that is all about schools driving themselves forward. We think that we could have a much better baselining system if we were to use the information that we have from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), the census and geographical information systems to put schools into a decile system, which is used in New Zealand.
327. On monitoring, we think that you can get all the information you need by doing a light sampling process, using international data, but we will bring positive proposals to you on broader assessment measures.
328. The issues of governance, accountability and transparency go back to the question of cause and effect, and the symptoms. The cause is the global education reform movement, which tells politicians that you must measure everything that moves, but the targets are far too narrow. Those targets are then monitored by the Northern Ireland Audit Office, which beats up you, the schools and everybody else for not meeting them, and we are not sure whether they mean anything. We therefore want better judgements all round, based on broader targets.
329. On policymaking, I have included a little diagram, which, I have to say, is not mine; it was designed by Mortimer in 1999. He states that policymakers have very short-term memories and policy drives because they have been elected, but researchers and practitioners are there to give you all the information that the system needs. We need joined-up policy thinking. I do not see the same interference in medicine. You are not telling doctors how to manage their patients. Our message as professionals is this: trust us and let us get on with the job that we know how to do.
330. We need a framework for teacher professional development. I have produced a diagram on our linking up with the GTCNI competences. If you want us to be regulators, we have to regulate on the basis of competence, and those competences have to be built into school development planning, school self-evaluation and school inspection. We need a core programme

- of development for all teachers, and we need — as you can see from the little passports in slide 17 — a range of modular support systems that teachers can dip into to develop themselves throughout their career. We are hoping that we — a bit like the medical service — will have a professional development portfolio.
331. Our appeal is that we move from a deficit model that is data-driven, with everything directed and monitored to within an inch of its life, that focuses on old literacies, narrow targets, assessment for accountability and moderation for policing, and that breeds systemic distrust and compliance without engagement, to a growth model that is data-informed, professionally trusted and focuses on the new literacies. Eighty per cent of our children are fully literate, so they need to be stimulated and engaged by 21st-century thinking. We want broader measures and moderation for capacity building, not policing. We want systemic empowerment, and we want to breed 21st-century autonomous learners.
332. In conclusion, we think that you are at the apex of the tipping point. We thank you for instituting this inquiry. We hope that you can influence a major shift in our education culture, which we think is moving in the wrong direction. We want joined-up policies, supportive 21st-century learning, broader measures, value added and a big investment in teachers as professionals so that you can trust us to get on with the job.
333. **The Chairperson:** Carmel, that is the shortest 15 minutes that I have ever heard, but it was very valuable. I am sure that there are many people who wish that I was pushed over the tipping point rather than being at its apex. You spoke positively about the Committee.
334. There is a lot in your submission, and it covers various strands and issues. We will try to focus on the inspectorate, because we could go off on other discussions about other things, and I do not think that that would be healthy or profitable. Is there an issue when
- the GTC says that schools can have only a small impact on the variation in pupil attainment? How do you marry that with the good outcomes obtained in our schools as a result of the process and the position that our schools are currently in? How do you marry those two things? Anywhere in the world, people want to be sure that they are getting value and worth. Whether you are in Singapore, Shanghai or Stranocum, parents want to know whether outcomes will be beneficial for pupils. Is there not a contradiction in what you say about the levels of attainment that can be achieved?
335. **Dr Gallagher:** I know that it is counter-intuitive. I think that the view is that, if the influence of the lowest common denominator is allowed to thrive, the impact is only around 20%. We believe that the challenge that great schools can offer in certain neighbourhoods can be as much as 50% and more. Where does that challenge function come from? The suggestion is that inspection is driving improvement, but there has yet to be a research study that proves that. Education is changing all the time, and people are getting better at analysing what needs to be done. Schools are becoming more energetic and focused on what they need to do. There is a lot of drive and commitment in the system. Your question is: how can you be sure as politicians? Do you need an inspection service that tells you that? I can understand why you would think that. Alternatively, have we got to the stage now at which you can have a self-evaluation culture that is being measured by schools themselves and reported to a local authority whereby you have a supportive insight into schools?
336. In the survey results, there is no doubt that schools — some more than others — think that inspection helps them to focus on certain issues. However, they feel that they would prefer a different system that acknowledged that they were doing their best and identified some of the issues that inspectors thought that the school could valuably focus on. Inspectors could then come

- back in six, 12 or 18 months to see how a school was tackling that, as opposed to a situation in which the problem is identified and the school is told, “Fix it now — or else”. Among the shocking things you see from the comments from schools is the stress and tension that there is; the feeling that they are performing in an abnormal way; and the fact that, sometimes, teacher is set against teacher, because one person is dragging the others down. We are not questioning the accountability or the need to look into schools; we simply question the mode of doing it.
337. I suppose the message is a bit like parenting. If you bring up a child and terrorise and criticise them for every wrong move and threaten sanctions if they do not adhere to a regime within a specific period, you know what you produce: distrust, disempowerment, fear and, eventually, resentment. However, if you have a system that says, “We know you are trying to do your best. There are problems, and we know what they are, but we are here to help you to analyse them and to support you”, you empower someone to help themselves.
338. **The Chairperson:** Carmel, you also need some regulation. I do not accept that analogy. I am not going to get into parenting skills, because my children would probably think that I am the last person who should give advice on that, but if they are not disciplined —
339. **Dr Gallagher:** You need both.
340. **The Chairperson:** A minister of mine used to say that, if a child does not know that hand in love, you should not use it in discipline. That is a rule that I have always tried to apply.
341. Everyone holds Finland up as a great example of how it is done. They have no inspection. They dispensed with the inspectorate. However, what confidence have parents that what they get is what it says on the tin? Self-evaluation is good, provided that it is within a parameter that can be assessed and independently verified. Schools were raising concerns about the computer-based assessments, because the books could be fiddled. You could make things look better than what they were if you were in the right place at the right time. That is not what we want to get to either.
342. Everyone says that we should use the Scottish model; however, when we were in Scotland we picked up that not all teachers thought that the inspectorate was a wonderful thing. There were concerns there too, even though it was seen to be more independent than our regime. How do you get a combination of both rather than it being one or the other? Is that what you are saying is the model that would be useful for our own system?
343. **Dr Gallagher:** Going back to the parenting analogy, you set expectations and you have values to which you expect people to live up. Any business self-evaluates; it knows where its problems are, and it fixes them. You do want an element of trust. The difference in Finland is that they trust their teachers and their schools. I can understand the conundrum. However, I will reflect on my experience of inspection, even though it gives my age away. I had the highest regard for inspectors who inspected me when I was a teacher. People will remember them: John Birch and Vivian McIver. They were the top two history inspectors. I had a healthy fear and respect for them. Equally, they came in with supportive, constructive suggestions, and they led our in-service training. One of the things that our teachers are saying is that, because inspectors see so much good practice, they particularly value the district inspector. A district inspector can behave in a supportive and analytical way as a critical friend; they do not morph into something else when they come in as part of an inspection team. It does not have to be either carrot or stick; there can be both.
344. **The Chairperson:** Carmel, how is different now than it was when you were inspecting? What is the fundamental difference between the way the inspection took place in your time? I take the point about the district

- inspectors, who always seem to have a good rapport with schools. The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) did a customer review of ETI. We quizzed and queried the reason why there were only seven appeals in recent years and why none was upheld. What is different now than a few years ago?
345. **Dr Gallagher:** I asked schools about that survey, and they said, "We have been through an inspection process. We are exhausted and stressed out, and we suddenly get this survey. Our name is on it even though it is anonymous, and we do not believe it is anonymous." I do believe that it is anonymous, but schools feel that they just want to get it over with and do not want anybody to come back at them.
346. I was looking at our survey yesterday. It is relatively positive, only when you get down to the detail. Schools are compliant; they understand and will go along with it. The difference is that you come in with a supportive attitude, and I believe that many of the inspectors have that, but it should not be so narrowly data-driven. We will have to bottom that out, and, in our survey we will try to find out whether there is a socio-economic fairness in inspections. Is the 'Irish News' right in saying that you are four times more likely to get a poor inspection because of your socio-economic background? It is all about the judgement of value added. You are not on a level playing field. You might be doing a great job up the Shankill Road, where all the principals are out on stress, and dedicating your whole life to it, but you are up against that 80% community lack of aspiration and are being held to account for something that you cannot fully influence. The first law of accountability is to be held to account for that which you can control. Some schools cannot control that, and beating them up will not help. We want a more supportive and constructive approach.
347. For example, everything is not rosy in Scotland, but the inspectors come in, and if they think that things are going relatively well, they are only there one or two days and they clear off and send
- in their support team. If they think that there is a problem, they stay, bottom out the problem, give detailed feedback on it and then bring in the support team. That is supposed to happen in our system, but our support team is being steadily diminished. The feedback in the commentary section of our survey showed that schools feel that they are not getting enough feedback to tell them what to do next. There is a great deal of respect in our schools for inspectors, as they know their job and do it well. If they have those insights, they should share them more fully.
348. **Ms Sharon Beattie (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland):** As a practitioner who is a principal and has taken her school through inspection twice, I have respect and had a very positive inspection. However, competition between schools has crept into our system without clear indicators on how you get over the bar. You get a "good", but nobody tells you how to get to "outstanding". Principals have lost faith in it. We have some outstanding practice, and that is overlooked in Northern Ireland. Why are we not using the outstanding practitioners as a model for practitioners who are having difficulties? I totally support Carmel: some schools with the baseline that will never achieve what my school achieves because of the area I sit in. There has to be a system that acknowledges that and takes it into account rather than just beats up hard-working principals because they cannot get their children over the bar.
349. I have met you before, and you know that I am passionate about early years. That is where we can make a lot of change, and, at its core, the Learning to Learn policy will provide that. However, if we are not provided with the systems, and if we think that someone is going to come and beat us with a big stick because we are trying to target that school, we know that we will not get the same success. That does not stop us as good practitioners from working with that child and trying our best with that family, but it reflects in league tables

- because we cannot move that child. We are not miracle workers. There are children with difficulties and difficult socioeconomic backgrounds who will never be able to achieve that measure in the present system unless we are given flexibility as good practitioners. It needs to be acknowledged that some of our work is much slower; it might not show at the end of one school year and it might not show at the end of an educational phase, but we must be allowed to try with those children. I fear that the present system is what puts people off doing that as a practitioner.
350. **Mr Colm Davis (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland):** Mervyn, I have probably spoken to you about this before, possibly years ago, but it is very important. I endorse what Sharon and Carmel are saying. I think that we now have a culture of almost beating people up if they cannot achieve the A to C measure or level 4 or level 5, but we have got to look at other ways of embracing other data that is equally important. Likewise, we need to turn the culture of parents around to realise the importance of vocational qualifications and alternative qualifications. Schools are afraid to do that at times, because when inspectors come out to inspect, if the school is not moving up to the A to C measure, they are criticised. However, special schools do not have the A to C measure, so questions are asked about how inspections are done there.
351. We have a great deal of outstanding practice going on. We help one another quite a bit in the special schools culture. We work with one another in close proximity and, even though there is distance between the 43 schools, we have good partnerships. We exchange good practice. We look at each other's self-evaluations, for example, which are based on the 'Together Towards Improvement' indicators. All of that is taken in as part of the inspection process when the inspectors come in to look at how to measure, report and monitor improvement, and, for us, the kids make excellent gains. The problem is finding a way. The district inspector has a crucial role to play in building a relationship up with the school; of knowing the culture of the school, knowing the area and building that relationship up with teachers.
352. I can give you an example in my school whereby if a district inspector was coming up the road, he might drop in for a cup of coffee, although you might think that that is too familiar, but when he comes in, I will fill his head with everything that is happening in the school. We had a nurture group for a few children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), for example, and I asked what he thought about the idea. I told him that we were trying this out, we had not done this before, and asked him whether he wanted to come down and have a look. The teachers are open to this, although perhaps in some schools they are not, but we are always open to celebrating achievement and I think that, for us, it is about building a relationship up with the inspectorate. They need to be able to go out and share that good practice, and as Carmel said, it is the training element that needs to be built in to support our colleagues. At present, when criticisms are made, the infrastructure is not there to support them to a sufficient standard. As a result, they are running about like headless chickens trying to find out where they are going to get the support from.
353. At this moment in time, the mechanism is not there for schools to exchange staff in order to enable a mentoring, tutoring or shadowing concept to be set up as well. It is important to look at that, because if the expertise is in those schools, that is something that we need to think about. There are lots of things; that was a brainstorm.
354. **The Chairperson:** I want to get to members' questions because there are so many things coming out of that. Is the district inspector allowed just to drop by? Is that still a common practice? Has it been frowned upon?
355. **Mr Davis:** It is still common practice. I cannot really say too much. I do not really want this to be recorded. I am not sure whether I have been given a

- different line of direction from above, but it does still happen. We have had four or five inspectors in since the beginning of September for meetings on various issues. It is good; you have got to build a relationship up and establish a context. They may not do you any favours, but the good thing is that they are being kept up to date with what is going on in the school. They can see the problems that you have and know outlets where you can get the additional support if required. They may know models of good practice elsewhere and say, "If you give that principal a ring, he will be able to help you out." As a professional and one who has got very little leadership training over the last number of years because of a lack of training, I have had to rely on my colleagues. For any of my colleagues who have been rated as "outstanding", I have looked at how they have got that grade and what they are doing that I have not done. Special schools are all so different; what they are doing there may not necessarily apply to my school. However, I take good practice and tweak it to suit the needs of our school.
356. **The Chairperson:** In our system you have a variety of special schools. I worry about the socioeconomic argument that if you put everybody into one big pot they will somehow all come out the same. You need to recognise that there are issues in special schools that require different types of schools. That is why, whatever level you designate the school at, you should judge it on the basis of what that school says it is.
357. That is the difficulty that we have got ourselves into. We have set a standard that everybody has to meet. It does not recognise differences; that is why there are some in the fourth division. That is not to say that that is where they should be staying; they should always be aspiring to improve. However, I still have a concern about trying to change the outcome socially and economically by simply saying, "We will send all the patients to the one hospital." That does not work either. You need a variety of specialities and skills that address the particular and individual needs of patients.
358. **Mr Kinahan:** Carmel, thank you very much. There is a hell of a lot in that document from a different point of view, including many good things. I want to pick out one or two before I go on to a question. You are concentrating on the fourth division, which is absolutely the right place to work, but the bell always seems flawed because it works on an average. Whatever way you work it, there will always be a fourth division, so the issue is getting the fourth division to the middle. Therefore we need a different measurement system.
359. I take on board the point about joined-up thinking and getting our silos working together, particularly early years. I also accept what you say about stimulation and looking at better ways forward in the twenty-first century. I particularly take on what Sharon said about needing to find a better way of doing things.
360. I would like to see your questionnaire to see what questions you asked and see where you have come from. Laced all the way through this is politics, because politics and education are so integrally linked.
361. **Mr Hazzard:** That is the problem.
362. **Mr Kinahan:** There lies a great problem, but you probably need someone on your shoulder who totally disagrees with you so that you are coming at it from a non-political point of view. The document is laced with your own views, and I would probably do the same but in another direction. Can we see the questions so that we can look through them?
363. What is not in the document, and I was intrigued by this, is an incentive system. Everything we do at the moment involves the stick; there does not seem to be a way of using resources to get a comfortable way forward. You mentioned that I seem to be for inspection; I am, but it has to be done in a nice way so that you all work with it. We need a way of judging whether a school is good or bad. What do you have in mind? How

- do you feel about trying to look for incentives so that we get the carrot?
364. **Dr Gallagher:** Well, I certainly do not think that payment by results is an incentive. That is proving disastrous in the United States, and I cannot believe that Michael Gove is thinking of having it in England. It goes back to the same idea that there is a homogenous group that you can teach and get results, when children are all terribly different. Five A* to C grades is a good thing, as Mervyn said, to aspire to, but there are schools with intakes of children that should be aspiring to achieve eight A* to C grades. We need a relative measure and relative aspiration. One of the things that appals me is the fact that you have children who pass the transfer zone, end up in a grammar school, do not get five grades at A* to C and are not let back in, because they are supposedly not fit for the work. Actually, they have been failed. In a sense, the system has failed them, and it is making sure that those children are not on their register because they might bring the A-level performance table down.
365. I turn to incentives. As professionals — I will let my colleagues speak here — we are all incentivised enough. People do not become teachers for the money or the ease of the job. Let me tell you; the job is getting worse because of stress and workload. I blame computers, in a sense, because everybody expects everything to be done much faster. I am not terribly sure about incentivisation. As professionals, we are dedicated; we have a vocation, like nurses. The incentive for us would be, “trust us”.
366. **Mr Kinahan:** We had a discussion about this at our party conference at the weekend. One of the points that came up was about levelling things up and trying to get everyone sharing to get the best resources. Resources and incentive are important. We are always judging how people have failed, but the ones who do really well —
367. **Dr Gallagher:** Again, that could work out unfairly. One of the incentives at the moment seems to be that if you get an outstanding inspection, you will be told that you will be visited again after a shorter interval to make sure that you are still outstanding. The message of that incentive is that we will all just want to be good, not better, because we do not want the inspector to come back. The incentive might be, “Go away and leave us alone and let us get on with the job”.
368. **Ms Beattie:** As a practitioner I support what Carmel is saying. The incentive for me is trusting me and using the practice that I have worked hard to instil in my school to disseminate that. I do not just want the children in the Dromore area who go to Dromore Nursery School to experience excellent preschool; I want every child in Dromore, regardless of the setting they go into, to have that experience. My incentive is that if you declare me to be outstanding, then trust me and allow me to take that out. My incentive is the acknowledgement of the work that I do and the trust in the person that I am for leadership.
369. **Mr Davis:** The big incentive is feeling valued, not undervalued; respected, not disrespected. The teacher should be able to celebrate the achievements of a child; we have moved away from that quite a bit. The teacher is so happy when a child makes progress; that does not necessarily need to be in examinations. It is about finding ways to celebrate achievements. I know that some schools are fantastic at that. That is equally important to me.
370. Yes, we have the examination route to think about and the types of examinations that we have. However, we look at developing the whole person, including thinking skills, to make our young people more effective contributors to the society in which they are expected to live, whether they work as a mechanic, a doctor or a lawyer. It is about equipping them with those all-round skills. We should be able to measure that, in a way, by celebrating achievement.
371. Folks, I have to head on; I have an external performance review waiting for me at 11.30. *[Laughter.]*

372. **The Chairperson:** Thank you.
373. **Mr Sheehan:** It is interesting that every public service organisation complains about external inspections. The Chief Constable was complaining about it a couple of weeks ago, but when his director of finance was in last week he was full of praise for the HMIC that had pointed out that he could save £2 million. That is just a fact of life.
374. I am not so sure that self-regulation is the best way. The vast majority of our teachers do an excellent job; however, there are some bad teachers. If we go back to your concentric circles and the influences on children's educational achievements, 80% is down to parental involvement or peer influence. I totally agree with what. You find, particularly in schools in deprived areas, that there is very little parental involvement. Not long ago I went to a meeting in a school that is on the point of amalgamating with another school. There was a meeting for parents, but very few turned up. That was a sign that very few of them cared one way or another about what was happening.
375. However, a lack of parental involvement in a child's education is, in some ways, part of a vicious circle, because when teachers are not challenged, they tend to lower their aspirations or expectations. It does not happen so much in more affluent areas, where parents come from professional backgrounds or have qualifications themselves. If there is an issue with their children in the school, they are quickly on the phone or up to the principal's door asking what is happening. You do not have that so much in disadvantaged areas with kids from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, so there is a lowering of aspiration among teaching staff. The question is how we rectify that, or, to take it back a step further, how do we increase parental involvement? Increasing parental involvement would make the biggest change of all in educational outcomes.
376. **Ms Beattie:** Personally, I would say start with the early years. Even in deprived areas, you will get 60% outcomes for parents' meetings for three- and four-year-olds. It is harder in certain areas, but you still get it at that age if you have an open and welcoming environment, because some parents have had a very poor experience of education, are afraid of going back, and do not want their child to experience what they experienced. It has to be all-embracing. It has to start with the early years. That is my passion. We need to get parents engaged and to re-engage with those whose poor experience led them to disengage completely at 16 or 17. The answer is definitely in the early years. Go beyond that and they disengage further.
377. As a practitioner, I am not opposed to somebody looking at my practice. I am not opposed to being accountable to someone for what I do, how my children are treated and how my teachers operate. It is about how that is done, using a system that is supportive and, if it is a good self-evaluating school, sharing that practice, taking it out and allowing it to be part of the inspection, not just an external force coming in. Neither my colleagues nor I have a problem with being accountable; we have no problem with someone coming in to see our work and share our practice. In fact, many of us would welcome more opportunities to do that, but it is the system that is set up. As Carmel said, we should be joining up all the systems so that we have a shared baseline, a shared goal, we know what we want to achieve and we move in a uniform way towards it, not compete with one another in sectors but move forward so that the child is back at the centre. That is what we lose. It is not about which practitioner is the best or which is the best head teacher; it is about the child. If we do not come back to the child, we will lose completely. We have to come back to the children and to disengaged parents and start there.
378. **Dr Gallagher:** One of the big issues is the nature of examinations. They say

- that if you can get the exam system right and get it to do what you want it to do, everyone will be motivated, because everyone aspires for children to succeed, but some of our exams are just not suitable. Some radical thinkers even ask how much any of us ever need a mathematics GCSE. There should be a mathematics-for-life qualification. There should be forms of communication through ICT or social media, as they energise young people. I agree that there is no way that we should accept that any school should lower its expectations. Every community should have a school that drives the expectations of young people. If you saw the young kids that those Teach Me teachers had out on ICT programming boot camps, you would have seen kids just dying to get at learning. It is all about really energising our qualifications system to deliver for young people, particularly those in socially deprived areas. We need to get away from the boring old GCSE textbook stuff and give them examinations that really motivate them.
379. I am a former CCEA person. I drove curriculum reform and hoped that we would have a very vibrant assessment and examinations system. That is happening around the world. It is hard to change, because you are always looking at comparability and whether we are OK. We have the entitlement framework and the opportunity to do our own thing. I hope that the Province has the courage to do its own thing. I think that Michael Gove is driving England back to the 19th century with his focus on content, knowledge and learning. In fact, learning is all now at a touch of a button on the internet, and we need to give kids information management skills, problem-solving skills and creativity for the 21st century.
380. Kids want to get at it and teachers want to get at it, if we were not measuring them with old yardsticks. We really need to energise the debate around the nature of assessment and examinations. Scotland and Ireland do their own thing. Northern Ireland has a very good reputation for education
- and, if we have the courage to do our own thing, our qualifications will travel. Universities in England break their backs to get students from Northern Ireland. I do not think that we should ever fear our comparability and, therefore, we should really go for it, particularly with our young men. Girls tend to toe the line and jump the hoops because they are generally more compliant, although I do not know why.
381. **The Chairperson:** I will pass no comment. The wife might be listening.
382. **Dr Gallagher:** Girls tend to be more compliant in their learning. Boys need to be motivated from primary school. They are motivated by ICT and exciting things. That is what we need to give them.
383. **Mr Sheehan:** I have one other question. Earlier, Chris suggested that we should rename the inspectorate as an education support service, teacher support service, or something like that. It would maybe cast a whole different light on inspections. Even if the inspectorate was renamed, what would be the practical outworking? What would be the differences between what you envisage and what exists?
384. **Dr Gallagher:** I think that the inspectorate is moving in the right direction. This inquiry is probably incentivising the thinking, but I am aware that the inspectorate has been looking at its format of inspection and is focusing more on self-evaluation. You said that everybody needs some form of monitoring. We have an audit committee that scrutinises everything we do, and we report, in governance terms, to our council, which trusts us to get on with the job. Of course, the Department then comes in with its governance accountability review meeting, and we do that also. Everybody needs something, but the culture has to be one of self-evaluation and driving towards your own targets.
385. It might be better if we changed the name from inspection to evaluation and looked at self-evaluation alongside support. The suggestion would be a bit

- like the one that I gave earlier. Those involved should not go into schools and say what is wrong and what needs to be fixed. They should ask what people are doing and ask them for their priorities and targets, and how they are getting on. They should also ask about the focus on improvement, take note of that, ask what supports people need and tell them that they will be back to evaluate how they get on on the basis of their own self-evaluation.
386. It is a bit like the peace process. When we started to use the right language we got out of the conflict zone. I know that that covers —
387. **Mr Sheehan:** We may be getting into dodgy territory.
388. **The Chairperson:** I do not think that that is the best analogy.
389. **Dr Gallagher:** No. However, language can change perceptions and the way that people deal with one other.
390. **Ms Beattie:** It is more about partnership working and working to address a shared goal, rather than two people working and someone else coming in. Partnership is really what we need to get to.
391. **Mr Gerry Devlin (General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland):** When I was teaching in the early days, inspectors were seen as being senior professionals who carried enormous amounts of wisdom. They had been in the system, had great status in the system and carried great practical wisdom into schools. If that energy and sort of ethos could be re-harnessed and redirected into a growth model of inspection that nurtures schools and teachers and that is closely aligned with professional development opportunities, I think that the outcome of this inquiry would be very beneficial for the profession. We could then move forward together in partnership rather than with these jagged edges that exist between the ETI and the various other sectors.
392. **Mr Hazzard:** Thank you Carmel, Gerry and Sharon. This is such a huge issue and I really do not know where to start sometimes. Carmel, you made the point that it is about culture or ethos; and, very often, that is what we hear. Speaking as the Committee member who was sitting in a classroom most recently, it has always struck me that inspections —
393. **Mr Kinahan:** I cannot remember when I was — *[Laughter.]*
394. **The Chairperson:** I was in a classroom yesterday. *[Laughter.]*
395. **Mr Hazzard:** I meant sitting at a desk.
396. Pupils play no part in inspections. This process is over the heads of the people who are, or who should be, at the very centre of our education system. As far as I am aware, pupils do not have a say in it. That is something that I would love to be fed in.
397. Carmel, you mentioned exams, and I often ask: who do exams actually serve? Again, our young people are not at the centre of that. Recently, the Minister said that we are going to have a real look at exams and who they serve. I am delighted with that. Hopefully, young people will be included.
398. I am going to ramble for a while, so apologies. We said that it is not so much a school issue but a wider societal issue. I definitely buy into that, although I think that the former can inform the latter. We need only look at the social missions or at the recent changes in schools in Venezuela that have had such a huge influence on wider society.
399. If anyone heard some of the things I said lately on the Floor of the House, they will know that I am a great disciple of Richard Kahlenberg's work on social integration in America. A long time after the Coleman report in the 1960s, parts of America are finally seeing that a social mix in schools is so important. I think that this feeds into the wider cultural thing, and I hope that through the review of what we now call inspection, we will move away from the term "inspection". I think that we need to see a support service for teachers.

- In saying that, the most important thing is building the self-evaluation capacity of teachers. I am really rambling here, but that involves continuing professional development and putting self-evaluation at its very heart.
400. I would love to hear your thoughts on whether that is the right way to go, and how we get to that point. For me, this is a huge process. I do not know if we will ever get to the Finnish-type model. We are not going to get the right answer now, but we need to plant the seeds. What are the most important steps in that path. Sorry for rambling to get to that point.
401. **Ms Beattie:** For me, you should start with teacher training. The problem is that you have beginner teacher training and then no continuing professional development (CPD). If we had that, and if self-evaluation were taught from teacher training onwards and practiced from day one in the classroom, it would become part of ethos of teachers and they would not be afraid of it.
402. For some teachers there is a fear factor in evaluating themselves and holding that evaluation up for someone else to look at. They have to highlight the bits that they are not good at, and, for some, there is a fear factor in doing that. Self-evaluation needs to be built into our culture. It has to start with teacher training. You cannot have a big gulf in the middle where teachers are stuck in their classrooms and never get out, never have any continuing professional development, do not see other teachers teaching, and lose the skills that they had.
403. When you are doing teacher training, you do not have a choice: you have to have people watching you teach all the time. However, suddenly you go into a classroom and close the door, and you could be there for 10 years. So, we have to have continuing development. It has to start at the grass roots and continue, through self-evaluation, until it becomes part of teaching culture. It will then become a part of school culture, supported by someone coming in and taking self-evaluation forward, rather than producing a big tick-list of what you cannot do.
404. **Mr Hazzard:** Let me move on to analysis and self-evaluation. I am a great believer that it has to start at school, even for the pupils themselves. That is the danger in what Gove is doing across the water; he is removing self-analysis and critical thinking in favour of the three Rs.
405. **Ms Beattie:** He is taking us right back to the beginning.
406. **Dr Gallagher:** Let me just add to that. Thank you, I will give you that £20 later. *[Laughter.]* That is the core of what the GTC wants to do, the framework for teacher professional development. In a few years' time, you will expect us, as the regulator, to regulate the competence of teachers. There is the "big stick", hard regulation which says, "If you are incompetent, you are out." I hope that that will not be used much. Certainly, there will be issues if someone has broken the law, or God forbid, child protection measures. Those are hard regulation issues.
407. However, competence issues are about competence being built throughout your career, from school and initial teacher training, through induction, early professional development, and throughout your career. We are in charge of competence standards and are about to review them to ensure that they are up-to-date, robust and easy to work with. In order for a principal or any teacher to self-evaluate against those competences, they have to be built into the following: school development planning; school self-evaluation; personal review, which is otherwise known as performance review and staff development (PRSD); and continuing professional development (CPD).
408. We will have what we call a "soft regulatory role" in the coming years, where we are going to have to be almost an in-service unit, helping schools to understand how to build in competences and work with self-evaluation. So I could not agree with you more.

409. The issue is that there has been a review of teacher education for 10 years. What does that say about valuing the profession? We have had a Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS) and those people have worked very hard, but I suppose that it has led to a kind of dependence mode, and now we want an independence mode. We want schools to be doing it for themselves. However, in order for them to do that, we need to do exactly what you say. We must develop all the tools for them to do it and put in a resource, so that they can run courses or bring people in to help their development.
410. For example, in the Republic of Ireland right now, the equivalent of the CCEA, which is called the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is putting up £100,000 worth of teacher bursaries for PhD students in assessment because they realise that they have a real problem with assessment capacity. And what is their response to that problem? They want to get a couple of hundred people really up to speed to be capacity builders within the system. So we need to think outside the box. We are fretting at the fact that the change management strategy, ESA, is stuck, and where is the plan? We are anxious to push on with helping to design the plan. After all, if it is for the profession, we should have an opportunity to influence it.
411. **Mr Hazzard:** At the start of your presentation, you showed us a “World Cup” of 20 countries’ educational performance. Among the systems, you differentiated between “done to” and “done by” models. Can you run through that?
412. **Dr Gallagher:** The United States system is a terribly “done to” system at the moment. Teachers there are in complete despair and are being measured by results. “No child left behind” is the great phrase used, but it is disastrous in implementation. Finland is a “done by” system, where there is total self-evaluation. Ontario is a complete partnership. Hong Kong has a new online self-evaluation tool from its evaluation service, so I think that it is a “done by” or “done with” system.
413. Our resident expert in thinking skills, Professor Carol McGuinness, did all our work, invented the whole progression on thinking skills in 2003 before the OECD even mentioned it. She went to Singapore to help with the development of their thinking skills. We call them “the other skills”. South Korea has a hugely energetic system where a lot of our young people go to teach and gain experience. Poland has quite a self-evaluative system as well. Ontario is the one that we need to be —
414. **Mr Hazzard:** The key word for me, and, I am sure, for a lot of people, seems to be “partnership”.
415. My final question is on the use of free school meals. Your work refers to it being inadequate for addressing the direct legacy of poverty in our schools. The Minister has said umpteen times that it is the best that we have, but that he is more than happy to look at alternatives. You alluded to the ten-point system in New Zealand, and I know that Vermont and Ontario were very successful at doing that as well. Do you have an idea of what we should be doing in the short term here?
416. **Dr Gallagher:** Yes, we have been lobbying quite a bit on this issue, and we were going to commission work, if no one else was going to do it, because we have experts here in Northern Ireland. A report has gone to the Committee from Borooah and Knox from the University of Ulster. They have already developed a system and applied it, and they have given you a fairly strongly value-added measure. So, there are experts at UU and Queen’s who could run the system quite easily.
417. **The Chairperson:** Could it all be done by Friday?
418. **Dr Gallagher:** Probably.
419. **The Chairperson:** I think that the world comes to an end on Friday. I was told that on Wednesday.

420. **Mr Hazzard:** I have one last comment, which may be tongue in cheek. We talked about wanting to extend consultation on the common funding formula because we need more time, yet we hear that there are thousands of replies coming into it too. I thought that point was interesting.
421. **The Chairperson:** What they are saying is the issue.
422. **Dr Gallagher:** I will just make one point in relation to funding, which has been hugely controversial. It is not our territory because it is a money issue and not a professional issue. The professional issue is that you can throw money at things, but it does not necessarily mean that it makes it better. It has to be research-informed funding, and Sharon will tell you that. If you want to throw money at anything, throw it at the early years.
423. **Mr Moutray:** Thank you for your presentation. As a relatively new member of the Committee, I find it all very interesting.
424. **The Chairperson:** It is a long time since you have been in the classroom.
425. **Mr Moutray:** It has been quite a while, and I was glad to get out of it at the time. One of your recommendations on school improvement makes reference to using positive language around inspections. You refer to what is being done in Scotland. Will you expand on that? Is Scotland better because of that? Why should we not continue to call it as it is? If there is an unsatisfactory inspection report, why do we not say that, because it is a fact, rather than dressing it up in more positive language?
426. **Dr Gallagher:** The General Teaching Council (GTC) is the oldest general teaching council in the world. It is also one of the most respected and highly developed inspection systems in the world. It makes a lot of noise about that, and it is visited all the time. If it does something, then I think it is worth doing, because there is a huge amount of research going on at the moment into inspection processes around the world, and they say that it is all very well giving inspection outcomes, but, if someone cannot hear the message, you might as well not give it. So, it is all about language. If you are destroyed in the process, you cannot hear the message. It builds up your resentment and your resistance. So, this is about delivering the message.
427. What we really need to know is who is doing brilliantly, who is doing well and who needs support. We also need to know the person who has a lack of confidence on certain issues. That lack of confidence could be severe or little, but it means that we know where to focus the report; whereas if you actually tell someone that they are completely inadequate, they cannot work with you. What happens — we have seen it already — is that schools get a terrible inspection report; parents say, “Right, we are pulling our kids out of the there”; and you start a downward spiral that is often impossible to repair.
428. **Ms Beattie:** As a head teacher responding to the question: if you came to me and told me that I was unsatisfactory and that you were outstanding, I would immediately feel like a failure. If I were going to look at your practices, I would be doing so cap in hand because I would be a failure. However, if you told me that I needed a wee bit of development in an area because there are things I could be doing, and that another person is really good at it, I would be more willing. It is easier to say, “I want to develop this”, than, “I have been declared unsatisfactory, I am a failure and you are wonderful. How am I going to put it right?”
429. Head teachers are real people. We might take a lot of flak sometimes, but we are human. It is very difficult, especially if you think that you have been working very hard. I am not undermining somebody’s comment that we could have poor teachers in the system: we could. We could also have poor head teachers. However, there are many very hardworking people out there.

- Their confidence and self-confidence is being trodden into the ground. If someone says that I need to develop something and shows me a way to do it, I will try to do it.
430. **Mr Moutray:** Absolutely. I accept what you say about the many good teachers that we have. However, sometimes, if someone is told that something is unsatisfactory and that there is a way out, that can act as a motivator. At the end of the day, if something is unsatisfactory, it is still unsatisfactory.
431. **The Chairperson:** Going back to the World Cup page; where is Scotland in that? With the dread of making Alex Salmond cringe; is it in with England?
432. **Dr Gallagher:** Yes.
433. **The Chairperson:** Oh dear.
434. **Dr Gallagher:** In fact, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland have, relatively, the same performance. Wales's performance dipped a little bit. There was a bit of a crisis recently, which is apparently why they are practicing for their PISA results. England performed terribly well in 2000. However, the results were not published because they reckoned that the sample was skewed. All sorts of things can happen that can cause a blip. A blip is not a pattern.
435. **Mr Newton:** I apologise for being late, I was at another meeting. In many ways, my questions have been answered as explanations to others have been given.
436. I noted, Carmel, when you were reporting on the situation in the classroom, you indicated that it was not getting better but was getting "worse and worse", which I think were the words you used. If you were from east Belfast, you would have said, "worsen and worsen". My background is in vocational training, and I come at this very much from the positive measurement as opposed to the negative measurement; positive in the sense that you encourage improvement rather than being punitive with regard to where the person is at that time.
437. Stephen made the point that if something is unsatisfactory, it is unsatisfactory. However, I find the term "intervention" to be a very negative term. It has particular relevance in east Belfast at present, where, at secondary level, there are three schools in intervention: Dundonald High School, Orangefield High School and Knockbreda High School. I think that Ms Beattie was the first to use the expression "partnership approach".
438. I will go back to my own background of vocational training. Partnership would have been the ethos when you were working with candidates in vocational training. Indeed, it is critical that we get back to "child-centred education", which, I think, was also your expression, Ms Beattie. I find it very difficult to disagree with the information provided to us and your GTC recommendations on school improvement on measuring the value that is added by schools. It is difficult to disagree with that. On the measurements of achievement, I might have some issues, but they would be minor as opposed to major. I think that, if we do not reach that governance and transparency level, we will continue to be in our current situation and will find it more difficult to reach the heights that we want to achieve. So, I really do not have a question as such, Chair; I just have those comments.
439. **The Chairperson:** Thank you. There are no other questions from members. Carmel and Sharon, thank you very much. Undoubtedly, this has brought about a degree of interest. I am just looking at the number and content of the responses that we have had. They are varied and wide. Your contribution has been extremely helpful. Thank you for what you have presented to us this morning. I wish you well and look forward to working with you in the future.

23 October 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Hazzard
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Mr Mark Langhammer	<i>Association of Teachers and Lecturers</i>
Ms Nuala O'Donnell	<i>Irish National Teachers' Organisation</i>
Ms Karen Sims	<i>National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers</i>
Ms Avril Hall-Callaghan	<i>Ulster Teachers' Union</i>

440. **The Chairperson:** Avril, you and your colleagues are very welcome. Obviously, you are here to make a presentation to the inquiry. You have heard the comments of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI). I ask that you speak to the paper that you submitted to us, and then we will have questions.

441. **Ms Avril Hall-Callaghan (Ulster Teachers' Union):** We will try to shorten the day for you and let you get off to lunch, because much of what we came here to say has already been said by GTCNI. As you will note, the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC), of which we are all members, has endorsed the paper, and that is the theoretical basis for where we are coming from. We will try to put a human picture to it now.

442. I take exception to only two of Carmel's comments. The first one was about maths. As a former maths teacher, I

think that maths should be taught in schools. The second one was about girls being compliant.

443. **The Chairperson:** I am glad that you said that and not me. *[Laughter.]*

444. **Ms Hall-Callaghan:** We are absolutely delighted that the Committee has thrown a light on this area, because, on behalf of our members, we have been and have become increasingly concerned about it. We are not critical of the inspectorate, and I want to put that down right at the start of this. The inspectors who go in and out of the schools are highly respected individuals, as was said earlier, and the teaching profession looks to them for best practice. However, it is the inspectorate's policy direction and ethos that, we feel, needs to be fixed.

445. In the past — I can go back nearly as far as Carmel or maybe even further — there was a much stronger feeling of support from the inspectorate. There was a good relationship between schools and the inspectorate. There was never any concern about an inspector coming in through the door because the teachers felt that they were working in partnership with the organisation. The role of the district inspector was absolutely crucial, and it needs to become crucial again. I can perhaps confirm where the concerns about that are coming from. In a recent meeting with the chief inspector, she said that the minute a district inspector walks through the door of a school, they are in inspection mode. If that is the case, it changes the relationship completely. So, we need to get that back on track again.

446. On self-evaluation, which was spoken about this morning as well, Marion Matchett, who was not the previous chief inspector but the one before that, had gone a long way down the path of developing a model of self-evaluation, and the schools had bought into that.

- Now, they are all absolutely terrified of showing any flaws. We all need to look at our bad points in order to improve, but schools are now being put in a position where they feel that they must always show their best side, and that is not a helpful situation to put them in. There is a climate of fear and stress, and there are workload issues. Of course, the stakes are very high because we are in the era of area planning. If a school gets a bad inspection, it fears that it will disappear. So, in building up this picture that teachers have of inspection no longer being a positive experience, we see that it is all interlinked.
447. If you look at the last chief inspector's report, you see that all the language is negative. It points out that so many per cent of leadership is inadequate and whatever. I do not think that that is healthy for the education system. It is certainly not healthy for those teachers who have been targeted in that way, some of whom will never, ever set foot in a school again, because their lives have been destroyed by it. That is not how, I think, we should treat our professionals. As somebody said this morning, inspection causes tensions and stress in schools. We are dealing with cases where there are still splits among staff perhaps a year or 18 months after an inspection. It is not an opportunity to bring the best part of your education experience to the fore. You find that people go into silos, with one department against another or senior management against the staff, and that is not healthy either.
448. Let us look at the Scottish model and what prompted it to change, because it did change and evolve over a period of time. As the result of an inspection, a teacher in Scotland took their own life. That is what made them look at it again and say, "What are we doing to our teachers?" We do not want that to happen here. Thankfully, it has not happened yet, but we need to heed the warning signs. What is the difference between the Scottish system and ours? The Scottish system, as was said earlier, is a supportive one, and the reporting system is entirely different. There is a report that is made public, and there is also a much larger report for the school's consumption. That is where we need to go, so that the school knows how to improve rather than just being told, "You are rubbish".
449. Another knock-on effect from making public the negativity about schools is the loss of respect in the local community, as well as the concerns that parents then have about whether their child is getting the best education. Last Friday, I was talking to a teacher who had been involved in an inspection a year ago. She said that, as a result of the negative inspection they had, parents are now up at the school every day, making complaints that they never made before. They were always very supportive of the school, but now they are looking for things that are going wrong. That is not a healthy atmosphere in which to work.
450. Finally, I would say that schools depend on their teaching and support staff to raise standards, and we need to help them to do that, not put obstacles in their way. Measurement alone does not make a difference. It is the people who make a difference.
451. I would like to call on Karen now to give her perspective.
452. **Ms Karen Sims (National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers):** I pulled out a few key points from the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) paper, and I hope, in bringing this to you, that I can now read my writing.
453. Our union believes that school inspection is being driven more and more by data, and we are very concerned about that. There is a disproportionate use of performance data to monitor schools, and because of that, inspection has higher stakes for those involved. We are concerned that schools are being forced to prioritise exam results over the broader

- educational outcomes for all the young people involved in the system.
454. My second point is that — again, I probably cannot articulate this as well as Carmel did in her presentation — we need to trust teacher professionalism. We have a very highly skilled and very professional teaching staff in Northern Ireland. Every School a Good School places an emphasis on self-evaluation and self-improvement. However, we are concerned about the fact that evidence from other parts of the UK shows that, when self-evaluation is placed within a high-stakes inspection model, more bureaucratic and more burdensome systems come into place, requiring teachers to provide reams and reams of evidence to support the judgement that they are doing well. So, as a union, we believe that self-evaluation has to come from a position of trust in the professionalism of the teacher and respect for their professional ability.
455. I think that there is a concern from our union that there is a lack of regard about the range of inequalities in the education system. We believe that inspectors should pay a little more attention to the inequalities in the education system. They need to look at equality matters relating to pupils, staff, parents and communities and to take those into account in the schools that they are inspecting. Inclusive schools and schools with a broad intake of pupils and of educational need should not be penalised because they have a challenging intake and because they seek to meet the complex needs of their challenging pupils. That has to be recognised, respected and taken account of.
456. Echoing what Avril said, on area planning, we as a union are very concerned that inspection is being used as a means of justifying school closures, and it does not reflect the best interests of pupils in communities that need the most support and which need to have education in schools as part of that community and part of the cohesion in that community. Again, echoing Carmel from this morning, we suggest that
- there be a move to a more supportive model of inspection, again, in line with the Scottish model. We know that you, as a Committee, have looked at the models in Scotland and in England and Wales, and we ask you to give further consideration to the Scottish model as a way forward.
457. **Mr Mark Langhammer (Association of Teachers and Lecturers):** Thanks, Chair and Committee. Avril started by talking about Scotland. We were very impressed by the Assembly's synopsis as presented by Caroline Perry. You are lucky to have her. She presented a very good paper. That took us to look at Scotland. My colleagues have talked about high stakes. One of the aspects that I wanted to highlight was that pre-inspection data collection in Scotland is significantly less intensive.
458. As unions, we are not unlike politicians in that we respond to pressure, casework, people ringing us and people writing to us. We have a bag full about the pre-inspection data dump. I tried to get out to some schools and visit members of ours and ask them to show me what it is that they are required to produce. I did that with three people. Typically, they were middle managers who were at the administrative heart of the inspection. The three were pretty much the same. The data dump was in the region of 2 gigabytes. It is all online. In old money, that is about 700 pages. It is a lot. They talked about the difficulties that they had formatting. I have to say that they talked highly about the C2k people who helped them with that, but, when I tell you that the C2k people typically visit an inspected school for one, one-and-a-half, two or two-and-a-half days, you will realise that it takes a lot of man days to support an inspection. When you look at the C2k formatting guidance, which has 52 pages, you see that it is not easy. I am making the point that we think that the data dump at the start of the inspection is disproportionate, and we think that we should look at that.
459. Scotland in general is worth a look. Like you, we went, and we talked to

- our colleague unions and the General Teaching Council for Scotland. We visited schools, and, on the point that, I think, Pat or Chris made, we noted that HM Inspectorate of Education was amalgamated with the support bodies to form Education Scotland. Because the support flowed from the assessment, less high stakes seemed to be involved.
460. My other point is on the social bias of inspection outcomes. We had some difficulty getting data on that, but, eventually, we got data from the inspectorate for 2010, 2011 and half of 2012. They were general inspections; they were not follow-up or special, focused inspections. Our starting point on that was that if the inspectorate took account of the challenges that every school faces, be they socio-economic challenges, or whatever, one would expect there to be outstanding schools, good schools, satisfactory schools, inadequate schools and poor schools in every band. Taken across the region, the distribution in each social band should be broadly equal, if we take account of the challenges. However, that is not what we found. We found that schools in the least advantaged social band were four times more likely to get the worst two grades — inadequate or unsatisfactory. When you looked at the most advantaged social bands, you saw that they were twice as likely to receive the highest grades — outstanding or very good. The health warning is that our study was quite unscientific; it was a brief look. It was not a research study, and it was quite a small sample, but we felt that it was indicative.
461. Added to that, we looked at England, which, admittedly, has a different system. Some research has been done on that. In 2011, the Royal Society did research on Ofsted grades and found exactly the same thing. It found that there was not an even distribution through the social bands and that, essentially, the grades followed the disadvantage, more or less. Carmel has put some US research in her paper. I do not want to make a big point about this, but, as a teachers' council, we
- are saying that this would bear tracking and monitoring. That is all. The sample that we took over two and a half years was not huge, and it probably was not very scientific, but we think that there is something there, and we would maybe want a report on that.
462. The last thing I want to say is not exactly on inspection; it is more about baselines and the free school meals measure, which you talked about. In her paper, Carmel looked at New Zealand's decile system. Essentially, it is a geographic information system. We, in Northern Ireland, have a very good one through the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Your standard neighbourhood community group knows it a lot better than I do, with the multiple deprivation measures and super output areas. For quite a long time, I have been talking to somebody who may have been in front of you, I do not know; it is Billy McCauley, who was a colleague of mine in Rathcoole, years ago. You would know him, Danny. He used to be a principal at Black Mountain Primary School. He has been looking at this for many years. Mervyn, you talked about what we could do quickly. The New Zealand system might be longer term, but, in Billy's respected view, the quick fix would be to cross-reference free school meals with the NISRA super output area indices. Essentially, a school would take its children's postcodes and then go across into the super output area. If you cross-reference that with the free school meals, you get a much finer system. I am talking about a quick fix; I am not talking about a planned system costing millions of pounds. You would get a much finer-grain system for setting baselines. That may be worth talking about. I know that Carmel talked about speaking to Professor Shuttleworth, I think it was. So, there are people out there who understand this stuff and who could put this together.
463. **Ms Nuala O'Donnell (Irish National Teachers' Organisation):** I have a couple of other things to touch on. One of the issues for INTO in particular is the grading system of inspections, which, I

- think, Carmel touched on earlier. There is a very clear view from INTO that it wants to abolish the grading system of inspections. One of the reasons for that is this: what does it actually measure? What does it say about the school? It puts schools in competition. They feel that “very good” is not good enough when you compare it with “outstanding”. It causes a lot of issues within the schools.
464. As was mentioned earlier in relation to the language used, what does “satisfactory” mean? Does it mean that it is acceptable? Or, does “satisfactory” mean that a school is not achieving where it should be? Those issues have been coming up for years. As Carmel mentioned and as has been said to us by schools, where schools got very good or outstanding results, being inspected now within two years for a follow-up is putting people off. So, there are issues with the grading systems and with the use of language.
465. The bottom line for us is this: what is inspection about? It is about measuring where a school is. However, how does that change whether a school is achieving or what it is achieving? If we look back through chief inspectors’ reports, we see that, no matter what the inspectors have been doing, it has not changed the outcomes of the schools. Therefore, it is not doing anything for school improvement. It is just a measuring aspect, as opposed to helping anything to improve or giving support for schools to improve the outcomes for learners.
466. The reports have been touched on. This issue has come up repeatedly, and we have talked about the different kinds of reports in the Scottish system. One of the key issues that schools are telling us about regularly is that the one sheet that they get, and even the finalised report when they get it, which is only about three or four pages with recommendations, does not tell them anything about how they can seek to improve themselves; whereas the Scottish system gives them an individual report. We have raised that with the inspectorate. NITC had a meeting with the inspectorate on Monday, and it is now talking about making available to schools the running record that it is doing in post-primary schools. So, there are clearly benefits from your inquiry already that we would like to see continued, so thank you for that.
467. The last thing that I would like to touch on, which comes from the reports, is the complaints procedure. There is a complaints procedure. Two years ago, at the NITC’s first meeting with the chief inspector, we were presented with a new complaints procedure, and it was clear that we were meant to just accept it. The big issue for all of us is this: there is absolutely no challenge to the inspectorate in relation to this at all. It was also clear from the meeting with the Committee and the inspectorate last week that the actual reports cannot be challenged; they can be challenged factually, but their perceptions cannot be challenged. That is a huge issue for all of us. We are seeking an appeals procedure. Currently, it is the ombudsman, but that does not change it. The report is published, the damage is done, and the ombudsman cannot change the outcome of the report anyway. There are appeals procedures within the procedures for supporting effective teachers and supporting effective leaders. It is an act of human justice. Therefore, we feel that that should be there, and we still do not understand why it is not.
468. The procedure was to be reviewed after a year, but that has not happened. I have heard it said that very few appeals or complaints have been made, and those that have been made have not been upheld. However, very serious issues are happening out there. I know that Avril said that the inspectors who are going into schools are respected by teachers, but that is not the case with a number of inspectors. When we have raised individual complaints about an inspector, that inspector has been moved to a different district. It has not been dealt with. Somebody mentioned earlier that there are bad teachers in the

- system. We recognise that, and we have procedures to deal with that, but surely that must mean that, on some level, there are some bad inspectors as well, and we have to be able to address that for schools and for moving forward.
469. **The Chairperson:** Thank you. That has all been very helpful. Would all of this be helped if we had an inspectorate or assessment, or whatever we would call it — that is becoming an issue, and we all have been bedevilled in this country by what we call a variety of things, and people's perceptions of what things are is dependent on what they are called — that was independent of the Department? That is another issue that people have a problem with. The Department is very clear: the inspectorate is the Department. Chris Stewart made that abundantly clear when he came here some months ago. The Department is not trying to hide that fact. However, no matter what it is that you go to change, there is always this caution: be careful what you wish for. I think that the consensus is that you do not want to go to Ofsted. It is a bit like the balance that Carmel referred to in the earlier presentation; it is whether it is done for, with or to you. Again, there is surely a halfway house. We should not be satisfied that it is all in the Department and he who pays the piper calls the tune. In other words, inspection bases school assessments on the latest criteria or circular from the Department and is set against its policies and so on. What that tells you about how a school is performing is beyond me, and the children and young people in the school are lost in all of that. Is there an issue about independence and getting to a point where you have a system that helps to instil your members with confidence? Those members generally seem to have a growing concern and a greater concern than they would have had 10 or 15 years ago.
470. **Ms Hall-Callaghan:** It is certainly an area that needs to be investigated. I do not think that we have a collective view on the independence of the inspectorate. However, it is something that we would like to get involved in looking at, along with you.
471. **The Chairperson:** Nuala, I have just noticed this in your introduction; is cooperation with inspections still being withdrawn?
472. **Ms O'Donnell:** No.
473. **The Chairperson:** So, that concluded in July 2012.
474. **Ms O'Donnell:** Yes. It concluded at that stage, when we went back into discussions on a lot of issues. However, there has been a lot of fallout from that as well. We have one principal who was off on long-term sick leave as a result of how she was treated, having stuck to the industrial action. Even when she and the vice-principal were off, the inspectorate insisted on coming in and inspecting the school with the senior management not there. There have been a lot of issues. There was a lot of, shall we say, bad feeling because we took action on that, which, as Avril pointed out, there had not been previously. It was, basically, "How dare you take action against inspections?"
475. **The Chairperson:** That raises the point of who inspects the inspectorate or whatever it is called. People will say that that is their role. I am glad that the Committee is getting some credit for work that is beginning to make the Department decide to do certain things. It is actually funny to see how it operates — when you raise an issue, all of a sudden, there is a flurry of activity and certain things begin to happen. It may be something that the Committee needs to take on board, but I have a real worry that if that is still the case in relation to an ongoing issue — with the constant caveat that we cannot get involved in individual cases — you are clearly indicating to us that there are still issues of concern that your members feel are lurking in the past. Whatever description you wish to use, they are not happy with how that is being progressed. I believe that we should be raising that with the inspectorate. I certainly believe that, if the Committee

- agrees, we should raise those issues as a result of this meeting. Politics is all about being adversarial, but that is not how it should be in schools, where it should be about cooperation. It should not be conducted in the way that it seems to be at the moment.
476. **Ms O'Donnell:** Certainly, our members would feel that to raise issues against the inspectorate, it comes down to that question of who inspects the inspectors. Members feel that it will just come back on them and inspectors are untouchable in that respect. That is how they are perceived in schools in a lot of cases where issues arise, which is why NITC is now doing its own kind of surveys for schools following inspections. We can then gather information without schools having to name themselves. We have had to do that because schools just do not feel that they can do it for fear of retribution.
477. **The Chairperson:** Before we move on to Danny — I should have done this earlier — I welcome Craig, who is in the Public Gallery. He is on work experience with Robin, and that will be an experience; I will not go any further, but you are very welcome, Craig. *[Laughter.]* Craig is a pupil at Orangefield, and we wish him well in his studies.
478. **Mr Kinahan:** Thank you very much; it has been very interesting. I have loads of questions, and I am not really sure where to start. I would love to explore the incentives question that I asked Carmel earlier, to hear what other things you feel are relevant to that. I want to ask about timescales. You mention in your brief the time that it takes a school to repair, and a lot of schools end up ringing us to ask when they will hear that they have come out of intervention. Should we look at a shorter period, or should it be done in a different way? The complaints and appeals side can be added to that as well. As you saw last week, we were not getting much bend from the inspectorate when we pushed for things. We should be looking for an appeals procedure, but should that be time-limited? If it is running too long, it turns into a long-term battle.
479. Area planning drives everything at the moment, and we should really pause that, because although it has been done for good reasons in certain areas, it is perverting everything that we do. We should perhaps put it on hold until we know where we are going with shared education and other issues.
480. Finally, I want to pick up on the points that you made about Billy's suggestion to do with NISRA and free school meals. We have indications that good things are being done in Sweden and lots of other places, and we can probably link them all into a reasonably quick fix and just keep working from that.
481. **Ms Hall-Callaghan:** I will deal with the incentives aspect and then pass over to my colleagues to answer the rest of the questions.
482. What the serving teacher who was at the previous session said rings really true with all of us. It is about professionalism, recognising that professionalism and somehow feeding it back into the system. At the minute, the strategic forum, which is kind of an advisory body set up between the Department of Education (DE), the employers and the unions, is working on the workforce review, and the paper that NITC put in might be useful to explain to you the flexibilities that might be built into the system. In a way, that would provide some incentives. For example, a teacher such as the one you spoke to earlier, who has huge expertise, would go into the inspectorate on secondment for a year, two years or three years, and then perhaps move into administration for a while so that all the good experience is shared. The Department needs to take that into consideration.
483. **Mr Langhammer:** I am not sure about an even shorter timescale. The notice of inspection is now a little bit shorter, at two weeks, and we welcome that. Our union is different from the others in that we want to get to a stage at which you do not need to give any notice and that you take us as you find us. That is probably a step too far for now, but the difficulty with a longer period of lead-in is

- that the school becomes consumed with preparing for inspection. We welcome the shorter period.
484. You asked about the appeals system, and so on. One interesting thing that we found in Scotland is that, instead of waiting for an appeal, they had a bit of a bun fight when the report came back. Here, you get the report back and you take it. That is it. In Scotland, the parents' council, which is like a board of governors but not the equivalent, was in the room. Therefore, the parents, the representative and chair of the council and the senior teachers were in a room with the inspectorate, and they had a bit of a fight about the report. At the end of the day, the inspectorate makes a determination, but, where there were rational grounds to make challenges, that was afforded. We like that. It was immediate and happened there and then. That is worth looking at.
485. **Ms Hall-Callaghan:** The council has not talked about the timescale for notice, but if the atmosphere towards inspections changed, there is no reason that the inspectors could not just walk in. Teachers would welcome that. The professional judgement is paramount.
486. **Ms Sims:** I want to go back to the incentives. As well as having been involved in a representational role, I have worked on citizenship projects with teachers across Northern Ireland. I have spoken to you in the past about that, Mervyn. For our members, the biggest incentive comes when they are recognised for the work that they do. They then feel encouraged and respected, and people recognise the fantastic work that is being done. I want to put that on the record.
487. **Mr Hazzard:** I want to pick up on the point that Pat made in the previous session; namely, a lack of parental engagement in socially deprived areas. That plays a huge role in kids' attainment. For any future body, I am reluctant to call it the "inspectorate". That is very important, because it could become an advocate for those kids. What are your thoughts on that?
488. Do you foresee a mechanism for the pupils and the families at home to feed into an inspection-type process? They have a stake in the future of the school, so should they be allowed to feed into the process somehow? Very many parents have a lot of opinions on teachers, on the way in which a school is run and on how it engages with its parents. That may be something that an inspection does not see.
489. **Ms Hall-Callaghan:** You said that you had a perception that teachers who taught in lower socio-economic areas might not have high enough aspirations for the kids, and I find that view I find very interesting. However, I do not think that that is true; rather, it is the other way around. An awful lot of the teachers who teach in those areas choose to do so so that they can be advocates for those children.
490. **Mr Langhammer:** We do not have statistics for Northern Ireland, but the last Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on the measure of social segregation ranked the UK 34th out of 34. In other words, it was the most socially segregated system anywhere. That is important because we also know, from local, regional, UK and international research, that the more that the pupil intake is balanced, the better that the school does. In fact, you find that not just the poor kids do better but the better-off kids do a bit better.
491. A lot of that is about peer effect. The biggest eye-opener for young people from a disadvantaged area is somebody who looks like them, who plays the same music as them, who is into the same computer games and who watches the same Man United games but has a different attitude to learning. Our union says that the critical thing here is applying pressure — carrots and sticks — to balance social intakes.
492. On the parental support issue, I go back to the Scottish model of inspection, where the parents' council is in the room. Not all of them are in there, but its chair, vice-chair or some

- representative of the parents is in the room for the critical engagement. That is quite good.
493. When I was involved in work with Dawn Purvis for the educationally disadvantaged in Protestant districts, there was a question mark about the whole system of governors. Quite a lot of governors said to us that they could not do the thing that they had volunteered to become governors to do and that they ended up with a heap of regulations on top of them that the principal or school manager should be addressing. Therefore, the role of parents in schools, on boards of governors or whatever, is questionable.
494. **Ms Sims:** Before we debate the role of parents as governors and them possibly feeding into inspection, which are valid ideas, we need to look at how we involve parents in the community in the school. In the first instance, how do we get parents to have a more active involvement in their children's education? How do we encourage those parents that their children's education is important and is something that they need to push, especially if their own educational experiences were not that positive? How do we include parents and put the school at the heart of the community?
495. There is an awful lot of very good work going on — extended schools and schools becoming the centre of communities — that we can learn from. We need to get parents involved in small projects. Some schools in north Belfast are running Irish-language evening classes for parents. My daughter's primary school has something on almost every night that parents can get involved in. If we can get them in to do their own learning and see the social side, they will start to see the school as part of the community and want to have a more active involvement in their child's education. They will then want to be part of that school's improvement process and be more involved in how the school operates and delivers. We need to start not just with how parents feed into inspection but how they see the school as a key part of their community.
496. **Ms O'Donnell:** The current system for inspection has a parental questionnaire that goes out to all the school's parents. The inspectorate reports back to the governors on the responses from the parents, but that is it. The way in which the parents view the school is relayed to the governors, but it is not part of the inspection report, so there is a difference there. A sample of pupils' views is sought on pastoral care and how it is processed in the school. That is what is in the system currently.
497. **Mr Hazzard:** I am reluctant to keep talking about the bogeyman, Michael Gove, but he is even suggesting that kids will rate teachers in the classroom. What are your thoughts on that?
498. **Ms Hall-Callaghan:** We would be totally against that, obviously.
499. **Ms O'Donnell:** I do not think that you could answer that politely.
500. **Mr Langhammer:** The pupils' voices are important in all of this. The inspectorate is transmitting to schools that ways of capturing the pupils' voices are important. However, in some of the practice in some schools, RateMyTeachers-type surveys are being distributed to youngsters. Those can be very damaging if taken after a class test in which a youngster has done badly, or after a row in the class or for all sorts of other reasons. We need to give more thought to that. The pupils' voices are important, but the way in which they are captured is important as well.
501. **Ms Sims:** By way of an example, we had to address an issue in one school that distributed a survey about its teachers. The teachers of more, for want of a better word, academic subjects such as maths did not score so highly, because maths can be a difficult subject. Pupils will automatically not warm so much to the maths teacher. However, art teachers score extremely highly because they the ability to be a little more relaxed in their delivery. Those surveys often do not give a true reflection of the merit, professionalism and value of the teacher.

502. **Mr Sheehan:** I just want to come back to the point, Avril, about lowered aspirations or expectations among teachers, particularly in disadvantaged areas. I am not suggesting for a second that it affects all teachers, but it does happen with some teachers. That brings me to the question that I was going to ask, which concerns what happens after inspections and, perhaps, after assistance from inspectors. You may not agree that that happens, but at some stage do you not have to call a spade a spade and say, "This is a bad teacher" or "This is a bad school."?
503. I could give you any number of examples of bad teachers. I was talking to a guy the other day who told me that, for four years in one class in his post-primary school, the teacher told the pupils to open their books at page 30 in case anyone came in. Everyone had their books open at page 30, and they just did what they wanted to do for the whole period. That teacher should have been out on his ear.
504. **Ms Hall-Callaghan:** We have just signed off on a new set of procedures to support teachers and principals who are in that situation and who were perhaps good teachers and principals in the past but have, for whatever reason, gone downhill. There are support mechanisms that need to be put in place. At the moment, the problem is that, because there are no resources in the education and library boards or in the Council for Catholic maintained Schools (CCMS), and so on, we have nothing with which to help those people out. They have to get to that procedure before support is put in place to keep them at the standard at which they need to be. I stress that the teachers that you are talking about are few and far between, but we do acknowledge that they exist, because they come to us for support. We try to get them that support but then find that we are hitting a brick wall because there is nothing out there for them.
505. **Mr Sheehan:** What do you do with a bad teacher who just cannot be supported?
506. **Ms O'Donnell:** The procedure is there to deal with that. If the teacher does not improve over time with the support that is there, the option is there to dismiss the teacher. It is a system that looks at the issues. There are a lot of issues, particularly in disadvantaged areas where there are high numbers of children with special needs. There is a lack of resources from the education and library boards for classroom assistants, and so on. With so many children presenting with a lot of issues, teachers are not able to cope with that, and once those issues are addressed, the situation can change. As Avril said, nobody comes out of a training college as a bad teacher: issues arise.
507. It is the same with the formal intervention process. What are the reasons that got the teachers or the school to that position? Were they of the school's or the teachers' making, or were they of the system's making? That is one of the things that we need to look back on and get information from the inspectors on. We also need to get information on the system issues that need to be addressed, instead of leaving them up to each individual school, which has limited resources and finance to address them.
508. **Mr Sheehan:** This is my last question. How do you respond to the complaint that many of us have received from school principals that it is almost impossible to get rid of bad teachers?
509. **Mr Langhammer:** We spent quite a long time revising the procedure, and it is only just on the books again, so we will have to give it a little time to bed in before we say that it is not working. One of the systems that we looked at collectively with the management side was in Maryland in the US, where there was very focused support but also a truncated period in which you had to improve. That is what we have tried to replicate. There is a support programme put in place. It can last up to two terms, but it can last a lot less than that. It is assessed at the end, and if the assessment is negative, there is an answer. Part of the difficulty in what

we used to call the “unsatisfactory teacher procedure” was that it was very adversarial, so, as unions, we had no option but to get the gloves off and say, “Where is your evidence?” With this one, it is slightly more collaborative. There should be more support, but the results should be quicker, in theory.

510. **Ms Hall-Callaghan:** The language is different. That is important, and we have been talking about that already.
511. **Mr Langhammer:** In fairness, in moving from the unsatisfactory teacher procedure to the supporting effective teachers system, we need to allow a bit of time. As unions, we know who you are talking about, and we have no vested interest in retaining teachers who are not fit for the job, but, at the same time, we have a job to do to support those who can improve. We are not necessarily against you on the issue.
512. **The Chairperson:** Following on from that, the Department is in the process of revising the formal intervention process. It all ties into the whole issue of inspection. What the Department is now saying is that a school will not automatically exit the formal intervention process on an Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) evaluation of “satisfactory”. We are now going to be put in a position. For a fair number of schools — we have asked for a breakdown of the schools that are in the position of being deemed as satisfactory — that will compound the problem and make it more difficult to resolve the issues. Do you believe, as I do, that the proposed revisions will lead to a large number of schools going into formal intervention? The 4% that Carmel referred to earlier will rise dramatically. We will focus on the most negative elements of our system, not on the positive. We will not ignore the fact that there are issues, but it is about how you address those issues. That is out there now; that is what is being proposed.
513. **Mr Langhammer:** We share that concern. If words are to have meaning, “satisfactory” should mean that there are more strengths than weaknesses.

That is what it reads as in the inspectorate language. If a school has more strengths than weaknesses, you should just encourage it with self-evaluation and work on the things that it has to work on, rather than put it into formal intervention. Once you put that in the local newspaper, you know what is going to happen: there is a parental stampede away from the school, and, all of a sudden, the rug is pulled from under it, and that has implications for area planning. You are into a cycle that you do not need to be in.

514. **Ms O'Donnell:** The proposals in the document that we responded to are not looking at why a school remains to be satisfactory. It is just saying that if that is the case, there is an automatic reaction. It is not being taken into account that the schools are, as we mentioned, from different socio-economic backgrounds and are all dealing with different issues. They may be facing resource issues or other issues, such as a change of principal. There are all kinds of different circumstances. Therefore, you cannot apply a basic baseline. As you said, if the numbers were to increase, what would be the purpose? It would still not be addressing the issues. This is still only about measurement and statistics for an audience, which is nothing to do with improving things for the learner in the school.
515. **The Chairperson:** Obviously, if a properly resourced and adequate Curriculum and Advisory Support Service (CASS) were in place, that would automatically mean that those schools could receive help, and so on, rather than what happens in the current situation, which is that we identify that a school has problems, but if it cannot improve itself, there is no service out there to assist. Some day, if the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) comes over the hill on a white charger, it is felt that that will answer all our ills. Well, I do not think that that will be the answer either, because how long will we have to wait until it has a service? We have been waiting for a long, long time for the Department to

set up a regional service for continuing professional development (CPD), and it is still not there. It is now talking about a regional service for governors, and it has sent some poor man out to have all sorts of discussions around setting up that service when there was already a service in each of the boards that dealt with governor support. I am sure that you will not be surprised to hear that I believe that this is all part and parcel of the Department just getting to the point at which it wants, at all costs, to have that large monster created.

516. **Ms Hall-Callaghan:** When you look across the water at England and Ofsted and at the number of schools that have been closed down, I am concerned that there is an agenda there. We do not have an agenda here. We have very good schools, and we want to hold on to them, please.

517. **Ms Sims:** CASS is available only if the school goes into formal intervention. Had CASS continued to be funded in the way in which it was funded, the chances are that schools would have not been going into formal intervention, because the service was there to provide that professional development and support prior to schools ever having reached unsatisfactory, or, now, satisfactory.

518. **Ms O'Donnell:** It goes back to the premise of what this is about. Is it about school improvement and supporting school improvement? If it is, and if the district inspectors were able to work with the schools on that and identify the issues that CASS could assist them with, we might not have any schools going into the formal intervention process at all. It would be preventative rather than curative.

519. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much for your time Avril, Mark, Karen and Nuala. It has been very useful.

6 November 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Ms Michaela Boyle
 Mr Jonathan Craig
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Sean Rogers

Witnesses:

Mr Gerry McGuinness	<i>Belfast Education and Library Board</i>
Mr Ray Gilbert	<i>North Eastern Education and Library Board</i>
Ms Kim Scott	<i>South Eastern Education and Library Board</i>
Mr Paddy Mackey	<i>Western Education and Library Board</i>

520. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much for your patience. Apologies that the previous session ran a bit late, but, if you were listening outside, I hope that you found it helpful. Thank you for your submission. Please make some opening comments, after which members will have some questions.

521. **Mr Paddy Mackey (Western Education and Library Board):** Thank you for the opportunity to present to Committee members today. We hope that the occasion will provide useful clarification of our views. With me today are Kim Scott from the South Eastern Education and Library Board; Ray Gilbert from the North Eastern Education and Library Board; and Gerry McGuinness from the Belfast Education and Library Board. I am here representing the Southern Board and the Western Board. Although you have received four submissions from this group, we carefully considered the individual submissions and believe that there is sufficient common thinking

across the five boards for us to present a shared view today.

522. We propose, first, to put our presentation into context. We wish to briefly outline the role of the boards in school improvement: the key principles and practices underpinning our work; and the key priority areas, including our work in support of governors. I hope to cover that section. Secondly, we will address the four issues defined in your request to us, and Ray will take you through those.

523. It is important to say, as I hope that this will be a theme throughout our presentation, that, for us to deliver on the key principles that I am about to outline requires collaborative working relationships with the Department of Education (DE), the employing authorities, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and boards of governors. We believe that we have that collaboration in our current *modus operandi* for support of schools. Throughout the presentation, in referring to the work of the boards, I include the Regional Training Unit (RTU). As part of the boards, it will be part of the group supporting schools.

524. The key principles underpinning the work of our services are based on current research evidence on school improvement, ETI-identified good practice and our experience of supporting schools in school improvement initiatives. They are also founded on the belief that school improvement is most effective and sustainable when it is driven from within the school.

525. The first key principle is that sustainable improvement needs to be inclusive of all stakeholders, internal and external to schools. We operate with senior management, staff, board of governors and, as appropriate, the community in which a school operates. The

second key principle is that regular and rigorous self-evaluation using performance and other data is central to school improvement. The third key principle is that priorities for action need to be limited and focused. In school improvement, it is not useful to work on too many fronts in one school, so our work needs to be very well focused. The fourth key principle is that targets need to be set at pupil, year group and whole-school level, with detailed plans drawn up. We work with schools to ensure that those targets are reasonable and realistic for the various groups. The fifth key principle is that quality teaching and learning must be at the heart of such plans. The sixth key principle is that learning and best practice should be shared. When we identify best practice, we hope to share that with other schools. The final key principle is that school-based support for strengthening leadership at all levels should be contextualised, in the sense that we need to take into account the nature of a school, its location and any contextual factors that could be influencing the work of that school. It is essential to improve the leadership and management at all levels in a school.

526. The key principles are underpinned by key practices, the first of which is the targeting of support for schools based on evidence from ETI inspections, performance data and local knowledge, in collaboration with employing authorities and sectoral support bodies. That reinforces the collaborative nature of our work with schools and other partners in the education community. The next key practice is the deployment of trained and experienced officers to support the schools in the key processes of self-evaluation, data analysis, etc. We like to ensure that all our officers are well equipped to deal with the challenges that they sometimes face as part of the school improvement agenda. Third is the strengthening of school leadership in schools through sustained and regular support, with the objective of supported autonomy. It is not about going in and running schools; it is about going in and working with

those charged with the responsibility for their running. Fourth is the sharing of good practice. Schools deemed through inspection to be outstanding or very good should support those with less effective practice to improve, including through the use of Every School a Good School (ESAGS) television, which can record, so it can be shared with other schools. The fifth key practice is a coherent continuum of support with available resources clearly linked to DE priorities for the professional development of personnel in the school. The final practice is the development of the potential of area learning communities for school improvement. That is about bringing together groups of schools that have a common interest in a particular community and having schools support one another in the delivery of the curriculum.

527. I will now outline the priority areas. To ensure that support resources are effectively deployed in a manner that maximises the opportunity of key outcomes, support is differentiated to meet the specific needs of schools. The nature and intensity of support provided is based on a range of evidence, and support must embed the process of school development planning, with a focus on improving practice, including literacy and numeracy outcomes. Currently, support within the support services — again, I emphasise that this is common across the five boards — is provided to a spectrum of schools, which includes those in formal intervention, as identified by ETI. It also includes schools found to be satisfactory in inspection. Satisfactory is considered a holding grade, so the support addresses improvement issues identified by ETI for schools so deemed. It also includes schools in which performance improvement will have most effect in closing the gap between the highest and lowest achieving pupils. We will do this through prioritising Programme for Government requirements. A school could be satisfactory in its inspection outcome, but, through the analysis of our data and information, we might find shortcomings in the literacy and

- numeracy provision or in year group provision, and we would hope to address that. The catch-all is self-evaluation and school improvement plans.
528. I hope that I have given you a brief outline of the context in which we work, the underpinning principles and the schools that we identify. I will pass over to Ray, who will address the four issues identified in your request.
529. **Mr Ray Gilbert (North Eastern Education and Library Board):** Thank you, Chair. As a preamble, and to reinforce some of what Paddy said, the interdependency of all of us working with schools, and our collaboration and partnership, are critical. We must all play a role in ensuring that our young people have the opportunity to achieve their potential, but those roles are complementary, and ETI's role is obviously very important. I will try to pick out some of the core themes that emerged. I am conscious that you have already received a submission from each board.
530. The first issue is that of the current approach and value added in schools with lower attainment. Underpinning all that is recognition of Programme for Government targets and recognition that standards, particularly in the core areas of literacy and numeracy, are extremely important to the life chances of young people. Much of what we will say today reflects our work with schools and the information that they share with us. We recognise that the Northern Ireland curriculum is very much there to build the skills and capabilities of young people, as well as part of the raising standards agenda. However, some schools would like their broader achievements with young people to be more fully reflected in the narrative of inspection reports. They recognise the importance of standards and Programme for Government targets, but, in the wider spectrum of preparing young people for life, we also recognise that, on top of those standards, the skills and capabilities of young people are very often the determinant of whether they track a successful path in life.
531. One of the developing features in recent years has been the highly sophisticated use of data in schools to track young people's attainment, set targets for them and so on. We recognise the many challenges in setting indicators, particularly for primary schools, which do not have an externally validated qualification framework such as the GCSE, A level or their equivalents. The data that schools already capture, using standardised tests and so on, is very important. They track individual children, and they set individual targets for children. Certainly, there is a view that that should be very much part of the process, particularly in schools serving challenging areas, for which raising standards, particularly in post-primary GCSE attainment, is a challenge. I am not suggesting for a moment that that should not be our aspiration, but we feel that the work that they do with existing data, identifying what young people are capable of and using that as a way to raise standards is very important.
532. Another point about current practice is one that we observe and one that schools often report to us. It is about ensuring that inspection is highly consistent, regardless of the context or the situation in which it takes place. In the past, schools very much valued their very close relationship with their district inspector, and they feel that that has been slightly lost. Certainly, we get a lot of feedback indicating that the return of such a relationship would be very welcome. That is because district inspectors and their close relationship with schools is a critical part in bringing together all of the key factors in the agenda for improvement.
533. In reporting, one of the areas that we want to draw attention to is the definition of performance that is not satisfactory or better. We would like more clarity, particularly when a school falls into the category of inadequate, which, by itself, does not necessarily kick off formal procedures. None of us would want that to happen, but we would like a clearer definition and clearer articulation where performance

- is borderline. There should always be focus on the fact that we want to help and support teachers to improve their performance, because, ultimately, the young people are the beneficiaries of that.
534. My final point on issue 1 is a plea that will recur as part of other things that I want to say. Schools want to feel empowered. They want to be continuously improving, self-improving organisations. Some schools perceive themselves almost as victims in this process, just waiting to hear what inspectors have to say. Very often, we say to schools, “If your self-evaluation processes are working effectively, there should be no surprises in inspection; it should be a validation of what you are doing”. I will come back to that point.
535. Issue 2 concerns the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and gaps in the review process and in the support given by DE and boards. One key such issue — again, this is very much grounded in worldwide school improvement research — is leadership in governance and the quality of that leadership. Again, we pay tribute to the extensive and excellent work done by many of our leaders, but we also recognise the importance of findings that development work is required. Of course, we fully recognise that governors are volunteers but in a much more accountable framework now than ever before. They are critical to the work of schools. They are part of their community support, particularly in socially deprived areas and where there are children with challenging circumstances.
536. As far as the value-added approach is concerned, I refer to my earlier point about the very sophisticated data-tracking systems using standardised tests and so on that our schools use. So they can use these existing tools to identify the value added. We would certainly like that to be significantly reflected in the outworkings of inspection, across the broad range of development of young people, while paying due regard to the need for good standards of achievement.
537. I move now to support for schools. Paddy outlined the schools that we currently work with. We recognise that, to some degree, reducing resources over the past number of years has led us to reshape and refocus our service to work mostly with schools in challenging circumstances. In some senses, it could be argued that it is a kind of deficit model of support. We recognise the importance of that work, but we feel very strongly that our profession, as a profession, needs to be developed. The whole concept of continuous professional development (CPD) for our teachers, regardless of whether they are in the most successful school, a middle-performing school or a school striving towards improvement, is, we believe, a critical point that needs to be drawn out. Like any other profession, if we are not developing our people, we stand still, and we feel that, with the challenges in education nowadays, that should not be the case.
538. We recognise that supporting schools is a changing scenario. I refer to the work of the McKinsey group published in 2010 and how the world's most improved school systems keep getting better. One of the fairly logical points that it draws attention to is that, broadly speaking, schools fall into categories of poor to fair, fair to good and good to great. The way in which we should support those schools and the level of autonomy that schools are capable of handling in developing their own performance is very often the consequence of where they are on the improvement journey. We believe that the intervention is critical. I will speak more about that in a second, but we consider that any intervention, and external support, or critical friend, whatever you might want to call it, is very important. We also draw attention to the fact that the process of school improvement is very wide-ranging. We know that learning, teaching, leadership and governance are critical, but there are many other factors in the broad

- education family. If, for example, a school is in an area where attendance is a challenge, we need to use the full range of services to support that. If it is an area where there are challenges with attitudes to education, we can use the expertise of some of our colleagues in the youth services, who are used to working with young people in that more informal way, to address such issues. However, this also goes beyond and into the community. In the broad range of work with parents, the local community, community representatives and community groups, we believe that it is important to recognise that, in improving performance for any group of children in any school, those are all very important factors and ones that show themselves in challenging circumstances.
539. Underpinning the support is the critical friend. Fullan and many other researchers over the years recognised that the external eye is a very useful eye to have, as is the support of an external individual. ETI provides an evaluation of where it believes a school is at, but, once the core development issues are identified, we have a role in intervening, challenging and supporting to address them. I want to stress that inspection, which is critical, is an integral part of school improvement. It is not an event that happens every so often, a kind of “pull yourself up by your boot straps”. It should be an integral part of the school improvement journey and perceived as such. Again, I go back to the point that I made about the role of the district inspector as the conduit to, or link with, the external evaluation.
540. On the question of alternative inspection models, which is the third issue, our main comments centre on building on the very good work that schools already do on self-evaluation and empowering them so that the model of inspection should, in our view, be very heavily driven by quality assuring the school's own assessment of its progress. Doing that will, we believe, empower schools to continuously improve. It will lead to more meaningful school development planning because it is part of our own continuous improvement journey. Hopefully, a range of appropriate performance targets will be set that embrace the Programme for Government targets but are realistic given the circumstances, and interventions can be chosen that are appropriate to a school's position. Sometimes, we hear that schools feel as though they are often the victims of all of these processes — I want to stress that it is only a perception — and I think that there needs to be an approach of quality assurance, of saying to schools that they have a responsibility and an accountability to track their performance and have an evidence-based portfolio to back that up. Of course, for any organisation, whether it is in education or beyond, the value of an external perspective is always hugely important. That goes back to our earlier point about partnership. Again, we acknowledge that one of the things that we should do is to look at international best practice and at systems where different approaches have worked and try to learn from those and apply them to our own circumstance. The point is about empowering our schools. The best organisations take forward their own improvement, and the great benefit of improvement in a school is the benefit to the children and young people. Of course, that is the core of what we are all about.
541. Finally, I move to the priorities and actions needed. We recognise the findings of the ETI very often around leadership, learning and teaching and so on. Thankfully, this does not happen often, but I suppose that one of our frustrations is that, if there are significant issues, for example on the governance of a school, there are currently no powers to make changes to that governance other than when reconstitution comes along, in theory, every four years. So, if there are significant issues around governance, obviously the ETI, using the legislation, can recommend the appointment of additional governors to a board of governors, and that has happened in some cases. There is a lack of powers to deal with that.

542. Also, although we fully support the concept that any person in any form of employment can be underperforming, and that there can be a thousand reasons why that is the case, they have the right to improve their performance. Currently, we have very long and drawn-out processes while, in the meantime, young people are perhaps not getting the best education. So, there are issues around addressing that in a meaningful way, but it is important that it is done in a supportive way, giving everyone their human right to have the right to improve.
543. We recognise and certainly welcome the Minister's recent announcement to explore the concept of looking at functional literacy and functional numeracy qualifications, because it is important that our young people get that baseline of being able to be literate and numerate to give them the best chance in life. There is a live debate at the moment on whether the current format of GCSE examinations is the most effective tool for functional literacy and functional numeracy. We welcome that, and we think that that will be very helpful, particularly in those areas serving socially deprived young people. We recognise the need for progress around value added and defining the impact that schools are having on our young people.
544. My final point is on the reporting of inspection. In the past, there was a very extensive process of verbal feedback, and a point that comes up often is that it is important that verbal feedback is fully reflected in the written report. Verbal feedback is very important at an individual level, including if the teacher has just taught a lesson and is getting that feedback. We know how pressurised for time the system is at the moment, but we feel that that is very important. We also feel that it is very important, particularly in respect of follow-up inspections. Many of our schools in formal intervention, for example, will have a series of follow-up inspections. Although it is welcomed, in many senses, that, on the improvement journey, the report is not necessarily a public-domain report that is published on the website, we do feel that the feedback given to the school needs to be as extensive as possible, because it is feeding back on the stages on the improvement journey, which helps to form and shape future action for improvement.
545. That is really pulling out some of the main themes that came across from the inputs of the boards. I will hand back to Paddy, who will draw to a conclusion.
546. **Mr Mackey:** In conclusion, there are six points that we will use to emphasise our input so far. First, we need to develop systemic empowerment for improvement in our schools through ensuring greater emphasis on self-evaluation by moving to a model of predominantly quality-assurance inspection. We are data-rich on the performance of schools. The schools have access to this information, and, through that, we should be looking at a self-evaluation and self-assurance inspection process.
547. We need to recognise the full range of achievement in our schools and measure school performance against meeting the needs of society in Northern Ireland and in a global context. We need to deal effectively with performance that heightens the risk of children and young people not achieving their potential. We need to ensure that continuous professional development is an integral component in the professional requirements of each teacher and school leader, and we must ensure that there is appropriate resourcing of continuous professional development of our teaching force.
548. Finally, I think that the theme running throughout our presentation is that school improvement is a partnership process and must continue to be so.
549. **The Chairperson:** Ray and Paddy, thank you. No doubt we will get to Kim and Gerry through the course of time.
550. To pick up on your last point about the six elements and resourcing; you said that resourcing is a key issue. There is a question around whether the savings

- delivery process that the boards are undergoing and the £25 million that is to be taken out of professional support services including the curriculum, advisory and support service (CASS) has been achieved across the five boards. Do we know where we are in relation to that target, which was set by the Minister, unfortunately? Do you believe that that has had an impact?
551. The story that we have heard repeatedly is that CASS is gone; it had been decimated; it is over; it is depleted. All of those terms have been used, yet the presentations that we have from you and from others say that a key component of this journey of improvement is having that professional support structure or system in place. I was worried that Paddy was beginning to sound like Trevor Lunn, because he ended up using the dreaded word “ESA”. It reminds me of when we were trying to save the Northern Ireland water system when everybody said that the Northern Ireland water board was the answer. Leaving ESA aside, because that is a debate for another day, we are dealing with the realities of where we are at now with CASS and how we move the system forward. Can we do that in the current context?
552. **Mr Mackey:** I will start and then colleagues can join in.
553. It would be fair to say that the savings delivery plan targets were very challenging and were not all met, and I think that I am speaking for all boards here. However, it was also an opportunity for the boards to refocus how they delivered with the limited resource that they had. We had the conversation about whether we are still a CASS or school improvement service. The service that CASS provided before was a fairly broad-reaching service that included a high level of continuous professional development of all our teachers. A good example of that was in the implementation of the revised curriculum where almost 20,000 teachers received a minimum of three days of training. CASS was
- able to deliver that as a professional development service for teachers.
554. As a result of the savings delivery plan, we took the opportunity to refocus. By refocusing, we decided that we needed to target the schools at most need, and I outlined that in the third part of my presentation on how we operated in the schools that we identified. In a sense, we have now moved away from being a CASS, which is an all-encompassing service that included professional development of teachers and many other things. For example, within CASS, we would have been supporting the entitlement framework, extended schools and so on. We still do, although probably in a more limited way, but the limited resources that we have now are focused entirely on the school improvement agenda.
555. **The Chairperson:** Was CASS designed to ensure that it helped, or was there for, failing schools?
556. **Mr Mackey:** Initially, CASS was delivered as a curriculum support service, as the name curriculum, advisory and support service suggests, but I think that the move towards school improvement and the school improvement agenda has long been on the table for CASS across all five boards. As a previous head of CASS and, more latterly, a senior education officer working with colleagues who are sitting here today, we have looked at the direction of the service. We needed to focus more on the school improvement agenda rather than just curriculum advice and support.
557. **The Chairperson:** The work that you have done over the years, as professionals, has been extremely helpful and valuable to all our schools across Northern Ireland. What is your view, as professionals, about whether we should move to a new structure, whatever that structure may be?
558. Taking the Finnish example, which I did not put to the NIPSA representatives in case they had the same reaction as Noelle Buick; why do we not just do away with inspection altogether? Finland is

- always set up as great and world-class and the leading education provider in the world, but it has no inspection process. It is all self-evaluation. I will pick up on the comments that you and Ray made on self-evaluation, quality assurance and putting it all into the school. Would that be preferable to where we are currently? The NIPSA contribution raised serious concerns for me because it was said that people have fears that final decisions are being meddled with or overturned by somebody else, even from outside. Do you think that there is now a need for a realignment of inspection, continuous professional development (CPD), self-evaluation, quality assurance and all that?
559. **Mr Mackey:** It would be helpful if there was a realignment, and I will ask Ray to take this one. However, it is also about getting the balance right. Self-evaluation is not about leaving schools to do that on their own; there needs to be a quality assurance process in relation to that internal self-evaluation process, and we would be very supportive of that.
560. **The Chairperson:** Could you have a CASS without an inspection regime and would that be effective and help?
561. **Mr Mackey:** It is helpful to have both. They are complementary in that CASS is there to work with schools in identifying issues and areas for improvement and to work through those with schools. That can be the full spectrum of schools. If you go into any school, you will find some areas that are capable of improvement, but the real challenge is to get schools to identify those areas for themselves, draw up plans to deliver on that and then have those plans validated and verified by another agency. That is where the ETI could have a role to play.
562. **Mr Gilbert:** I will pick up on something that I mentioned in passing. Michael Fullan, an acknowledged school systems improver across the world and part of the McKinsey group, said that external involvement is essential for success and that the range of researchers agree on the need for external support to provide information, ask specific questions and promote critical analysis and reflection. It is about balance. As with everything in life, balance is usually not far away from where we should be. In industry and in business, any company undergoing continuous improvement and quality assurance processes will use external measures such as the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), Investors in People (IIP) or some other mechanism to bring an external validation and external perspective.
563. There was a point about CPD. As Paddy indicated, we are in a very challenging time, with austere circumstances, but some of us have been writing papers for a wee while. I remember sitting with Paddy on the north coast back in 1998 writing papers about developing a school improvement service, and there is a need for a focus on the critical friend who complements the inspection perspective.
564. We also have to recognise that a CPD process involving all our teachers has to have a range of different facets, and this links back to the point I made about the capabilities of schools. Some schools can handle the professional development of teachers quite comfortably within their own means by sharing good practice, exchanging ideas and so on; others need to be given an external stimulus. There is room for a mixed model. I certainly do not subscribe to either end of the spectrum: totally centrally controlled or totally autonomous. We have to factor in the very significant work of McKinsey, which says that where your school is at in its own confidence and improvement journey often determines your capability for development. Like everything else, the less capable you are or the further away you are on the improvement journey, the more help you need. Hopefully, you become more and more self-sufficient. It is a balancing act.
565. **The Chairperson:** Could the Regional Training Unit (RTU), as opposed to the inspectorate, become the independent external evaluator or adjudicator?

566. **Mr Gilbert:** My view is that the objectivity that external inspection brings, as an integral part of the process, and the experience that our colleagues in the inspectorate bring, through observing practice, is very helpful as an essential part of the mix. I would not want to comment specifically on any particular organisation.
567. **The Chairperson:** Do you believe that the current system is sufficiently independent to give us that external evaluation, which is solely on the basis of being for the benefit of a particular school or the particular children in that school, on which the focus lies? Is that where we have an issue?
568. **Mr G McGuinness:** We referred to the work of CASS, the school improvement service, over the years and where we are now. CASS can support, advise and provide training courses, but the critical thing at the minute is that inspectors are the only ones who can go into a classroom and observe the learning taking place. CASS does not really have that remit. So, it is back to Ray's point: you can have all the support service and training you need but, at the end of the day, those people are not going into the classroom to observe the learning that is taking place. That is where this is important, whether it is an inspector or whoever else is doing it. You need a person to go in and observe the learning in the classroom.
569. **Mr Kinahan:** Thank you very much. You have touched on a great deal that matters, and I like the way that you seem to be going with this. Given all the cuts that are coming through, whether in CASS, the inspectorate or anywhere else — everything is getting tighter and tighter — how good is the relationship between yourselves and the inspectorate? The feeling that I had when they were here was that the inspectorate sits rather high up, believing that it is doing a great job, and does not like to take criticism on board. Yet, all the ideas that you are coming up with are exactly where we are trying to move to. Are you getting enough meetings with the inspectorate? Are the inspectors listening? Are we actually going that way, and will it improve?
570. **Mr Mackey:** Relationships with the ETI are good, and I think that there is mutual respect. There are two ends of the spectrum, in a sense. They are also inspecting our work when they are inspecting schools. It is important that we maintain that division. There is respect both ways. There are regular meetings with the ETI and, as Ray said, the role of the district inspector is very important with respect to meeting CASS staff to discuss issues in schools in a local area. The pressures are building and there is perhaps less time for that than there has been in the past. It is certainly something that will need to be revisited.
571. **Ms Kim Scott (South Eastern Education and Library Board):** Certainly, at the point of inspection, CASS advisers and officers sit with school staff and the inspectors and, at that stage, it is very valuable that they share information on the improvement journey and the support that can be offered. It is almost like the Scottish model, and moving towards the model where we are working together. It means that, from that informal stage, the CASS officers can then support the schools to join up their action plans and support them through that. CASS officers are then present at the follow-up inspection. So, there is ongoing dialogue throughout the school improvement journey for schools and, very often, the inspectorate will mention the supporting role of CASS in the follow-up report. The relations are very positive and we are all there for the common goal of improving standards and improving schools.
572. **Mr Gilbert:** It is something that we often talked about over the years. It relates to the point Paddy made. It is almost — to use that awful analogy — like the three legs of a stool. You have the school, the external inspection and the support, intervention and challenge from the support services. Take any one of those away and you are in difficulty. As Paddy said, the external perspective is there. The critical thing

- is that it is in the nature of inspections that they happen as part of a process, then the inspectors revisit and return. However, in between times, depending on how confident the school is in its improvement journey, it requires intervention, support and challenge. That is the role — the Fullan role — that we play in guiding and supporting the school. Quite often, schools prepare improvement plans or action plans based on their broad experience. Like Paddy, I am a former head of CASS and a former adviser. I have always said that one of the greatest privileges that I had in my work was the privilege of going into so many different schools and seeing how things are done. That is a richness that the support bodies can bring.
573. I certainly want to stress the point that we have worked very closely with our colleagues in the ETI over the years, even going back to things such as working on the original programme management board for the implementation of the revised curriculum. It is critical that we have that balance. We all have a different role to play in the school improvement journey.
574. **Mr Mackey:** I want to make another point about that. It is not all good, in the sense that, as Ray mentioned earlier, there are inconsistencies in approaches in the same way as there may be inconsistencies in the approaches from the school improvement services. We do all that we can, and I am sure that the ETI also does all that it can, to ensure that that is smoothed out. However, in the absence of a framework for school improvement, those inconsistencies will persist for some time.
575. **Mr Kinahan:** How do you mark the difference between what schools are able to do and what they cannot do because they have not been provided with help from CASS or offered some other form of advice? There must be a point at which schools are going at full speed but do not have the help coming in as you have been cut back. How do you decide what is at fault?
576. **Mr Mackey:** Again, it goes back to the points that I raised in my introduction. We are limited in our resource and, therefore, we have to deploy that resource where it is most needed.
577. The first group of schools that we look at is schools that are in intervention; most boards have schools in intervention at any one time. Supporting those schools consumes a lot of CASS hours. Next, we have the schools that are deemed satisfactory through inspections. That is holding grade. As far as we are concerned, it needs to go up, and we will work with those schools to do that. Through the data analysis, we may also identify specific issues in some schools. Those may be in Key Stage 1 literacy, for example, or in Key Stage 3 numeracy. We will have discussions with those schools to, if you like, fulfil a challenge function with them to say that we believe that there is an issue that they need to address.
578. To be perfectly honest, the scope of our work beyond that is limited. A failure there is that high-performing schools also need to continue to look at their development. From my experience in the boards in which I operate, there is little opportunity to work with those schools. Again, that is something that the service needs. Ray talked about the privilege of going into so many schools. It is also a privilege to go into high-performing schools and glean some of their practices that can be disseminated among other schools. That is important.
579. **Mr G McGuinness:** I want to add to what Paddy said about the high-performing schools. I think that we mentioned the importance of supporting the area learning communities. That is what we try to do. Obviously, our resources are limited, but we try to provide support to area learning communities. In turn, they provide that support in their areas.
580. **Mr Gilbert:** I would add that we should not underestimate the capability of our schools. We keep a record of activity around ESaGS TV, which Paddy mentioned earlier. The number of hits on esags.tv is absolutely fascinating; there

- are thousands of hits every quarter. However, more interestingly is the time of the hits. We have seen a pattern of hits at 3.30 pm, and it is quite obvious that the good and outstanding practice that is being captured on that website following inspection is being used as a stimulus for self-improvement by schools. As I said earlier, some schools are more capable than others and it is a balancing act. I think that we should not underestimate the very good work that is going on in our schools on that continuous journey of self-improvement.
581. **Mr Rogers:** You are very welcome. Paddy, I suppose that for the ETI to move into a quality assurance role we would need to have self-evaluation very well embedded in schools. That may require two, or even three, cycles of a school development plan to get it really well in.
582. I was going to accuse you of glossing over some things, but in one of your previous answers you spoke honestly. I make no criticism of CASS, and I think that you do what you can with the resources you have. However, in order to cover formal intervention and unsatisfactory cases, by the time you get to self-evaluation, where a high level of skills is needed to move people from the first development plan to the second one, you are so stretched. I think that that is the big issue. When you talk to principals, particularly in some of our primary schools, they feel frustrated that they cannot just get to the next level because the help is not there. Do you envisage that, in the future, schools will have some flexibility to buy in that type of higher-level skills that are needed to move up, and that the ETI would have only a quality assurance role?
583. **Mr Mackey:** There are a couple of points there, and colleagues will want to come in. When we talk about a move for the ETI into quality assurance, it should be noted that, in a sense, that was started a number of years ago. The Together Towards Improvement document contained self-evaluation material, some of which was excellent and still holds well today. It is used by some schools today. So, there has been some groundwork already completed there.
584. You are quite right, and I agree with you fully, that there are at least three cycles of school development planning. It is an iterative, ongoing and almost continuous process in order to reach the self-evaluating schools that we would like them to be. Some of our high-performing schools and many of our medium-performing schools will already be engaging in that.
585. Your final point was about buying skills in. This is where school improvement, the ETI and everyone in the education community need to look at where we have good resources available for schools. That may include retired or practising principals, or principals or teachers in the area learning communities that Gerry mentioned. We have to use that expertise. I have no difficulty with buying it in as long as we have a mechanism to ensure that there is a quality assurance of that input into the schools and that it is appropriate. There is a danger there; I go back to the inconsistency that results from a lack of a clearly defined infrastructure.
586. **Ms Scott:** The richness that CASS can bring to that process is when it can bring schools into clusters to look at the school development planning and self-evaluative processes so that they can learn from one another and share practice in clusters together. If schools are working in isolation and buying in services, that process cannot happen and it is, perhaps, not as rich an experience for the school in its development planning.
587. **The Chairperson:** The previous set of students left before we could say hello to them. I want to welcome the students from Lagan College and their teacher, Mr Wishart. Thank you for dropping in to see us. Representatives from the education and library boards are here today to give evidence to the Committee's inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and school improvement process. I am sure that

- you will all want to pay attention to the inquiry report when it comes out. I wish you well in your studies and thank you for calling in to see us.
588. **Mr Rogers:** I wanted to make a point about being data-rich. There is a common theme throughout your responses. There is an issue, because there is no baseline assessment for our children starting school. There is also an issue with the value of end of Key Stage 2 assessments. How do you get round those issues?
589. **Mr Mackey:** I will kick off and ask my colleagues to come in on that. You are quite right; there is no formal baseline assessment, although a lot of schools, right down to nursery schools, will use some form of baseline assessment for the children who come into their care. People would say that end of Key Stage 2 assessments have a limited use, but these are only a small part of the repertoire available to teachers. There is general day-to-day classroom assessment and the use of standardised tests, which are built up over time. There are schools that will have quite rigorous regimes of testing year groups and retesting them at a later stage. They can be baselining but also looking at value-added at a later stage. There is a wealth of that. Ray referred to that when he referred to maybe more use being made of school data that are available, rather than just the high-level data that come from the end of Key Stage. It is reliable data; it is used for assessment for learning purposes in schools, so it is used in a valid way. It is critical that it is recognised as that and used fully.
590. **Mr Gilbert:** One of the big developments we have seen is that when you put a focus on data, there is always a danger that you will get certain people who just love to collect loads of it. And I think the real development —
591. **The Chairperson:** I think it is called “the Department”. *[Laughter.]*
592. **Mr Gilbert:** Moving swiftly on — *[Laughter.]*
593. **The Chairperson:** I don’t know what they do with it. Neither do they, but that is only my prejudiced view.
594. **Mr Gilbert:** The really significant thing is the concept that data only ever enables you to ask questions. We are now seeing schools being much more sophisticated around the diagnostic use of data, right down to individual pupil tracking. There may be parents around the table, and so on; the quality of input that parents get now when they go to meet schools is a very different kettle of fish, because schools are really getting on top of this and have moved beyond simply saying, “It’s the in thing to collect data”. It is actually using the data effectively. There is a huge amount of really good, standardised data. To build on what Paddy said, we recognise that. I suppose what we are saying is, “Let’s not miss that. Let’s use that to good effect”. That gives schools a good take on where they are.
595. **The Chairperson:** The only caveat to that is, “Apart from computer-based assessment”, because that is not really that valuable to parents.
596. **Mr Rogers:** That begs the question of why we use assessment for assessment’s sake instead of assessment for learning. We know the answer.
597. **The Chairperson:** That is a valid point, Sean.
598. **Mr Mackey:** Just one more comment, and I think it is an important one in relation to data. Ray alluded to it. The high-level data is sometimes not helpful for schools in that they are set targets that they will never achieve. That can be difficult. In terms of school improvement, it is always better to look at the individual targets for pupils and the targets that that school has set itself in terms of its standards. That can bring about that improvement: when they start to look at their own performance against their own targets. It could be that the Programme for Government targets, for example, could be at a level that some schools may never achieve.

599. **The Chairperson:** You are not comparing like with like, either.
600. **Mr Mackey:** Absolutely not.
601. **The Chairperson:** And it is never contextualised.
602. **Mr Mackey:** It is not.
603. **Mr Gilbert:** Another benefit, and we see schools doing this work a lot now, is recognising that whilst we understand and accept the need for system targets, we have to remember that a different group of children does the tests every year. Schools are now very good at identifying. We go into schools and they will say to us, “Just to let you know, our results are going down next year”, because they know the cohort of children. They have done the CAT and other tests and made their predictions. Of course, they are working hard, and we are supporting them where appropriate, to help those young people to achieve better than the predicted but there is a recognition that schools are very sophisticated now in respect of that — probably more sophisticated than the broader system in some cases.
604. **Mr Craig:** Paddy, that was a good point you raised, one that I was going to question you about. One thing that intrigues me is what triggers the inspectorate to go into a school. Is there a consistency across the board? If you go on just results, you have just highlighted the fact that there will be years when those results naturally dip. Do they take a long-term pattern on that issue? In your experience, what is the trigger that sends the inspectors in? More importantly, is there a consistency, not only in areas but across sectors? I have been keeping a close eye on that, and I do not see that consistency.
605. **Mr Mackey:** Again, my colleagues will want to come in here. First of all, I emphasise that there is a need for system targets. We do need those targets, and I think they are helpful, but they have to be recognised as system targets as opposed to individual school targets. From my experience, there are two things that trigger an inspection. First, the inspection cycle that is operated by ETI. We will be given information prior to that, that there is an inspection in particular schools. That is the first thing. There is also a facility, which is rarely used, but which has been used and used effectively, through which a board can ask the ETI to consider inspecting a school, if it identifies serious cause for concern within the school. Quite often, ETI will carry that out, if the school is not already included as part of its inspection programme.
606. I am afraid that I am not aware of the final point about the inconsistency across sectors. I am not aware of any inconsistencies in the scope, nature or range of inspections.
607. **Mr G McGuinness:** Chair, it is a very good question and one that we talked about when we referred to the reduction in staff in terms of school improvements and school support over the past two to three years. It is a very important issue. The number of inspections in primary, post primary, or whatever, will vary greatly from year to year, so having a reduced number of staff makes planning all the more difficult. You could, for example, have x number of inspections in nursery in one year, and it could be down the next year, but the number in primary could be up. So it makes it very difficult to plan. As Paddy says, it is within the ETI cycle — whether it is now five years or seven years since the school has had an inspection. That seems to be the main trigger for it. There is no consultation with the boards about what inspections are going to happen.
608. **Mr Craig:** I know that the seven-year cycle is built in. However, there are times when that cycle is broken. I have witnessed that. It can be extended or shortened if necessary.
609. **Mr Mackey:** I am sure that ETI will also be looking at the data and, perhaps, wish to break the cycle if it feels that there is cause for concern in a particular school. However, we would not be privy to that sort of information.

610. **Mr Craig:** I noted that, in your submissions, under enhanced powers, you hit on the issue of what an inspector can or cannot recommend if they identify a poorly performing teacher. I take it that you would be of the opinion, in a case like that — I note that you say that they should be identified for additional support and training, which they must do. I think that that is interesting, because the present situation around that is not clear.
611. **Mr Gilbert:** I think that that was the point that we were trying to make in the presentation. There is a need for greater clarity around that. Again, I stress the point that any employee has the right to improve, because there could be 101 reasons why performance deteriorates. We would certainly want to do that because, ultimately, that is a duty of care to that individual professional, but also a tremendous benefit to the young people. Certainly, there is a greater need for clarity around that. As I indicated in my previous input, it does not happen very often, but, in a process situation where there is significant risk, it is quite a long, drawn-out process.
612. **Mr Craig:** Would you extend that to the senior management in the school?. Sometimes you can have as much trouble with senior management as you can with a poorly performing teacher.
613. **Mr Gilbert:** Yes.
614. **Mr Lunn:** Thank you for your presentation. I know that you said that you were reporting as a group, but I want to pick up a couple of things that are in the detail of the various boards' submissions. I see here — I think it is from the Belfast Board — that schools should be given six months to take action before inspection reports are made public, to allow ETI time to evaluate whether formal intervention is required. Somewhere else, it makes a suggestion that there could be two reports: one for internal consumption and one for external. Can you not see any problem with that approach, from the point of view of a parent who may be considering sending their child to a particular school? They could find out that it is to go into formal intervention and that that was something that arose from a report six months previously.
615. **Mr Mackey:** You may let the Belfast Board take that one.
616. **Mr G McGuinness:** To clarify, certainly the statement is not suggesting for one minute that if the ETI is suggesting that there are grave concerns, that there are areas for support and that children and young people are not getting the best — there is no reason to suggest that.
617. We were suggesting that perhaps by the time ETI issues the formal report, a number of actions from action plans might already be under way. So, by that stage, for example after three or four months, we would have already acted on the ETI report. We were asking for a wee bit more time before the report is published so that when it comes into the public domain we can say, "Yes, we accept that there were failings and shortcomings. We have already put x, y and z into place, and we will continue to work with the school on that." It was not to suggest for one minute that serious actions should be delayed for any length of time: it was just about the publication of the report.
618. **Mr Lunn:** Maybe it is just the way it is worded: I was hoping you would say something like that.
619. The other thing that caught my eye, which you referred to, Ray, was a lack of informal feedback during the inspections. I think that is what you meant. We heard from ETI and NIPSA just a while ago, and they are very pleased with the full and frank discussions that there are before reports are issued, and the discussions around draft reports. You are talking about an on-the-spot, instant reaction, which would be very useful.
620. **Mr Gilbert:** We recognise the pressures that we all work under in this day and age, but in times past there certainly would have been an expectation that if you had a lesson observed you would have a time of debrief or detailed

- feedback that would be given to you, so that you have an opportunity. We all recognise the stress that teachers often feel around inspection. That can be heightened if you are observed, and then do not hear anything. The human being in all of us tends to go to the bad place first — maybe it did not go well; maybe it was not an effective lesson. So, on the human side, we feel that sort of immediate feedback is necessary — plus the messages that come out of that.
621. Again, it is important that, while we do not want the written reports to be tomes, they have to be sufficiently detailed on the improvement issues to enable the school to move forward, particularly, as I said earlier, with the shorter follow-up and interim inspections during, for example, a formal intervention process. We recognise that when schools are placed in formal intervention there is a huge amount of quick work, which Gerry alluded to, that is often done. Sometimes, from a human perspective, it is nice to get recognition that you have done something that has made a difference. So, quality of feedback is really important, and we encourage that.
622. **Mr Lunn:** There is one more short paragraph here. I think, again, it is from the Belfast Board. It says that there is:
- “a marked dichotomy between the ETI’s rhetoric of ‘collaboration and professional discussion’, and the interrogative, data-driven, mechanical and perceived demoralising nature of the actual process.”*
623. They could join the diplomatic service, whoever wrote that. *[Laughter.]* Is that not a bit hard?
624. **Mr Gilbert:** That is the problem. We referred earlier to two to three years ago when you had a professional support service in CASS of maybe 30 officers, 15 of whom were really experienced senior advisers. They have moved on, and we have a new cohort, mainly of assistant advisory officers. Some have been involved over the past 12 to 18 months in schools that have entered formal intervention, perhaps working at the coalface in some of those schools.
625. **It is like all reports:** sometimes you get too much of a personalised version. We have to take the median. That is one view, but it is not necessarily the view of the whole professional development service. You are quite right: the issue is trying to catch a broader and more realistic view of that.
626. **Mr Lunn:** Have you got a view on the clauses in the ESA Bill relating to the inspectorate and its increased powers? You put me up to it.
627. **The Chairperson:** *[Inaudible.]*
628. **Mr Gilbert:** The Chairman said we were not allowed to speak about this. No, obviously, I would not speak specifically about the draft Bill, but certainly we hope that the partnership and complementary working will be the way into the future, as it has been in the past.
629. **Mr Lunn:** Without asking you to comment on the specifics of the draft Bill, would you venture to take a view on whether there is much difference between what is in the ESA Bill and the current powers of the inspectorate? Some of us think that those clauses just draw together the various orders and regulations that apply to the inspectorate and put them into one document. That cannot be a bad thing. I am not going to draw you at all here.
630. **Mr Gilbert:** I have no particular view.
631. **The Chairperson:** Paddy, Ray, Gerry and Kim, thank you very much for your submission and input into the inquiry. We look forward to continuing to work with you, and I wish you well in your respective boards and your responsibilities.

6 November 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Ms Michaela Boyle
 Mr Jonathan Craig
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Chris Hazzard
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Sean Rogers
 Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Mr Tony McMullan *NIPSA*
 Ms Janette McNulty

632. **The Chairperson:** We welcome to the Committee Tony McMullan, assistant secretary of NIPSA; and Janette McNulty, departmental secretary. Thank you for taking the time to come here and for your written submission.

633. **Mr Tony McMullan (NIPSA):** Thank you very much, Chairperson, for inviting us to provide written evidence to the Committee, which you have received, and for asking us to come along today to give oral evidence. We will start with a presentation, and then we will be more than happy to answer any questions. I will start off, then Janette will address some issues, and then I will conclude.

634. First, I would like to advise the Committee that I am the lead official in NIPSA with responsibility for the Department of Education (DE) and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Janette works as a civil servant, but is our departmental secretary. Unfortunately, we do not have any inspectors with us because all of them are on inspections at the moment. We could not get an inspector, even though we wanted to have one with us in case there were technical or professional questions. Unfortunately, every one of

them has allocated inspections to do. We have talked to our representatives in the inspectorate, and, hopefully, we will be able to answer any points that you wish to raise with us, as well as giving an overview of what the inspectorate is about.

635. By now, you will have had the opportunity to read our written submission, but I would like to refresh your memory on some of the salient points. The inspectors possess a wide range of educational experience, professional expertise and knowledge, and all are highly reflective individuals. In every inspection, the individual context of the school and what happens there is foremost in inspectors' minds, and, in all cases, the interests of the children — the interests of the learner — are paramount. The inspectors do not shy away from making difficult decisions when they believe they are merited.

636. The recent introduction of a new inspection model for post-primary schools and changes to the primary sector inspection model, which our members are attempting to implement in good faith, have come at no small cost to the work/life balance of the inspectors. The inspection work is always underpinned with rigour. However, there has been a desire to increase the number of inspections, leading to more inspections with fewer resources. Indeed, the chief inspector has cited that she has been asked to deal with a 20% reduction in the budget allocated to ETI by the Department. The reduced time for inspectors to evaluate provision has, in our view, a clear potential to cause divisions between ETI and schools. Our members have serious concerns about any future erosion of time allocations for the completion of inspections. The recent trend to complete inspections within shorter time frames is causing our members great concern. We believe that there must

- be adequate time to ensure that the evaluations remain high quality and fit for purpose.
637. The education system, coupled with the culture in Northern Ireland, is, in many respects, unique. Although, as a trade union, we favour the abolition of post-primary selection, we would welcome the introduction of good practice from other jurisdictions if it would improve the current system. However, that needs to be looked at very carefully because it may be difficult to import systems from other jurisdictions. Those systems may work elsewhere but may not be a good fit for how the education system operates in Northern Ireland.
638. Our members would welcome a similar time allocation to their Scottish counterparts, who get approximately 40 days a year for professional development. That would allow ETI staff time for partnership working with others so that the work that they do can contribute to system-wide improvement. It may also improve confidence among schools because inspectors will be continually refreshing their skills, knowledge and understanding. We also believe that the inspectors, who are the professionals at the coalface in respect of school inspections, need to be the final arbiters when it comes to assessing and determining the outcome of an inspection, not least because it is, ultimately, their responsibility to justify and stand over their evaluations and to explain their reasoning to staff in the schools that they have inspected.
639. There is a need for increased resources to ensure that ETI can fully and effectively meet business plan targets, and continue to provide high quality, professional evaluations in the interests of the learner. There is also a need to move away from the recent desire to drive up the quantity of inspections. If there is a need to ensure that all schools are inspected within a seven-year time frame, we believe that needs to be adequately resourced. In addition, inspectors need greater assurance about the finality of their decisions and that evaluations may not be overturned from anywhere outside of the original inspection team.
640. Our strong view on where ETI should be situated is that the status quo should remain, namely that ETI should be part of the Department of Education. We believe that being part of the Department and the wider Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) allows ETI to be more accountable for their actions and fosters greater levels of transparency and public accountability. There is a very strong desire among our members in ETI to make reporting as clear and transparent as possible.
641. Our members refute suggestions made in some of the oral evidence that the Committee has heard from other stakeholders that, following industrial action last year by teachers, schools are terrified of visits and that the relationships with the schools remain difficult. The direct experience of our members in ETI is that their relationships with schools are still very good. However, they note that they have sometimes been subjected to extremely inappropriate behaviour, which invariably goes unreported, not least as our members do not have the time to factor in meetings with their management because of the tight, unrelenting schedules for inspections and the fact that there is currently no mechanism for an inspector to make a complaint against a school or an individual therein.
642. Members of the inspectorate would welcome the introduction of a code of conduct for inspection, which would be for the inspectors, the schools and their governors to adopt and adhere to. Fundamentally, our members see themselves as advocates for learners, speaking up for the children whose schools they inspect. They believe that their job is to report honestly, without fear or favour. The sad fact of the matter is that, sometimes, provision is not good enough, and some children can be failed.
643. The Committee previously cited a departmental official, Chris Stewart, who made it clear that the inspectorate

was part of the Department of Education. When our members join the ETI, they relinquish their teaching status, adopting instead the terms and conditions of civil servants. That does not mean, however, that there is not a degree of autonomy in the way in which the inspectorate conducts its business. The inspectorate is influenced by DE policy, but our members point out that no one in the Department tells them how to inspect, and, as such, they value retaining the autonomy that they have within the Department. It also means that, from our point of view as trade unionists, our members are protected by NICS terms and conditions, represented by us and have a right to be consulted if changes to those terms and conditions are proposed.

644. Inspectors argue that they represent very good value for money. We have noticed in some submissions by other organisations, including some of the teacher unions, that they said ETI is allocated a very large budget. We do not accept that. Some 0.3% of the Department of Education's overall budget goes to ETI.
645. NIPSA members and the inspectors are extremely dedicated and hardworking, consistently working above job requirements and often working well over their prescribed hours, without amassing flexi-leave or attracting overtime. In fact, they regularly work very long hours and drive very long distances. In addition, they frequently have to work at home after hours to ensure that they meet deadlines for inspections, with 70 hours a week being quite normal for those who undertake the role of a reporting inspector. Our members are extremely child focused and they want only the best for children. They report unanimously to us that they believe that they are very privileged to do this work. They observe and affirm the very best practice.
646. At this stage, Chairperson, I will pass over to my colleague Janette McNulty.
647. **Ms Janette McNulty (NIPSA):** Since forwarding our submission to you, we

have taken the time to listen to some of the oral evidence that was presented to the Education Committee by some of the other stakeholders. Having heard that evidence, we believe that it may help the Committee if we refer specifically to a number of issues that were raised so that we can provide you, on behalf of our members, with their perspective.

648. There is particular concern among our members around some of assertions made by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) in its submission to the Committee, including its statement that:

"Many of those employed by the ETI have little or no experience of teaching, leading or managing schools."

649. Our members suggest that that may be a typo, which should instead read "any recent experience". In any case, they vigorously refute that, not least because to become a primary sector inspector, for example, they are required to have at least 10 years of teaching experience, demonstrate evidence of effective use of self-evaluation in bringing about improvement in children's learning, and have successfully completed an accredited postgraduate study related to primary education. In other specialisms, the job spec may vary slightly, but it will be just as robust. In addition, our members point out that the majority of inspection teams include at least one associate assessor. They are drawn from a pool of around 200 current teaching staff who work alongside the inspectorate for the duration of an inspection. The associate assessors have always been very positive about the training they receive to undertake that role, and the robust and well-considered way in which inspections are conducted. However, as there is currently no mechanism for them to come together as a collective body, unless they have responded to the inquiry on an individual basis, it may be that you have not yet heard their perspective. That may be a factor that you will wish to consider.
650. I turn to the way in which inspections are conducted. Although one of

- the complaints was around written reports being shorter, those are only one indicator of findings that the inspectors use. Inspectors also spend a lot of time during the report-back providing principals, governors and representatives from the relevant employing authority with detailed oral feedback on their findings and answering questions that they may have. As teaching unions are not present at those report-backs, any assertions they made about what takes place are based on second-hand feedback. The inspectors' findings are, ultimately, aimed at providing information for the school that improves provision in the interests of children, because the inspectors are advocates for learners. The inspectors work extremely hard to bring all the key people with them, but it can prove difficult when they need to deliver a message that the school may not want to hear.
651. The NAHT also asserted that the cost of retaining the inspectorate is considerable, without providing an indication of that cost. Our members argue that they constitute extremely good value for money. As Tony pointed out, The ETI comprises only 0.3% of the Department of Education's overall budget. They consistently work well over their prescribed hours, without the facility to accrue flexi-leave or attract overtime, drive very long distances on a regular basis, and then have to continue to work at home in the evening to ensure that they meet deadlines. Although they are civil servants, they cannot avail themselves of the same working patterns as other civil servants. In addition, they are currently being subjected to a drive to increase the number of inspections. That, coupled with the reduction in resources, is having a significant impact on their health and well-being.
652. We are aware of earlier discussions around the pros and cons of other inspection models, within and outside the UK. Our members are not necessarily wedded to any of those. Rather, their view is that they would welcome a system that advocates inspection that leads to improvement for learners. As such, they would be content to incorporate the best elements of a range of other models to best suit our regional needs. They see that, rather than discussions around increased powers for the inspectorate, as key, because their focus is on how to improve learning for children and young people. They welcome working alongside schools in the best tradition of working together towards improvement.
653. Having listened to the evidence presented by some of the other teaching unions, we welcome their comments on working towards partnership arrangements. We are reassured that, although they cited some criticisms, they advised that those were not aimed at inspectors. We particularly welcome the comments on the role of the district inspector, which they view as crucial. Our members in the inspectorate very much endorse that. In fact, you will recall that, in her evidence to the Committee, the previous week, the chief inspector stated that:
- "From our perspective, the district inspector will provide support to principals. I know of examples where the principal asked the district inspector whether he could talk about a particular issue, and the district inspector was very happy to do that. That is one vehicle for providing support for principals."*
654. We were, therefore, concerned that the teaching unions reported that, at a recent meeting that they had with the chief inspector, she stated that, the minute the district inspector walks in the door of a school, they are in inspection mode. Because they felt that that was the case, it changed the relationship completely. We wish to make it very clear that our members are very clear that that is not how they see the role. Our members see district inspectors' visits to schools as inspections leading to improvement in which the tone is very different — akin to that of a critical friend, providing objective opinions, support and challenge where appropriate. In addition, district inspector visits do not generate written

- reports. As such, the findings are not deemed high stakes, because they are shared only with the principal and are not put in the public domain.
655. Many of our members would have concerns if district inspection visits resulted in written reports being put in the public domain, given the fact that, historically, the role of the district inspector has always been viewed as a positive and constructive working relationship. Our members add that the knowledge that the district inspectors have of their district's schools is vital in the inspection of a school. As such, it is important that, where possible, the district inspector fulfils the role of a reporting inspector on inspections in his or her district's schools. They would voice their concern that, should situations arise in which the district inspector no longer even serves as a member of the inspection team, they are ultimately the ones who, should a school need support, have to deal with the after-effects.
656. **Mr T McMullan:** I would like to finish our oral evidence with some final points. Having read the reports of some of the oral submissions that other interested bodies have given, we note that the teachers' unions referred to a number of concerns. One was about self-evaluations. They suggested that schools were becoming terrified of showing any flaws. As I mentioned earlier, our members in ETI would refute suggestions of schools being terrified. However, they also want to record their take on the issue of self-evaluations, which were previously required from schools prior to an inspection taking place and were seen by our members in ETI as a positive tool. Our members point out that, when a school recorded concerns via its self-evaluation form, that indicated to them that the school was aware of the issues, which was preferable to unearthing those issues during an inspection. That, conversely, would imply that problems had not been spotted. The school development plan is now the means for this evaluation, as it should be based on a robust self-evaluation process, encouraging schools to take charge of that important improvement process.
657. Inspectors have some concerns about the newly introduced evaluation of governors. We have read the evidence to the Committee. We understand and appreciate that governors fulfil their duties in a voluntary capacity. However, given the fact that it is a statutory duty, as determined by the Education Minister, inspectors are keen to do what they can to support the upskilling of governors in self-evaluation processes.
658. Our members point out that the self-evaluation pro forma and quality indicators used in the inspection process are freely available at all times on the ETI website. Those involved can use those as part of their ongoing self-evaluation process. District inspectors draw attention to those and, during visits to schools, encourage their use. Inspectors fully support promoting better governance in schools, thereby promoting upskilling that allows governors to take charge of their statutory duties in a more comprehensive manner so that they know in more detail the work of the school and are enabled to support and challenge appropriately. There was also some concern expressed in earlier evidence about the amount of data needed from schools in advance of an inspection. Our members in the ETI are not oblivious to those concerns, and the amount of information required from, for example, secondary school information disks (SSIDs), which provide data in the secondary sector, has recently been reduced. Inspectors do, however, use qualitative data to ensure that they make as accurate an assessment of school performance as possible. They are required to test the validity of evidence because the assessments are, and fundamentally have to be, evidence based. However, that does not mean that they do not also take into account the context in which they put the reports together.
659. It was also noted that the last chief inspector's report was full of negative

- language. That was reported to the Committee during a previous evidence session. The teachers' unions have pointed out that that is not healthy for the education system. Our members in the ETI are very aware that careless use of language can upset and damage relationships. Our members are open to suggestion and to change and, if there is a better way of doing things or a better way of expressing the language used around inspections, they are more than happy to consider that. They appreciate that words such as "satisfactory" can cause sensitivities, because they can sometimes be taken personally, although they would add that their assessments are essentially about the performance rather than about the teacher.
660. Our members are aware of the concerns being expressed around the shorter timescale of two weeks' rather than four weeks' notice being given to schools regarding an inspection visit. The shorter timescale came about as a result of feedback through the NISRA questionnaires that are completed by schools after inspections. In fact, a common assertion made by schools to inspectors at the end of an inspection is that they wished that the inspectors would just arrive in schools without notice to see how the schools would operate normally. That is completely contrary to what the teaching unions advised but is generally the case in schools that are "very good" or better and that feel they have nothing to hide.
661. There was also a suggestion that parents were not consulted as part of the inspection process. Our members point out that that is not the case. Parents are given the opportunity to complete questionnaires and can also request a meeting with the reporting inspector during an inspection. The teaching unions have also voiced concerns that, where they did not necessarily agree with the result of an inspection report, there was no vehicle for challenge, except on a factual basis, and that any complaints made about individual inspectors resulted in them being moved to a different district rather than them being dealt with.
662. Regarding complaints against inspectors, our members are not aware of any occasion where complaints have been made that have led to an inspector being moved out of their district. There will be times when inspectors are moved between districts, but that happens for other reasons, such as promotion etc. There is currently no mechanism for an inspector to take a complaint against a school or an individual, as I said, and inspectors and our members in the ETI welcome the introduction of a code of conduct for inspection, which would be for the inspectors, the schools and the governors to adopt and adhere to.
663. In the main, our members in the ETI feel that they have a good, mutually respectful, high-quality working relationship with schools that they inspect. They are very aware that young people are reliant on them to ensure that they do their level best in all situations to make the most accurate evaluation call in the interests of pupils and learners. In that way, our members believe that they are intrinsically representing and giving a voice to those children whose schools they inspect. More often than not, they affirm the very good and outstanding work of the many excellent teachers we have in Northern Ireland.
664. That completes our submission, Chairperson.
665. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, Tony and Janette. It is an interesting place for the Committee to be. We are now the subject of considerable interest on this particular inquiry. In fact, I was just saying to Committee members earlier that we probably received more submissions on this issue than we have on any other inquiry that we have recently had. It is good to see the inspectorate being aware that it is now being inspected as a result of this inquiry.
666. What I find interesting in your submission and presentation is the

degree of concern — “division” may be too strong a word — or difference of opinion between your members and those of other unions that represent teachers, who are, ultimately, subject to the inspection regime. That leads to a concern around the whole issue, which I notice from your submission that you are keen to protect. Paragraph 20 of your submission states:

“Our strong view is that status quo should remain. Being part of DE and the wider NICS allows the ETI to be more accountable for their actions and fosters greater levels of transparency and public accountability.”

667. If that is the case, based on what we have found in the submissions that we have received to date — apart from yours today, which basically says, “Things are not as bad as everybody else says” — we need to determine who has an accurate picture of what is going on in the inspection regime.

668. That leads me to ask a question. Paragraph 19 of your submission states:

“However, Inspectors who conduct the inspection need greater assurances about the finality of their decisions and the fact that evaluations may not be over-turned from anywhere outside of the original inspection team.”

669. Who else would interfere in the work of the inspection process? If you believe that the status quo should remain and that everything is healthy in the relationship between the ETI and the Department, who is the original inspection team and who, in your estimation, would overturn or interfere in that process?

670. **Mr T McMullan:** The inspection team depends on the size of the school. Normally, very small schools would have two inspectors. In very large schools, a team can comprise up to six inspectors who do the work and report back. That is what we see as the inspection team.

671. You asked about who can interfere. It has always been the case that inspectors do the report and submit it to their line management. Over the years, there has been support from line

managers if a challenge needs to be made, but the overwhelming majority of the inspections have been accepted. We are concerned that there is the facility for inspections to be overturned at a higher level. Also, of course, teachers and schools have the right to challenge a report on a factual basis, as we pointed out in our submission. Nobody has any difficulty with that because the reports must be factually based and evidence based. However, we would be concerned whether anybody, either internal or external, would seek to change a report once it is completed.

672. **The Chairperson:** Yes, Tony, but there is a complete contradiction between paragraphs 19 and 20 of your submission. On one hand, you say that “that status quo should remain”, so that there are:

“greater levels of transparency and public accountability.”

673. Yet, I cannot get a clear indication from you about which individuals or organisations would possibly interfere and overturn original decisions taken by your inspectors. You mentioned a facility to overturn a report at a higher level. Is that higher level in the ETI? Or, as some of us suspect, is it a conversation that carries on between the ETI and the Department? We have examples of reports that are subject to ongoing discussions between the Minister, the Department and the inspectorate around a particular school that was inspected. That is in the public domain; in fact, we have had correspondence from the Minister about it. It seems as though there have also been discussions with the relevant boards about that particular school. We want to have transparency and openness, and schools certainly want to have transparency. They want to know whether anyone else, who may have an ulterior motive, is meddling in the pot.

674. You talked about the number of inspectors, Tony. There is a school in my constituency that had eight inspectors come through the door. I am at a loss to understand why eight inspectors were

- required. That is a practical issue for the ETI. Could the Department interfere? In written terms, what is the facility to overturn? As a union representative, do you know from your members that a process is written down? Is there a process or facility somewhere that allows the Department to interfere? What are the mechanics of all that?
675. **Ms McNulty:** As we mentioned, we cannot give you exact figures for how many inspectors go into a school at any one time. It depends on the school and whatever. As we said, most inspections will include an associate assessor from another school. The robust discussions about inspections happen at the time of the inspection with those inspectors who are directly involved. In a sense, we are saying that that status quo should remain. They are the experts and the people who have seen at first hand what the issues are. They should make the assessments.
676. **The Chairperson:** I just want to ask one other question, and a lot of other members want to come in. Do you believe that the Department's target of a 20% cut to the resources of the ETI is achievable? Is that cut driving a more widespread use of associate inspectors in place of inspectors? Is that whole process undermining inspection standards?
677. **Mr T McMullan:** As we indicated in our earlier comments, we do not believe that the reduction of 20% is achievable without having a direct impact on inspections. We believe that inspectors need proper time to do inspections. All the inspectors are working flat out, and we indicated that many inspectors who are doing inspection reports are working over 70 hours a week. That is completely unsustainable. The inspectors do that because they are passionate about the work, but people will eventually burn out.
678. A 20% reduction in the budget will lead to a significant reduction in inspections. It is just unsustainable. We made the case to the Department that the ETI needs to be properly resourced to do its job, and we are not saying anything different here. If the Department and the Minister want the ETI to do that job, they have to provide it with the resources.
679. **Mr Kinahan:** Tony and Janette, thank you very much. Your presentation started quite well but, as you got towards the end of it, I got quite angry. At the beginning, you talked about collaboration, the two-way passage of information and people working together. When the representatives from the ETI were here the other day, I very much got the feeling that they were not really listening or taking things on board. They see themselves as slightly above everything that is going on. When you got to the points at the end of your presentation about careless language, not having your own complaints procedure and wanting a code of conduct, I had this vision of you wanting to set up your own body that would suffer from the same faults. You are not listening or taking the concerns on board. When you go to the schools and talk to the principals and vice-principals, you learn that they have very real concerns. You acknowledged those at the beginning but, at the end, you went back into your bunker almost as though you had blinkers on.
680. **To get to a question:** will you try to be more collaborative so that you really are more comfortable sharing procedure so that you are part of them and working with them? By the end of your presentation, I got the feeling that you are a different organisation that is protecting your members who are in the ETI. We need you in there. We need you to be involved, helping and moving them all forward. You painted a very different picture at the end of your presentation than you did at the beginning. That is one question.
681. The second point is something that Sean came up with when we asked the representatives of the ETI about teacher training during the 40 days. Teachers are being judged on something that they cannot control because they are not getting the time. So many processes and reviews and so much

- work is being thrown at them that they do not have time to do their training. The representatives from the ETI did not seem to take the point on board that the ETI is judging teachers on something that they cannot control. The ETI needs to consider that it is throwing so much at teachers that they do not have the time to train themselves. It cannot fail them for not hitting their number of days of training. It must help them and help the system to change.
682. **Mr T McMullan:** Thanks very much, Mr Kinahan, for that question. We understand and appreciate that there are concerns. We read the transcripts of the oral evidence that has been given to the Committee by teachers' unions, the boards, other organisations and individuals that have come before the Committee. We understand that.
683. What we are trying to say is that our members do not want to be in a bunker. They want to be professional and passionate — they believe that they are passionate — about the work that they do. Fundamentally, they believe that inspecting schools is about trying to identify all the good practices and sharing them with others. Where there are particular weaknesses in schools, it is about identifying poor practices so that they can be dealt with. I note from one of the submissions that the Committee received that 81% of schools that have been revisited after an inspection have seen an improvement. That shows that inspections work.
684. Our members are very keen and are very passionate about what they do. They want to do that to the best of their ability. We asked for protocols in areas where we believe that they would be justified. We do not necessarily want to create additional red tape; no one wants more red tape. We accept that there is a level of bureaucracy. Sometimes, bureaucracy gets a bad name as if all bureaucracy is wrong, but there is a certain level of bureaucracy in every organisation that is necessary to sustain it. When we suggested some things that should be put in place, we thought that they would be helpful and beneficial to the system. We were not in any way trying to be negative.
685. Fundamentally, because our members are so passionate about what they do, they want to work very closely and collaboratively with schools, principals and teachers. They do not want to do something that would have a negative impact. Having said that, on the occasions when they find practices or things that are wrong, they believe that they have to say that they are wrong. They have to be open and honest. If they were not, they would be failing in their duty, not just to the ETI but, more importantly, to the children.
686. **Mr Kinahan:** You also said that you did not really recognise the fear factor. You did not quite say "fear"; I think that you were even stronger than that.
687. **Ms McNulty:** The teachers' unions said that there was a fear factor. That was very emotive language. We said that our members feel that they have very good relationships with the schools that they deal with. I am not saying that it is always the case, but it is the nature of these things that people who have issues are more proactive in sending submissions in to an inquiry. Schools or other organisations that have had a good experience may not necessarily write in because there is no need to do that.
688. **The Chairperson:** On that general point Janette, you made certain statements in your submission about selection and other things that are not the subject of this inquiry. As the representatives of your members, how confident are you that your members believe a lot of those things and would concur with what is in your submission?
689. Previously, we received submissions from the unions on a variety of things. I have met numbers of teachers and staff who are members of those unions who have told me that the union does not speak for them on those issues. What discussions have you had with your members in preparation for making this submission so that you have got

- to the point that you can say that your members feel or believe something?
690. **Ms McNulty:** We have had very full discussions with our members. We would not be here saying the things that we are without their agreement, because we want to take them with us. If we were to say something outwith anything that they wanted to say or that they were taking forward, we would obviously not be put in a good position with them.
691. **Mr T McMullan:** Just on that point, I think that it would also be the case that, because teachers' unions represent thousands of members but the ETI has fewer than 60 members, we have been able to let all our members see our proposed submission having consulted them on it.
692. **Mr Hazzard:** Thanks for the presentation. I will pick up on a topic that the Chair started with, which was to flag up the various differences in opinion between your members and members of the teachers' unions. What engagement is there between you around the whole process of inspection? Is there room for engagement and the sharing of good practices in building up trust, which is an issue that we have certainly been made aware of so far?
693. **Ms McNulty:** From what we told you, our members are keen to engage, and we welcomed the fact that the teachers' unions alluded to that in their oral submission. There certainly would be no barriers to that.
694. **Mr Hazzard:** But it does not happen, does it?
695. **Ms McNulty:** I am not sure that it is relevant, in the sense that I do not know that the teachers' unions would necessarily be for it. The teachers' unions represent different people for different reasons, so I am not sure how often it would be relevant to meet to discuss things.
696. **Mr Hazzard:** It was just even on the subject of the time that elapses in writing the report. As was said, if that is shortened, it will create stress, worry and everything else. Equally, I suppose that the other side of that coin is that teachers can be caused stress and worry if it is prolonged. Perhaps that is one particular area where you could come together to decide what would be an agreed length of time or what the benefits would be of shortening it.
697. **Ms McNulty:** But, at the end of the day, our members have to do what they are told. If they are told that the report is now a five-day report, they do that. They are human beings as well, and, much as we appreciate that teachers would be anxious to hear the results of a report, they also have to bear in mind that the inspectors now have to do this in a very condensed period. As Tony said, that is not only becoming much tighter for them to do, but you also have to factor in that they also have to drive. Some of our inspectors would drive two hours to a school in the morning, two hours back and take work home to finish a report by a Friday.
698. **Mr Hazzard:** That is fair enough. You spoke of the need maybe for a code of conduct to be in place. Would you agree with a complaints procedure alongside that for inspectors? You talked of some scenarios and situations in which that might have been beneficial.
699. **Mr T McMullan:** Sorry, could you repeat that?
700. **Mr Hazzard:** You spoke of perhaps needing a code of conduct that would help the situation. What is your opinion on having a complaints procedure as well? That way, inspectors could —
701. **Ms McNulty:** Sorry, just to clarify, do you mean a complaints procedure against the inspector or —
702. **Mr Hazzard:** No, for the inspectors. You spoke of some scenarios where they could have benefited from the opportunity to make a complaint or —
703. **Ms McNulty:** The point that we were making was that they could, technically, make a complaint. However, their schedules make that very difficult because it would put things on hold

- and they would have to take time out to make a complaint. In other words, even in the past, when they maybe thought that they could have complained — they mentioned things to us — it was not possible because they had so many other things to do.
704. **Mr Hazzard:** I suppose that what I am getting at is that you must feel that being able to complain if behaviour has not been what it should have is an important facility. Surely, like there is for schools, there should be a complaints procedure or arbitration if a report has not been what they think it should have been.
705. **Mr T McMullan:** We understand that schools are able to use the appeal mechanism if anything in a report is not factual.
706. **Mr Hazzard:** Is that for facts and facts only, though?
707. **Ms McNulty:** Well, again, as we mentioned, all inspections are evidence based. So, if they have been done properly, they should be accurate.
708. **The Chairperson:** Is Chris not referring to the point that you mentioned, Tony, about extremely inappropriate behaviour, which I assume was on behalf of teachers in schools where your colleagues were carrying out an inspection? If that is the case, is it not your duty to report it to your senior line management and to make the principal aware that particular incidents took place? You said that, technically, you can record it, but there is an issue because of work pressure. If some extremely inappropriate behaviour took place, is it not an issue that needs to be separate, in a sense, from what may be the factual detail about how that school responds to GCSE results or its management structure and all those things that relate to the school? Surely members are not left isolated if things are happening to them that you believe to be extremely inappropriate.
709. **Mr T McMullan:** You are absolutely correct, Chair. We advise our members that, where they are the recipients of behaviour that is unacceptable, they should report it. We think that that should happen, and we encourage our members to do that.
710. **Mr Hazzard:** I want to ask about the level of support, advice and training that is available for inspectors and your assessment of it. What do you think it should be?
711. **Mr T McMullan:** As we indicated, our colleagues are all aware of what happens in other jurisdictions, and that is why we made the point that not everything that happens in other jurisdictions should automatically be applied here. However, where we see good practice in other areas, we think that it should happen here. For example, our members identified that, in Scotland, most of the schools inspected get about 40 days a year allocated for professional development. Our members get only a couple of days for that, if they are lucky, because of the small numbers that there are, the number of inspections that they do, the geography and the pressure to produce reports more and more quickly. That leads to there being very little time for professional development. Our members are professional people working in this field, and we would like to see them having the same opportunities at least as their colleagues in Scotland.
712. **Ms McNulty:** It is particularly imperative in the case of our inspectors. When they join the inspectorate, they have no choice but to work from home. That is the stipulation. So, in a sense, they are all working in isolation and it is very seldom that they all get together as a group. That is why it is difficult, for all sorts of reasons, for some of the things that we mentioned here. For the majority of time, they are on their own and, compounded by that, they are rushing to finish inspections. So, in the case of our members, it is imperative that they get together more often.
713. **Mr Rogers:** You are welcome. Thanks for your input. I want to pick up on one or two points that were raised earlier. Chris asked whether you, as representatives,

- would sit down with the teachers' unions. Your response was that you did not feel that that was relevant. Why is that?
714. **Ms McNulty:** Sorry, I did not think what was relevant? Meeting teachers' unions?
715. **Mr Rogers:** Yes.
716. **Ms McNulty:** It depends on the issue. It would not necessarily be the case that the teachers' unions and ours would meet. If there was a relevance to it, we would, and we would welcome doing so. However, in the context of what Chris was saying, I am not sure that it would have been a relevant issue in that instance.
717. **Mr Rogers:** Surely there is a difference of opinion over the role of the inspectorate between how you perceive it and how the teachers' unions perceive it. Do you not think that there would be value in sitting down together?
718. **Ms McNulty:** In fairness, the crucial point is about how the teachers see the inspectors, and how the working relationships within the schools operate.
719. **Mr Rogers:** Yes, but the teachers are represented by their union. No?
720. **Ms McNulty:** Yes.
721. **Mr T McMullan:** I am not sure, Mr Rogers, that we see that there is a difference between what the inspectors believe their role to be and how the teachers see it. There is clearly a difference of opinion on how inspections are being done. However, with respect to the overall role of the inspectorate, as I understand it, the teachers' unions accept it. Nobody argues for the abolition of the inspectorate. The inspectorate has an important role to play in developing skills and providing best practice etc. As I understand it from reading the submissions of the teachers' unions, they seem to have concerns about how the practice happens in reality; whereas, we speak on behalf of members who we represent. Obviously, because we are not inspectors and we are not in schools on a daily basis, we do not see what happens there. Certainly all the evidence that we get from our members is that they are doing the job professionally, competently and with the best interests of the children at heart.
722. **Mr Rogers:** I do not question that at all. Having spent my life in the profession, I know that people work 70-plus hours a week, but I still think that there would be value in sitting down together, even if it is only to get a perspective on where people are coming from. I found your answer to be strange.
723. **Mr T McMullan:** It is something that we can consider. The teachers' unions and NIPSA work together through the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NICICTU). NICICTU also has an education committee that we are represented on, so some things, on a broad level, are discussed about the education funding issues, but I am not aware of requests being made by us or by the teaching unions to talk about the ETI's role. It may be something that can be looked at. Thank you for raising it.
724. **Mr Rogers:** That leads me back to my original question, which may be a different take on the 20% reduction. Is a 20% reduction really an aspirational one, with the assumption that self-evaluation will be better embedded in our schools? Do you believe that the role of the ETI in school performance should move to becoming a role in which it quality-assures the findings of a school's self-evaluation?
725. **Ms McNulty:** We will need to take that question back to our members to ask them. We will certainly do that.
726. **Mr Rogers:** I am just wondering whether the 20% is in there somewhere, too.
727. **Ms McNulty:** I am not sure why you are linking the 20% specifically to self-evaluations. The 20% reduction, as far as we understand, would be to do with resourcing across the inspectorate. In other words, for example, if an inspector retires, he or she may not be replaced. I am not saying that that would be the case, but it is that kind of thing. Our

- concern, and why we have highlighted it, is that an awful lot of school inspections are happening. They are not decreasing — in fact, they are increasing — and the period for inspections has shortened, as we discussed. Therefore, there is a lot more pressure on the inspectors who are there. That is our concern.
728. **Mr Rogers:** I think that if schools' self-evaluation were better embedded, there would be less need for the team of eight inspectors.
729. **Ms McNulty:** Our understanding on self-evaluation, and, as I said, we will take that back for further response if required, is that it is legally required under the school development plan. That is something that the schools have to do in any case for legal reasons, but if an inspector goes in to a school, that is something that he or she looks at as part and parcel of the inspection.
730. **Mr Rogers:** As a side point, the Chair also mentioned the team of eight. It might be helpful if we could get some clarification from the Department as to why in one case it is a team of eight or a team of five, or whatever.
731. You both mentioned advocates for learners in your presentation, and I think that that is extremely important. However, I get the feeling that the pressure that is on the inspection team means that you are finding a lot of difficulty in delivering. The other thing that I would like to mention is the reduction in quality staff development that was available, the reduction in the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS), and so on. Has that contributed to the pressures as well?
732. **Ms McNulty:** That is something that our members could comment on more fully than we could, because that is to do with school inspections per se. However, our understanding is that CASS would have been there initially to deal with schools before something went wrong, and now, because the resourcing is so much less, it is really there when something goes wrong. I suppose in a sense it is more proactive than reactive.
733. **Mr Rogers:** Would your members like to have greater alignment between the ETI and the school-supported staff development that exists, for example, in Scotland?
734. **Ms McNulty:** That is something that we would have to speak to the members about. I would not want to speak on their behalf when we have not checked that with them.
735. **Mr T McMullan:** That issue has not arisen in any discussions that we have had with our members. If we were giving a comment, it would be a purely personal view, and we are here to articulate that of NIPSA. When we were preparing ourselves to come here, we looked at all our submissions again and prepared on that basis. The question that you ask is a good one, but it never featured in any of our discussions, so we would not be competent to answer it directly. I apologise.
736. **Mr Craig:** Tony and Janette, it is good to see you here. I want to go back to something that the Chair was discussing with you. Paragraph 19 of your submission states:
- "Inspectors who conduct the inspection need greater assurances about the finality of their decisions".*
737. **I will hold my hands up:** I have been in the position of having the inspectors in and being at the other end. What do you mean by that statement? I always assumed that the report of the inspectors who came through the door and did the report was final.
738. **Ms McNulty:** That is how it is, and that is how they want it to remain.
739. **Mr Craig:** What other assurances do they need?
740. **Mr T McMullan:** We want to make it absolutely clear that this would be the final report and that there would be no possible change to the report, internally or externally. "Internally" obviously means in the Department and "externally" means outside the Department.

741. **Mr Craig:** We are always told that that does not happen, so why would they have that doubt or fear in their mind?
742. **The Chairperson:** Is that based on evidence? I am sorry to cut across Jonathan on this.
743. **Mr Craig:** No, you are all right.
744. **The Chairperson:** There must be evidence that leads you to believe that some people have been meddling and interfering. Who are they? Are they politicians? Is it other schools?
745. **Ms McNulty:** If I could say —
746. **The Chairperson:** What experience led you to write paragraph 19 of your submission?
747. **Ms McNulty:** Basically, whenever an inspection is done, as we said, there is very robust evidence and discussion around that before the inspectors leave the school. Anything that they decide on once they are in the school is how the inspection goes and what the actual end result will be. On occasion — we are not talking about elsewhere outside the inspectorate, and we make that clear — those decisions may be challenged and looked at. What we are saying is that that should not be the case and that it should remain as is.
748. **Mr Craig:** Challenged and looked at by whom?
749. **Ms McNulty:** In the inspectorate.
750. **Mr Craig:** Under what criteria? My experience is that you get a challenging report put in front of you as governors of the school, and, yes, in that room you do challenge some of the things in the report — some rightly. We have to be honest and say that some things in the report you just have to swallow even though they are not nice. At the end of the day, however, what comes out of that discussion between the governors and the inspectorate is final. It was as far as we were aware. I am not aware of anybody, outside the inspectorate team or anyone else, having any influence over that. Are you telling me that the case has been different in some cases?
751. **Ms McNulty:** What I am saying is that is what happens the majority of times that an inspection is done. There can possibly be a challenge, however. That does not necessarily change it, but there may be a challenge in the inspectorate when the report comes back, and that should not happen.
752. **Mr Craig:** From whom does that challenge come and on what grounds?
753. **Mr T McMullan:** What we are saying, and I am sorry if we are making heavy weather of this, is that because the Committee was doing an investigation into the inspectorate, we thought it important that we reflect on the broad questions that you are looking at but also point out that our members, in discussions that we had with them, thought that this was an important issue. They feel that that should be made clear so that there can be no doubt in anybody's mind — politicians', people in the inspectorate's or teachers' — that once the inspection report is done, there will be finality on it, and it will have been done by the inspectors. We are not saying necessarily that there has been evidence of interference. We are saying that there should not be interference.
754. **Mr Craig:** There should not be interference.
755. **Mr T McMullan:** That is what we are saying.
756. **Mr Craig:** That tends to tell me that there is interference. I have a good reason for raising this, Tony, because my bitter experience tells me that there is interference. I always assumed that, once it was done, a report was final and closed and that the issues raised were those that the school had to deal with. However, on an ongoing basis, I see moving goalposts around what the school is meant to do. Who is moving the goalposts? Who is doing the interfering?
757. **Mr T McMullan:** As I said, we are not saying that there has been interference; rather, we are saying that there should not be and that that should be clear.

- Everyone involved in the inspection report, in the ETI, and inside and outside the Department should be aware of the system, what our members aspire to and what they want. That is what we are saying.
758. **Mr Craig:** I find it concerning that someone outside the inspection team would have any influence over it. In fairness to the people on the inspection team, they are the ones at what I will call the pointy end. They are in there looking at the detail of everything. There should not be anyone else doing anything outside that.
759. **Mr T McMullan:** We concur absolutely.
760. **Mr Craig:** You said that the inspectors do not have a right of complaint. That also concerns me. I was not aware of that, and I would have automatically assumed that they could complain to their management team, and so on, if someone overstepped the mark around any issue. If an inspector oversteps the mark in some way, will you outline what the complaint procedures are around that?
761. **Mr T McMullan:** We did not say that our members do not have the right to complain. We are saying that, owing to the length of time involved in the process, the reality is that many of them do not complain, because they have so many inspections and so much else to do. I answered the Chairperson directly that we would encourage our members to make a complaint if they have one. If complaints are made against anybody, they need to be investigated. We do not have a difficulty per se with teachers making complaints against our members. We believe that our members are doing the job professionally and competently. However, if there are complaints made, they need to be investigated. We will stand over that. We do not have a difficulty per se. We are not saying that our members should have the right to complain but that nobody can complain against them. If investigations are conducted thoroughly and properly, our members will stand over whatever the outcome is.
762. In the same way, as we said when concluding our submission, we made it very clear that the overwhelming evidence is that the quality of education is very good. Exceptional teaching is being done in Northern Ireland. That has to be commended. The inspection process has a very real part to play in developing good practice. However, where there is bad practice, it needs to be challenged. Our members want to do that to the best of their ability.
763. **Mr Craig:** I do not disagree with you, Tony.
764. **There is a massive disincentive for anyone to complain against an inspector. I have witnessed that. I think that you understand that that is the case:** you are in there, you are being critical about what is going on anyway, and the fear from people is that, if they complain, they will make the situation worse. It would be interesting to see what level of complaints there ever has been against inspectors. I would not imagine that it is that high.
765. **Mr T McMullan:** I am not aware of the statistics, so I cannot help in that regard.
766. **Mr Lunn:** Thanks for your presentation. I am sorry to go back to the question of the finality of the report, because the issue has been beaten to death. You said that there is a full discussion between the school and the inspectorate before the report is issued. That is fair enough. I imagine that it might even take the form of a draft report. If the principal of a school does not agree with something in a report and is incensed by it, is it not reasonable for him or her to write to the chief inspector and for the chief inspector then to have a discussion with the inspection team that produced the report, and that might lead to a change in the report's wording? Do you see that as interference?
767. **Ms McNulty:** Again, what we would say is that anyone who has not been in direct contact with or inspected the school would not know the context in which something was written or

- why it was written. What we are really saying is that our inspectors are the professionals at the coalface, and they are ones doing the inspections first hand. Therefore, someone who is told about something third hand, or whatever, and has not actually seen everything in context would not necessarily be able to make a judgement about it.
768. **Mr Lunn:** That is OK. That is why I phrased my question to reflect “following discussion with the chief inspector and the team, there might be a change”. That would be different from somebody higher up in the inspectorate chain instructing a team to change a report, which I do not imagine would happen.
769. **Ms McNulty:** In the scenario that you suggest — we are not saying that this — has happened, if the chief inspector were to suggest a change, we personally do not feel that that would be appropriate, because the chief inspector would not have been on the inspection and therefore would not have seen what happened in context. The value judgements of the inspectors, who are the professionals, have to be trusted.
770. **Mr Lunn:** If, following that discussion, the inspectors who were at the school reflected on what they said and decided to temper their remarks or change an assessment in some way, would that not be reasonable? Do you think that that is interference?
771. **Ms McNulty:** The point that we made earlier is that this is not about one inspector. It is about a team of inspectors that includes associate assessors. They sit down and have very robust discussions for a very long time. It is not something that is done lightly whatsoever. We therefore feel that it would be wrong to challenge that at that stage.
772. **Mr Lunn:** I am glad that you mentioned the fact that they sit down and have a full discussion. The whole structure and mechanics of the system seem a bit strange to me. It is a condition that inspectors must work from home. I do not know why that should be the case. For a start, it must hinder the interchange of practice and ideas among inspectors. You mentioned that there is almost a complete lack of opportunity for professional development. It does not sound like a job that I would want to do, working 70-odd hours a week from home and then perhaps being sent off to the wilds of a different part of the country for four or five days to work with other people who have also come in from different areas. At least they finally get together to produce a report. I was beginning to think that you were going to tell me that it is all done by e-mail. What is the rationale for them having to work from home?
773. **Ms McNulty:** I do not know the exact rationale, but there are 60 inspectors, and if they were all working in the Department of Education itself, we would need another 60 offices. Therefore, a few years back, a decision was taken that inspectors who come on board work from home.
774. **Mr Lunn:** Do they operate geographically in any way? If a number of them live in Fermanagh, for example, is it reasonable to send them anywhere?
775. **Ms McNulty:** That is something that we have discussed before. Obviously, when you join the inspectorate, you could be living in any part of Northern Ireland. Some of our inspectors have young families or caring responsibilities, so it is not as easy as just going from one place to another to be nearer to whatever district is yours. There are times when inspectors literally pass each other on the road, so that perhaps needs to be thought through.
776. **Mr Lunn:** Sounds like school buses.
777. **Mr T McMullan:** I will add to the earlier question, which is, in a sense, linked to this. I am not sure why the inspectors all work from home, but it has always been like that ever since we came in. Therefore, it predates us. It may be because they are going out to schools all over Northern Ireland, whereas, the headquarters function can be in any central location. The vast majority of

- staff who work in the headquarters in Rathgael House do not have to travel around. The schools inspectorate, however, is travelling in all six counties in Northern Ireland, largely daily, so it would not be as cost-effective if they were all stuck in Bangor and had to travel to Enniskillen, Newry, Armagh or Coleraine.
778. **Mr Lunn:** I was not suggesting that they all be stuck in the one place, but there must be a suitable point somewhere in between 60 people all working from home and 60 people all working from one point, if you know what I am getting at. That leads me on to another issue, because it sounds like something that ESA could perhaps sort out when it comes into being. *[Laughter.]* You knew that I would get there, Chair. Do you have a view on the sections of ESA that relate to the inspectorate? Some people think that it will increase its powers to a draconic level, and the rest of us think that it does not make a whole lot of difference at all. What is the view of your members on whether ESA, in its present draft form, will give the inspectorate much extra power? Are they comfortable with it?
779. **Mr T McMullan:** As we understand it, there is to be some limited additional power, but it would still be less than the power of other bodies in other jurisdictions, such as Ofsted, and so on. Our members are content with the power that it has, and if it gets some limited additional powers, I do not think that there will be a problem with that. The inspectorate will not go into ESA; it will remain part of the Department.
780. **Mr Lunn:** Yes, but its powers will be incorporated into the —
781. **Mr T McMullan:** Yes, I accept that. The bottom line is that our members want to be left largely alone to get on with doing what they do best but within the confines of structures and the confines of being answerable and accountable. Our members have no difficulty with that, but they primarily want to get on with doing what is best in the interests of children.
782. **Mr Lunn:** You are leading me on to something else, which is the 20% reduction that is being talked about. You would think that, given the present structure of our education estate and system, that would be quite hard to achieve. However, if ESA came into being and got to grips with area planning and sorted out the school estate, 20% might not be so impossible to achieve on, dare I say it, the basis that there might be fewer schools.
783. **Mr T McMullan:** The issue of how many schools there should be is not within our area of responsibility.
784. **The Chairperson:** Tony, that is not totally accurate, because your submission raises a very serious issue. It states:
- “They are also called upon to provide ETI recommendations on development proposals for schools within their districts.”*
785. Therefore, the inspectorate is asked. Following this meeting, I will ask the Department for the information about particular schools and the recommendations that were given by the inspectorate on development proposals, because, until I saw your report, my understanding was that the ETI had no role. Paragraph 12 states:
- “District Inspectors are often called upon to provide briefings on organisations in their district for Ministerial visits and other VIP visits.”*
786. I would like to see the ones that they provide when I go to visit a school, but anyway. It continues:
- “They are also called upon to provide ETI recommendations on development proposals for schools within their districts.”*
787. That is to do with area planning. A development proposal is about a significant change, and if you are advocates for learning, how do those two things tie up?
788. **Ms McNulty:** I am not sure that that was our understanding of what they meant. We will clarify that for you.
789. **The Chairperson:** We would like to know.

790. **Mr Lunn:** Thank you for taking over my line of questioning, Chairman.
791. **The Chairperson:** You and I think the same things, Trevor.
792. **Mr Lunn:** It is an interesting line in the submission. It does not seem that surprising to me that if there is a development proposal, let us say, to close a school, at least the latest inspection reports would be referred to as part of that process. Following on from that, it might not be that impossible that the inspectorate could be called on to make a comment or a submission. It had not occurred to me before, but it does not seem unreasonable.
793. I just want to say something about this fear factor. I do not like that term: it is emotive, and I do not think that it is a proper description of what happens when an organisation, in whatever business, is going to be the subject of an inspection. In my previous life, I was inspected many times by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). Those occasions cost about four nights' lack of sleep and a good week of preparation. The FSA would comment on that and say that that was part of the process. It puts you on edge, because you have to look at your procedures and your recording, and so on, and tidy up your act in preparation for the inspection. The FSA thought that that was a good thing, and it knew that everyone did it.
794. To me, that is part of the process here, too. I would find it very strange if schools were not made to feel slightly on edge by the prospect of an inspectorate report. However, there does not need to be a fear factor, leading to the type of confrontation that we have heard about.
795. I do not really have a question for you, but I think that you said that you only really hear from the disgruntled people in these scenarios. You do not hear from the ones who found the report useful or beneficial or who had no complaint.
796. **Ms McNulty:** Our inspectors have said to us that they do affirm good schools and acknowledge good teaching. That is something that they would want us to say. That is exactly the point: schools that have had a bad experience, for whatever reason, will possibly be those who will be more vocal about the report.
797. **Mr Lunn:** The inspectorate could perhaps be a bit more generous in praising good practice.
798. **Ms McNulty:** We would attest that it is.
799. **Mr Lunn:** OK. We hear from other organisations that are involved, and it is chalk and cheese. Sometimes you would not think that you were talking about the same subject. It would be useful to get the balance right, and I am sure that the inspectors would agree with that.
800. **Mrs Dobson:** Trevor has asked most of the questions that I was going to ask. I am somewhat baffled by your take on the relationship with teachers. Janette, you described the inspectorate as being like a critical friend. From chatting to teachers, my impression is that with friends like that, they do not need many enemies.
801. Speaking with my agriculture hat on, I have to say that it reminds me so much of farmers' opinions of departmental officials. The farmers would say that officials used to come out to help you but that now they come out to get you. The impression that I get from speaking to teachers is that you are out to get them and that you are certainly not a critical friend. You have a lot of work to do to build that relationship with the teachers.
802. Trevor touched on the fact that inspectors work from home, and you talked about a feeling of isolation. They need to do more: speak with other inspectors and develop relationships in order to deal with the impression that head teachers have of them.
803. Chris Hazzard mentioned that the Scottish inspectorate has 40 development days a year. You get a couple of days, possibly. Would NIPSA support the adoption of the Scottish inspection system?

804. **Mr T McMullan:** You raised a number of points. First, I accept that, having talked to teachers, you have a different opinion about the idea of a critical friend. Our members fundamentally believe that they are a critical friend, in the sense that they want to be supportive of teachers and that they want to identify good and bad practice. If they were not doing their job professionally and competently and did not point out where there were weak practices, they would be failing in their job, not just on behalf of the Department and the Executive but, more importantly, on behalf of the children. Our members believe that that is fundamentally their job. However, they do not want to get into a war situation in which there would always be friction between them and teachers. They want to work together. In many senses — at least, this is reported to us — teachers do accept where there are weaknesses in areas. There could be a whole variety of factors: socio-economic factors; the location of a school; or the size of a school. In many cases, teachers accept that their school is failing in some respects and accept the report. In other areas, as in life, not everyone likes being challenged.
805. **Mrs Dobson:** You appreciate that a heavy-handed approach would not lead to a good working relationship with teachers.
806. **Mr T McMullan:** Absolutely, I accept that. Our members would not want a situation in which teachers believed that they were coming in with a heavy hand. They believe that they go into schools to do a professional job. Clearly, from what you have said, that does not appear to be happening in all cases. That is certainly not the impression that we are getting from our members. You say that they need to build relationships —
807. **Mrs Dobson:** You say that they work from home and in isolation. Are they so out of touch or isolated that they are not picking that up?
808. **Mr T McMullan:** I do not believe that. Although they work in isolation, a minimum of two inspectors go
- to each school, and, as identified earlier, there could be up to eight on certain occasions. So they talk to one other, but they do not work in office accommodation where they see people every single day. That is why we have suggested that more time is needed for professional development.
809. We do not say that the Scottish system in its entirety should be brought to Northern Ireland. We believe that we should look at best practice elsewhere. If there are good elements of best practice, and there is certainly one in professional development, they should be brought to Northern Ireland. However, we do not suggest automatically replacing ETI with the Scottish system.
810. **Mrs Dobson:** There is certainly a lot of work to be done to gain the confidence of the teachers and to be seen as assisting rather than policing them.
811. **Ms McNulty:** Again, that is not the experience of our members. It may well be that some teachers feel like that, but, in general, our members say that they have a very good relationship with schools.
812. **Mrs Dobson:** Perhaps they need to talk more to the teachers.
813. **The Chairperson:** May I conclude by clarifying something? It follows on from Tony's point about good practice. I just wonder whether there is a fear factor in NIPSA. We have talked about the fear factor in schools, but is there one in NIPSA, too? Paragraph 14 refers to good practice fit for the education system that operates in Northern Ireland. It goes on to mention specifically the poor press about Ofsted and states:
- "NIPSA would urge caution about importing methods and ways of working with schools".*
814. Who would be responsible for importing such methods and ways of working with schools that would not be suitable for the Northern Ireland system? There is a direct link back to Ofsted. Is there a fear that the current chief inspector, who is a former employee of Ofsted, might be responsible for importing methods

- and ways of working that might not be suitable for Northern Ireland?
815. **Mr T McMullan:** As well as our own experience, we talk to colleagues in unions that represent members in Ofsted, and, indeed, in other areas. Although we are a uniquely Northern Ireland-based trade union, we have close relationships with colleagues in other unions in other jurisdictions. We are aware, not least through those relationships but also because, as citizens, we read the press and watch the television, of the very difficult relationship between Ofsted, teacher unions and other organisations in Britain. We do not believe that the Ofsted model is a good one. We are not highlighting this particularly to the chief inspector; we are saying to anyone, be it the chief inspector, the Minister or anyone from the Department as a whole that we do not believe that Ofsted would be the best model for Northern Ireland. We want to continue with what we have but, where we can, advance it and make it better.
816. **The Chairperson:** Surely that enhances the argument that ETI should be a separate entity, not part or parcel of the Department but completely outside it, and that the chief inspector should not sit on the senior management team. As clearly indicated, somebody is meddling and interfering, which affects development proposals. Surely we would be in a better position if we had an independent inspectorate that had a clear remit to be an advocate for learners and had the child at its centre. Such an inspectorate could comment on all the policy and other issues but would not be inextricably linked to the Department in the way that it is perceived currently: solely to ensure that the most recent circular, policy or whatever comes from the Department is implemented. As Chris Stewart made very clear, the inspectorate is the Department. In many other regimes in Northern Ireland, that has not been acceptable. It is not acceptable for the police to investigate themselves; we need an ombudsman. It is not acceptable for health professionals; we need an independent arbiter. Yet, in education, we have a cosy relationship that taints the transparency and openness of the system. This is not an attack on individual inspectors, because I value their professionalism and the work that they do; it is about the process in which they are involved.
817. **Mr T McMullan:** We look at the experience of other places. Ofsted is not part of the Department for Education in Britain, yet there are still enormous difficulties, criticism and friction. So being independent of the Department will not, in itself, resolve any problems. Even if the ETI was independent of the Department, it could still get as its chief executive a person from Ofsted. The independence issue is, in our view, not the critical factor. We believe that the ETI is best served by being within the Department but with a degree of autonomy, which it has. That is to the best advantage of our members but, more importantly, the people whom we serve: the children.
818. **The Chairperson:** Tony and Janette, thank you very much for your submission and your time. We look forward to continuing the dialogue and discussion with you.

13 November 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

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

Witnesses:

Mr Stephen Black	<i>Association of</i>
Mr David Knox	<i>Controlled Grammar</i>
	<i>Schools</i>
Mr Frank Cassidy	<i>Association of School</i>
Mr Scott Naismith	<i>and College Leaders</i>

819. **The Chairperson:** I welcome Stephen Black, a member of the Association of Controlled Grammar Schools; Mr David Knox, the chairman of the Association of Controlled Grammar Schools; Mr Frank Cassidy, a regional officer of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL); and Mr Scott Naismith, the president of Association of School and College Leaders.

820. I thank you for agreeing to do the session jointly. That is very commendable. I also appreciate the time that you have taken to make a presentation to the Committee on its inquiry. I hand over to Scott or David.

821. **Mr David Knox (Association of Controlled Grammar Schools):** Chairman, thank you very much for the opportunity to make our voices heard. You will have read the points that we submitted to you expressing our concerns.

822. Although I am wearing my controlled heads hat today, I am also a member of ASCL, and I used to travel over to council four times a year to represent

Northern Ireland head teachers and heard from English heads their experience of inspection under Ofsted. I heard all kinds of horror stories about the regime of fear under which they operated, and I would fly home very happy to be coming back to some good old Ulster common sense and a world in which there was respect for teachers, head teachers and schools. Now, I have concerns that we are moving into something that might become much more akin to what has happened over the years in England: a culture of fear, failure and reprisal. I hear talk of schools being inspected every three years in future, whether they are good or not; a chief inspector being brought in from Ofsted — I am not getting personal; I am just connecting the name of the chief inspector to the organisation called Ofsted — head teachers being accountable at the point of delivery; and head teachers leaving their jobs because of unsatisfactory inspection reports. I hope that the Committee will do all in its power to prevent our education system becoming a culture of fear. That would be counterproductive.

823. Why are we moving to a position that we only allow schools two weeks' notice of inspections? Does our inspectorate think that it is helpful to put head teachers and teachers under more stress than they feel at the moment? That said, I, and many of my colleagues, have had sound relationships with our inspectorate over the years. We want our children to have the highest-quality education. We also recognise that head teachers and teachers must be accountable and that inspections must be of the highest quality from the analysis of data to the classroom observation. However, they must also be flexible enough to recognise that there are many different styles of leadership that can be effective and many different styles of teaching that can induce learning.

824. We want to make one or two specific points. An inspectorate questionnaire that seeks views from staff on the leadership in schools is a blunt instrument that can be used by those who have an agenda or a gripe. It has done damage in the past, and it would be good if that blunt instrument could be reviewed and replaced by something better. Is the inspectorate convincing enough on its claim that it confirms good practice in schools, or is there a focus on finding issues and judging when it goes into schools? Are we convinced that our current inspection framework is fit for purpose and value for money? How long has it been since some inspectors have been, or have taught, in a classroom? How much experience do they have of leadership, motivating staff and doing the job that school leaders do? If we want to improve schools, it needs to be part of a wider debate with all stakeholders, including parents and governors. A short, damning report will inflict great damage and will not build on or improve anything. There may be short-term gains, but how many good schools have emerged from the debris of a damning inspection report?
825. I will stop there, because I know that we are splitting the time. More things will probably come out in the questions.
826. **The Chairperson:** Thanks, David.
827. **Mr Scott Naismith (Association of School and College Leaders):** I will speak on behalf of ASCL. I start by saying that we concur with David. I have had experience of attending ASCL conferences in England that were addressed by the Chief Inspector, and I have seen the fear of inspection and for career advancement and puzzlement at why the Ofsted model appears to undermine rather than enhance school improvement.
828. I have also been fortunate enough to have had experience of the former Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) in Scotland, which had a different model and one that is very much focused on self-evaluation, quality assurance and inspectors working alongside school leaders and school communities to bring about sustained improvement.
829. We fully accept that with leadership come enhanced responsibility and accountability. However, accountability should not be a blame game; it should not be about trying to destroy the professional integrity of individuals and, regrettably, that can be — as David said — the outcome of negative inspections. I know that that is not the intention of the inspectorate. Unfortunately, however, once a report is out there, it is like posting it on Facebook; it is beyond your control. The way in which it is often interpreted in the media and in the wider community can lead to horrifying unintended consequences. Recently, our press carried front-page stories of a principal receiving death threats on the back of a community's reaction to an inspection report. That is repulsive and reprehensible, and it is not what the system should be about; it should be about identifying the issues and bringing about improvement. We need to know how we measure success in schools. What is it that we are looking for? Is it just about exam results? We seem to be obsessed by that single individual measure, especially in the post-primary sector.
830. Measuring value added is very challenging, but we have to look at it and address it in the review. The current measures of school performance, benchmark comparisons and inspections do not always identify the true value added to pupils' attainments in a school or allow them to be reflected. At a time when crucial judgements are being made about the sustainability and effectiveness of schools, it is vital that we get those judgements right and that they are fair and consistent. Standardised robust tracking systems are needed to measure the value added to pupil attainment from the beginning of primary school right through to the end of post-primary. That is why ASCL supports the introduction of common standardised assessment to provide objective benchmarking data. If

you can measure progress, you need to have a common fixed staffing point from which you measure.

831. It is also why we support a move to focus on the point/score average of pupils at different times in their educational life, as that would shift the emphasis away from performance in the C/D borderline that happens in England to the detriment of the curriculum. It can happen in schools here as well to pupils' detriment. We want to avoid corrupting the curriculum by moving away from that brutal, simplistic measure; we want to focus on what needs to be improved for every child in a school, not just those in the middle. That is why we need to find ways of considering the context in which pupils work, learn and live. Often, inspectors say that they try, through the questionnaires, the feedback and their observations, to take account of life in a school and what its pupils face. However, at present, we are banded in using the blunt measure of free school meals entitlement. Again, that does not always reveal the true picture of the challenges that many pupils and their families face in the school community and the value that the school adds to individual pupils. Therefore, we need to take full recognition of the opportunities that pupils are afforded in school to acquire not just qualifications but the skills and dispositions that employers, universities and society value. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) knows what it is looking for: confident individuals — youngsters who are curious, creative and have self-discipline, and who demonstrate entrepreneurship, independence and resilience. If we are to measure schools' success and their value added, we need to open up how we evaluate and quality-assure; we need to ensure that those skills and dispositions, and the things that schools do to promote them, are included as well.

832. **The Chairperson:** I apologise, as I have to step out for a few minutes. I will be back, and the Deputy Chairperson will take over. However, before I go, I want to ask one question. With regard to

the submission, particularly from the controlled grammars, you make the comment:

"The improvements brought about through the inspection process must be real improvements in educational outcomes resulting from real improvements to leadership and teaching and learning."

833. Do you believe that school inspections still serve the school improvement process?
834. **Mr Knox:** I am very interested in the paper by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) and its proposal that detailed research be carried out to determine the impact of inspections on schools and on school improvement. I think that improvements may follow inspection.
835. I am more concerned about the damning inspection report that makes it difficult for schools and school leaders to pick themselves up after the inspectorate has left. As my colleague said, sometimes, after the inspectorate has left, the media move in. However, I do not think that the Ofsted model — if that is where we are going — leads to long-term, genuine school improvements. It may prompt knee-jerk, short-term improvements, and there are all sorts of ways in which results and the evidence of outcome can be massaged and manipulated. However, what we are looking for are real, deep-rooted changes and improvements in schools.
836. **The Chairperson:** One of the things that were highlighted in the submission given to us by a union representing the inspectors, when it came before us last week, was the following passage. I am sure that you have read it:

"However, Inspectors who conduct the inspection need greater assurances about the finality of their decisions and the fact that evaluations may not be over-turned from anywhere outside of the original inspection team."

837. In your members' experience, has there been much of that in evidence, from the verbal feedback that the school would get to what, ultimately, becomes

the final report? To us, that was a very alarming comment. We have tried to delve into it and we continue to try to find out who was referred to.

838. **Mr Frank Cassidy (Association of School and College Leaders):** There is a great deal of evidence that there are concerns from school leaders that, as my colleagues have suggested, the full context of the school situation is not always factored in by the reporting team. It is true that representations are often made post-inspection to try to ameliorate some of the findings that a school might think were unfair or inaccurate. However, our experience is that those judgements are rarely changed, and the integrity of the report, as made by the reporting team, is generally upheld by the inspectorate. Our experience in supporting members who have had difficulties with inspection is that we would be disappointed if genuine concerns were not taken on board, post-inspection, and factored in afterwards.

(The Deputy Chairperson [Mr Kinahan] in the Chair)

839. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you. I am sorry that we have had to change Chair in the middle of that. That aspect was of great concern to the Committee.
840. **Mr Rogers:** You are very welcome.
841. I turn to the matter of school self-evaluation and particularly to what is happening in Scotland. Last week, we listened to the boards and they can do a little in the way of formal intervention by providing the Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS) support and so on for schools that are having particular issues. However, they are really firefighting. There is no high quality staff development for embedding self-evaluation in your school. What are your comments on that? To me, if your self-evaluation is really well embedded in your school after two or three cycles of school development planning, the inspectorate could become a quality assurance mechanism.

842. What is happening in the Scottish system is related to that. There, ETI is more aligned with CASS, or your development is more aligned there. Can we have your comments on that? I have one more point. I like what you said about how it is not all about driving for exam results. Education is about developing the whole person. Unfortunately, when we see the statistics produced as league tables and so on, it seems that only results matter. They take away from that. In Scotland, they have moved away from publishing those league tables, though the school may publish its own. To me, that is a benefit. In order to get that value-added right, do we not also need baseline assessment when a child joins a school? Perhaps you could give us your comments on those aspects, please.
843. **Mr Naismith:** I will comment on the first one. As regards the bespoke support that is required after an inspection, ASCL has been working with other providers to develop leadership development programmes. That will encourage and, hopefully through government support and backing, provide funding to release expertise in the system, which by and large would come from other schools that have their self-evaluation processes in place and have succeeded to mentor and support those leadership teams that require guidance in that area. To me, that goes hand in hand with the way in which schools are funded. It would be more effective if schools had money delegated directly into their budgets so that they could buy in what they need from where they need it, whether that be locally or from across the water, as a group, an area-learning community or an organisation together. ASCL ran a conference last week. One hundred principals and vice-principals attended. We brought in expertise from where we thought we most needed it. It also came from outside education. That is hugely beneficial. At present, however, we are too constrained about where we source that support, which is vital. If there are specific problems in a school, it needs

- to be liberated to buy in the necessary solutions.
844. I agree about the baseline assessment. However, as I said in my opening statement, if you are going to measure the progress of an individual or an institution, you need a standard common point from which to measure. Baseline assessment would be one way in which to identify that. That could happen at different points throughout a pupil's career, and it gives an indication. It should not be the one and only, sole thing that is looked at. The concern is that that is overemphasised. However, it is a starting point. If there is a common starting point, it allows some form of objective measurement. That should then initiate discussion and debate about progress afterwards.
845. **Mr Knox:** I could not agree more with what you have said. A number of years ago, the inspectorate experimented with quality assurance inspections. That would be the natural outcome of schools becoming more skilled in self-evaluation. However, it seems to me that that is definitely not the direction of travel. It would avoid the culture of fear to which I referred in my opening statement and create more of a culture of partnership, with the school itself taking responsibility for measuring and evaluating its outcomes.
846. **Mr Rogers:** Do you believe that the culture of fear has increased as a result? In the comprehensive spending review, everybody had to cut their cloth to fit. Last year, the budget for staff development was cut by £15 million. The proposal is to cut £20 million off it this year. Do you feel that fear has intensified as a result? Where do you go for help when you have had an inspection? Do you go to the boards or wherever else you can get that? I think that the fear has intensified because of the lack of quality staff development and the boards being fit only to firefight.
847. **Mr Knox:** The announcement was that schools would get two weeks' notice to gather the enormous amount of information that inspectors will require when they visit. In the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) Bill, in the part on inspections, the power is given to the inspectorate to come into schools, commandeer their hardware and go in search of whatever documents they want. Those kinds of measures contribute to the expectation that an inspection will be a more threatening experience than it used to be.
848. **Mr Stephen Black (Association of Controlled Grammar Schools):** You mentioned support, but the issue arises before the stage of there being inspections in schools. Through the self-evaluation that we are doing in our school, for example, we can identify where there are issues that we want to seek improvements on.
849. Ten or 15 years ago, if there was a problem, we could have gone to the board. There was a significant CASS service, and it could have provided support to a head of department who was perhaps having issues that he or she needed to address. That support is no longer there, which causes problems for all of us. We are now trying to seek ways to address that support from within, if we can do that, or through other schools. We do not get support from elsewhere.
850. You also mentioned the baseline assessment, which is absolutely vital. The inspectorate reports on the numbers of three A to C grades at AS or A level and five A to C grades at GCSE and so on, and it compares that to a notional average for selective or non-selective schools. However, intakes are not average. We benchmark our year groups when they come in in year 8, and there is a significant difference in their average CAT score from year to year. Some years, you could be performing above that average and not doing as well as you should, yet your results will be said to be good or very good. Equally, in a year when you are performing below the average, you could be doing very well for those pupils. However, because of the absence of a benchmark and measure, that is hard to do. I will give you one example of that. We worked

- quite closely with the inspectorate when we were in the specialist schools programme. I found that to be a very positive experience. At that time, we were looking at targets. As we moved through the years of that programme, through discussions, we were able to show why we were predicting a slightly lower percentage of five or seven A to C grades at GCSE. We were able to demonstrate the figures, and that was accepted by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). However, a formal inspection report is based on the overall figure. Benchmarking would take some of that away.
851. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you very much. At the beginning, David asked that the Committee does all in its power to make the inspection process as good as possible. When representatives from the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) were here last week, they almost denied that there was any fear in the system, yet every one of us have heard that. It was very important to hear that from you today.
852. **Mr Craig:** I want to try to delve into the process. Unfortunately, I have some experience of it. What are your views of the questionnaires? I have stopped calling them questionnaires and now call them gripe sheets. I find the questionnaire that goes out to parents and pupils to be pointless. If you send your child to a school, you are not going to criticise it. There would be no point in sending your child to that school, which turns it into a pointless exercise.
853. I also want to deal with the questionnaires that go to staff in schools. You are all senior managers in schools and will know what I am getting at. If you are running a school properly, you will know those who are underperforming and those who are not reaching the mark that you would like them to reach. You obviously deal with that, but they are the ones who then have the opportunity to put the knife in the back of the senior management in a school. What is your view of the value of those questionnaires?
854. **Mr Cassidy:** Based on the experience of members and the help that we have offered to members, I can tell you that there are two problems with staff surveys. As you eloquently described it, they can become gripers' charters. We have had instances in which the responses to the inspectorate have been manufactured from a central source, been duplicated and the names of a number of members of staff applied to them so that multiple complaints emanated from one source and skewed the final outcome. At a general level, if staff are given the opportunity to make complaints anonymously, they may chose to do so. In a situation in which school leaders are accountable for high performance, increasingly they have to put staff under pressure and challenge underperformance. We have found that when there is a genuine challenge of underperformance, principals are subject to personal attacks in the circumstances that are offered by the staff survey. That is the first problem.
855. In a sense, the second problem is worse. A snap or standard inspection can take three days. The inspectors have a limited time and make choices about what they will look at in a school. Much of that time can be misdirected by the outcomes from the staff survey, and the inspectorate can then focus on often bogus claims of, for example, poor communication between staff and leadership and miss the best practice in a school. Therefore, the overall judgement is skewed simply because of the amount of time for the inspection is used up by following and tracking down claims from the staff survey.
856. **Mr Naismith:** If a school is doing its self-evaluation properly, the questionnaires should be redundant as the issues should have been identified. We do our school development planning and survey staff pupils and parents. We ask the sort of questions that the inspectorate would ask if it came in, but we also ask tougher questions and are able to have the discussions afterwards and note the contextualisation of the responses to the questions. The inspectorate will

- miss the higher-quality evidence if it takes more time to focus on a snapshot questionnaire than those sorts of returns, which are compiled over a sustained period of time.
857. We have no issues about that information being made available to inspecting teams that come into schools because, again, it looks at how well a school carries out its function of quality assurance. It will also get the quality data that the inspectors can work with, and they can be directed to look at what they need to look at.
858. **Mr Black:** As schools, we all want to gauge opinion from our pupils, parents and staff, and, in my school, we have brought in outside providers to do that. We have used Kirkland Rowell, which is recognised across the UK for doing that work. We have also used other organisations that are connected with staff well-being. We are keen to hear that information.
859. To echo what Scott said, if schools are doing that, we can clearly identify the areas of concern and start to address them. It is about having a self-evaluation in place, and a quality assurance process of that certainly gives more validity to it. We are keen to hear what our staff have to say, but there is a context for it, and the context is very different if it is done in a Kirkland Rowell survey, which is confidential, or a staff well-being survey rather than in a standard inspection.
860. **The Deputy Chairperson:** That is what I was going to ask.
861. **Mr Craig:** I also want to ask you about the feedback that you get from the inspectorate when it sits down with you, senior management and the governors. Quite clearly, it will identify areas of concern. That is its job and what it is there for. It is very good at doing that and at using the statistics that are held in schools to point to problems and issues. Sometimes, it will also point out individuals.
862. If the governors and the senior managers are doing their jobs correctly, you will smile at them. You will have known that anyway and will have been trying to deal with it. What is your view of the inspectorate pointing out those issues and then walking away? No assistance, support or guidance is given to anyone, including senior management or boards of governors, about how you could help to resolve some of those underlying issues.
863. **Mr Cassidy:** We have a serious concern about the difficulty in addressing underperformance in the system. Procedures are in place for dealing with unsatisfactory performance. School leaders are familiar with those procedures and carefully follow them. However, we are finding that there is not the support from the system when school leaders want to take on some of those underperformance cases. There is not the support for that from boards, the Department or the inspectorate. School leaders can find themselves out on a limb and subject to personal attack from teaching unions defending their members. That can get into the press and add to or be just as bad as bad inspection issues being taken to press level. So if we are genuine about improving the system, we must be supportive of the genuine desire of school leaders to address underperformance, which is often identified in the context of inspection. However, you are absolutely right: that is left on the plate of school leaders, and there is not the support or the mechanism to deliver on the procedures that have been agreed but are almost impossible to use for fear of financial penalty and union opposition.
864. **Mr Craig:** I am really getting at the fact that, rather than working with a school and its leadership on those issues, the approach is very much, "Here's your problem; I am away, goodbye". The inspectorate gives no support, despite the fact that it writes the report.
865. Chair, you will be glad to hear that that brings me to my last point, which concerns the language that is used in the final reports. You know what happens. It is the final page, and what

- is said there will dictate where the press goes with the whole thing. The language used damns a school or praises it to high heaven, but there is no in between. The other difficulty is that a school can fail on perhaps one or two specific areas, and that brings down the whole house of cards. The inspectorate does not concentrate on the two problem areas but instead damns the whole system. What are your views on that?
866. **Mr Naismith:** That may come back to the notion that inspectors are constrained by the systems that have been set up. I know that they would probably appreciate an opportunity to give more nuances to sophisticated inspection reports, which, as you correctly say, would then be able to identify the real strengths in a school and perhaps give some explanation for the statistical anomalies that occur. Stephen referred to those earlier when he said that headline statistics can look really good or as though a school is underperforming, when, in fact, significant value has been added to the learning outcomes and attainment of its pupils. Opportunities to put that information into inspection reports must be taken. Unfortunately, they are also constrained by the requirement to use stock phrases so reports can become very bland. In comparison, Ofsted reports or those from Education Scotland are able to be more effusive, more directly critical but, therefore, ultimately more useful to the end user. We want to end up with that, with something that gives you a constructive document that school leaders and a school community can use to move forward.
867. **Mr Knox:** The inspectorate's view on this, although I think that it must speak for itself, is that it is very unfortunate that the press comes in and behaves unfairly towards a head teacher. The inspectorate dislikes that as much as we do but feels that nothing can be done about it. However, when the inspectors write that final report, they should be thinking about how it may be picked up in the media and adjust the wording in that light. They should take responsibility for how their words are interpreted.
868. **Mr Craig:** What you are saying, David, is that we need a bit more flexibility in the wording as well. We know what the press is like, and the four or five columns at the end of a report are all that it is interested in. The language used in that part of the report is the problem.
869. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Stephen, when you spoke about Kirkland Rowell, you almost stated that we should have some form of independent assessment of the inspection system for all schools, or something that you can all use if you do not have CASS helping you at one end. Is that what you are saying?
870. **Mr Black:** It is important for everybody to have an understanding of where their staff sit and the pupils' and parents' opinion of the school. As a school, we value that, and we have put money into it. It would not necessarily be within every school's ability to do that. It is important that people have a sense of where their school is sitting. In exactly the same way, we talk about benchmarking. Many schools spend significant amounts of money to give us a baseline of where pupils are to benchmark our pupils. That is all being done by a lot of people. If it were being done centrally, we would have a better idea of where schools are in general.
871. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Scott, you mentioned two areas that always seem to be missed out. You talked about the context of the pupils, and you also talked about the CBI and what it wants. Will you expand a bit on both those issues? I get the feeling that the inspection process should assess both of those and become part of the process.
872. **Mr Naismith:** That is perhaps the point of the inspection at which you discuss with your senior team and the inspection team what they have seen. That should be an opportunity to elaborate on why certain pupils or members of staff

- present in the way that they do, why their outcomes are the way that they are, and to give much more detail and, sometimes, confidential information on the performance and achievements of individuals. It is also an opportunity to broaden out the categories that inspectors look at in schools. They often miss what happens outside a classroom and after school hours. What about all the additional support that teachers offer? Not only do they provide additional study lessons or support around exam time but they listen to pupils' problems and issues.
873. Reference is made to the quality of relationship identified in the classroom. Very often, however, they miss out on the places in which that relationship is developed: the lunchtime clubs, the after-school activities and events at which staff engage with parents in the evenings. That requires inspectors to spend more time considering that or discussing it again so that that can be reflected in an inspection report.
874. The CBI is strong on the idea of looking at the skills and dispositions that pupils develop. Schools develop those through the learning processes in the classroom and the subject areas. Most importantly, a lot of the leadership skills, managing information, working with others and problem solving are developed even further outside the classroom. The opportunity is sometimes missed to see the pupils who perform reasonably well or adequately in examinations but have those skills in spades, demonstrate them in the school community and beyond and have gained the confidence to do that in the environment in which they are being educated.
875. The CBI is also interested in looking at outcomes, such as where the pupils go afterwards, what their destination is and how they have taken the education that they received and used it to progress to the next level. That should not and must not be just the blunt instrument of asking how many of a school's pupils go on to university. That is not necessarily the most appropriate destination. Certainly, because of university fees, fewer and fewer pupils will take that route. Are they going into companies in which they are getting opportunities to develop through new apprenticeship schemes? Are they going into gap years? Are they starting up their own businesses? Are they taking what they gained in school and using it constructively? That might mean looking at them in not just the year in which they leave but maybe five years after that. It is a more sophisticated measure, but that can give a huge amount of information about how well a school is serving its community.
876. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I am very grateful for that, because those two things are phenomenally important. We really have to push for those.
877. **Mr Newton:** I have to say that, historically, I always regarded school inspectors as nearly being infallible; I put them on that sort of pedestal. I did some previous work experience as an assessor, so I have a wee bit of an understanding.
878. Before you came in, I asked a question about the school inspection process. I was assured that the information was available on the website and that anybody, even an idiot like me, could follow it and understand it. It is simple, open and transparent.
879. **I note in your submission that you said:**
"There is a level of mystery, uncertainty and confusion around the inspection process, how it operates and how our schools are evaluated. If teachers, school leaders and the public are to have faith in the ETI and the inspection process, it is essential that all aspects of that process are carried out in an open, honest and transparent manner. The outcome of an inspection should not come as a surprise to anyone."
880. What is your experience of an inspection and how it operates, if the process is already established?
881. **Mr Naismith:** I will answer one half of that, and then I will pass over to Frank to answer the other half, because he has more direct experience of that aspect.

882. **You are correct:** if you go to the ETI website, you will find a significant amount of information outlining the inspection process and the headline items that inspectors are looking for, and information for teachers and pupils about what it means. It is a very broad introduction to inspections.

883. Once the inspection team is in the school and begins its work, what exactly is it that the team is looking for? Sometimes, there is a compliance agenda and an expectation that something should not only be done but done in a certain way. Things such as that can change over a period of months or years, and it is not until schools are inspected that they find that out. I know that the inspectorate is keen to address this issue, because it does not want there to be a disconnect between what its leadership is expecting from inspections and what actually happens on the ground.

(The Chairperson [Mr Storey] in the Chair)

884. **Mr Cassidy:** We have often asked the inspectorate this question: what is it that you want to see when you go into schools; what are the headline experiences that you want to see? In addition to the description of how an inspection process works, there are quality indicators, which are available and easily accessible. However, schools are very complex organisations, and the process of education is much more intricate than that.

885. The problem that I am trying to identify is that the agenda that a school may be following, and the priorities that it has set for itself in its planning, are two or three years in the making. Schools are expected to conform to the continual sequence of initiatives that come down the line from DE.

886. When an inspection happens, there can be a disconnect between what the inspectorate is looking for and what the school is actually working on at that time. In many cases, schools are ahead of DE agenda to which they are responding. Perhaps it could be

the entitlement curriculum, the new assessment procedures, or initiatives to encourage shared education projects. The inspectorate has an agenda that is quite firmly fixed, and it is slow to respond to new agendas. Perhaps that is a necessary side effect of having established, agreed procedures in that the inspectorate is not responsive to the speed of change in education.

887. My experience and that of others has been that inspection can lag behind where schools actually are. So, when the process arrives in your school, the inspectors have a set procedure that they follow, and, sometimes, when you present them with the latest thing that you are doing, it is not on their radar screens and it is not what they want to focus on. They want to look at this, this and this, and only these things.

888. This overlaps into two of the things that we discussed previously. First, unsatisfactory performance can be missed because inspectors are simply looking for a checklist on what is happening in a classroom. Secondly, good practice in extracurricular activity, and the huge value that that adds to pupils' experience in schools, can also be missed because it is not on the checklist either. Therefore, judgements are made through headline statistics and an agenda that may be slightly out of date and may miss a lot of the value. Does that answer your question?

889. **Mr Newton:** It does, but it gives me cause for concern. There seems to be only a very rigid comment made. From what you say, there is a very rigid, fixed process and where you have, through your own staff development plans or leadership qualities, gone beyond what is stipulated in whatever area — if I take you up correctly — it is ignored because of the rigidity of the process. It is a tick-box process.

890. **Mr Cassidy:** I have been involved in research into area learning communities, and I have published work on it since I left headship a couple of years ago. One of the things that we found is that there is a tension

- between the time that principals have to give to the DE agendas, requirements and the compliance issues that Scott mentioned, and the need to go outside and be part of the bigger education community and serve the system by investing time, energy and focus outside your own school. Sadly, there is a penalty for doing that. Time not focused on compliance issues can leave a school vulnerable to criticism through inspection.
891. **Mr Newton:** Do schools ever apply for the Investors in People awards?
892. **Mr Cassidy:** Yes, they do.
893. **Mr Newton:** How would you compare that assessment with the schools inspectorate assessment?
894. **Mr Naismith:** I suppose that the benefit of Investors in People is that it is an ongoing development process in which you are setting the agenda and targets for yourself and you can home in on very specific issues. As you go through the criteria you can say: "We will do that, that and that to this standard." Or, someone may have identified three or four areas in which you need to improve. You get that improvement, and it is recognised and rewarded. It is a very helpful structure for improving staff support and development. Although it is used within an institution, people from outside lend support, give advice and direct you to best practice.
895. Let me come back to your original question. A couple of points have occurred to me —
896. **Mr Newton:** Forgive me, is that not what one might expect from an inspection procedure? Should you not be getting helpful advice, pointers and so on?
897. **Mr Naismith:** It is, exactly. That is what you would hope for, rather than just a list of what needs to be fixed or of what is unsatisfactory and must be sorted out. When lessons and schools are graded, what is good and outstanding in the classroom? I have a very good idea of what can be outstanding practice when I walk into a classroom. For staff development, we use a lot of materials produced, ironically, by Ofsted, where they identify, film, record and share, because we want to improve not only the teaching in our school but teaching standards throughout the system for all pupils.
898. However, we do not actually get that feedback. Even during an inspection, an individual teacher will not get direct feedback from an inspector on his performance in the classroom. That quality of information is necessary, and there is a role for the district inspector to provide ongoing support and identification of issues so that, when the full inspection comes, the issues are already being addressed and the district inspector can say:
- "I know that that school knows about this and that the school is doing x, y and z about it. I also know that school well, and I know about all the other value-added things that go on there."*
899. So, district inspectors could have a role and an input, and it would not be just a snapshot. They would be able to give the story over a prolonged period of time. Some of them are very good at that. They say to schools: "We have seen this in that school; you might want to try that"; "Give so-and-so a phone call"; or "Do you mind if I get another principal to get in touch with your head of such-and-such a department?" That is really helpful, and that is what we need more of: conductivity.
900. **Mr Black:** Can I come in on that?
901. **The Chairperson:** Yes.
902. **Mr Black:** I think that we need to divorce the role of inspections a wee bit. They are not all about standard inspections. There are inspection visits to schools in relation to other areas. In the time that I have been in Antrim, we have had a standard inspection and inspection visits related to our specialist schools. We have been part of survey inspections for Learning for Life and Work and leadership development. I found those inspection visits to be very useful, as did the staff involved in them.

- They pointed out elements of good practice to us. We perhaps felt that they were good practice, but it was good to get them affirmed as such. Equally, they pointed out a few areas that we could look at to see whether we could develop them. It is done in a slightly different atmosphere to that of a whole school inspection.
903. I have a very good relationship with our district inspector. Perhaps I am very fortunate in that regard. It is good to hear other people's opinions of your school and to look at things in your school. We need to be careful to recognise that there are many examples of good practice going on. We want to try to build on those. Maybe I am fortunate, but my experience of those inspections is good. I know that other people would say different things.
904. **Mr Lunn:** I have a couple of things, because you have answered a fair bit of what I might have asked you. David, when you gave your presentation, you particularly mentioned the damning report that really scars a school, and perhaps a principal, and leaves it difficult for them to recover. What is the role of the board of governors in all this? I find it hard to believe that such a report could come out of the blue. I am not sure what the cycle of inspections is at the moment, but schools do not fail overnight. Does more attention need to be given to the role of the board of governors to make sure that it does what is supposed to be its job in between inspections?
905. **Mr Knox:** I raised that issue and concentrated on the culture of fear in England because, in many cases in England, the role of the board of governors has been to sack the principal. Some principals have been away within a very short time of a damning inspection report. We do not have that in Northern Ireland, although a number of principals have left their post after a bad inspection report. We do not want that in Northern Ireland. The role of the board of governors should be to work with the principal to address the issues raised by the inspectorate.
906. **Mr Lunn:** You might conclude that, in some cases, that is not happening.
907. **Mr Knox:** It is probably true in some cases that that has not been happening and that, in the case of controlled schools, board teams have moved in to try to address those issues. In many cases, the board teams that moved in have provided training for staff on some of the issues that have been raised. Obviously, that is very important.
908. **Mr Lunn:** Without being specific, you get the impression sometimes that the board of governors sat on its hands, when there were indicators that things were not quite right, and perhaps just accepted what it was told at board meetings. The inspectorate then produces one of your damning reports, at which point the board of governors almost turns on the principal. That hardly seems fair, given that it has the responsibility initially to control the activities of the school as best it can and try to identify some of the issues.
909. Maybe it points to a lack of experience, knowledge or expertise among governors generally, which will perhaps be addressed to some extent by the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) — they all laugh, because I always mention ESA. The ESA Bill will have something to say about the responsibility of governors. We will see what happens to that legislation.
910. There is another thing, while I am on the subject. You mentioned the sections of the ESA Bill that refer to the role of the inspectorate. When we talk to people such as you, having talked to the inspectorate, you really would think that we were on different planets. As far as the inspectorate is concerned, the clauses in the ESA Bill, as currently drafted, are really just tidying up what is already available to the inspectorate anyway. I think that you mentioned that it has the power to lift and take away documents and equipment. I am not standing over the Bill, because I really do not know which is the correct version. However, is it the case that the ESA Bill will provide the inspectorate —

- in your opinion or in any of your opinions — with more draconian powers than it has at the moment?
911. **Mr Knox:** It was the assumption underlying that part of the Bill that school principals would try to hide documents from the inspectorate. I will provide the inspectorate with whatever documents it requires when it comes to my school. I have no difficulty in doing that, and I would be very surprised if other principals were not the same. What have we got to hide? What would require the inspectorate to have the power to come and commandeer my computer to find the documents that it seeks?
912. **Mr Lunn:** It already has that power. I accept that, when the regulation was drafted, computers probably did not exist, which was part of the problem. It is an opportunity to tidy up the various orders and regulations that govern the powers of inspectors. That is the way that I see it. Is that unfair? Do any of you think that the inspectorate is getting more power out of this proposed exercise than it has at the moment?
913. **Mr Knox:** I do not know whether they could have come in and said, “I want to take your computer away and look for x, y, or z documents.”
914. **Mr Craig:** The PSNI can do that.
915. **The Chairperson:** Jonathan, will you ask your question very quickly, because I want to get to Chris and then to —
916. **Mr Craig:** In fairness to Trevor, he raised a good issue. Some boards of governors just do not have the expertise, and they need help too.
917. I want to ask you about the timing of some of the reports, because I found this laughable. If the board of governors and senior management in a school have identified issues, and they are in the process, as I found myself, of actually reorganising the whole structure in the school to deal with those issues — I will give you an example of what happened. We were in the process of appointing a new head of maths because we knew that there was an issue there, and we wanted the whole thing dealt with. We failed to hold the interviews because the inspectors came in and scuppered the whole process. And, what was the one main criticism within the inspectorate’s report? It was that there was no head of mathematics. We have to look at timing. What are your views on that? I thought that what they did was almost criminal.
918. **Mr Cassidy:** The remit of the inspectorate is to report on what it sees and what it finds —
919. **Mr Craig:** At that point in time.
920. **Mr Cassidy:** — and all of its comments have to be evidence-based, and we totally respect that. The conversation that we have had this morning underlines the fact that context is everything, and the wider long-term experience of the school and its record over a number of years has to be set alongside the evidence-based findings on a particular day or several days.
921. **Mr Hazzard:** I want to pick up on a point that has been made a couple of times. I know that Sean has majored on it before. It is the idea of building the capacity for self-evaluation in schools so that we get to a point where an inspection or an evaluation is done by or done with, rather than done to, the actual school. Looking at some of the submissions on this — there is a particular one today — it appears that we have travelled quite a way. The inspection process is improving as we go forward. However, maybe self-evaluation is one of the big, last, key things to really help drive it forward.
922. As for your points on building the capacity for self-evaluation in schools, how do we do that? How do we get to the stage where we really trust and rely on schools to self-evaluate? I know that Pasi Sahlberg is coming to the North to deal with the Department for Employment and Learning’s (DEL) teacher training. Do you have any plans to engage with that to ensure that

- self-evaluation is a key of our teacher training?
923. **Mr Cassidy:** One of the public policy positions that we are taking forward this year at ASCL is to develop middle leadership in schools. One of the problems that we have identified, and the inspectorate agrees with us on this, is that accountability has rested too much on the shoulders of the senior leaders or principal of the school. For a school to really drive forward improvement, accountability has to be taken on by the middle leadership of the school. We are talking about heads of departments and heads of sections. ASCL is going to provide training and we will work in conjunction with the University of Ulster and others. I know that there are plans from many quarters to develop this area, but we need to have a new generation of leadership in schools that will take ownership of their particular part of the enterprise and be accountable for it, self-evaluate and take that forward.
924. The trouble with schools, and the schools that we have experience of leading, is that they are very large organisations. If you are going to have effective evaluation, it needs to happen departmentally and then build to a unified overall evaluation. To do it from the top as a single operation is probably not the best way to do it. We need to change the culture of how schools evaluate themselves and how they hold themselves accountable for improvement, and that will require a change of culture. It will mean heads of department managing the staff under them more directly and addressing issues with the teachers for whom they have line-management responsibility.
925. **Mr Knox:** I think that we are becoming more and more aware of the tools that we can use for self-evaluation and we are now using those. That includes things such as Kirkland Rowell Surveys and Investors in People assessors coming into the school, but we also need to build it into the culture of the school from the bottom up as well as from the top down. We are getting better at doing that.
926. I think that the inspectorate needs to take note of the fact that schools are better at self-evaluating and are doing more self-evaluation. They have more evidence in the school to show in their self-evaluations and the ramifications of those for the style of inspection used in the future.
927. **Mr Black:** There is a lot of difference in the levels of self-evaluation going on in schools. We have talked about surveys and how we get opinions across wide ranges. In our school, we have departmental reviews of a couple of subjects each year, involving the senior leadership team going in, talking to pupils, watching classes, looking at results and so on. That then goes back to our governors, while we are talking about the governance aspect, and then through an education committee within our board of governors. We would seek to use that as a way to evaluate performance within those departments of our own schools and I think that that is very important. It is very important right down at the level of teaching. From my experience, I do not think that you can be a good teacher unless you can evaluate how your lesson went and know how you did, what went well and what did not go so well.
928. One thing that I see in teachers joining the staff now is that there is a greater awareness of that in the initial teacher training than there was previously. That culture should be built up through teachers and through departments, through what we have been given in school development days. Self-evaluation forms a big part of what we do on every one of our training days, whether it is in a subject area, a pastoral area or whatever. I think that that culture is developing in schools.
929. **Mr Newton:** Very briefly, I think I owe you, Mr Black, Mr Knox, Mr Cassidy and Mr Naismith an apology, because when I was quoting, I quoted from another document by the National Association of Head Teachers, but it seems as

though you did not disagree with their comments anyway.

930. **The Chairperson:** Thank you for that clarity. Scott, David, Stephen, Frank, thank you very much for your contribution and for your ongoing interest in this issue and many others in relation to education. I look forward to continuing to work with you.

13 November 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Ms Michaela Boyle
 Mr Jonathan Craig
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Chris Hazzard
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Sean Rogers
 Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Mr Jonathan Manning	<i>Edenbrooke Primary School</i>
Mrs Clare Majury	<i>National Association of Head Teachers</i>
Ms Fern Turner	

931. **The Chairperson:** Clare, Fern and Jonathan, thank you. Apologies for the delay in getting you in. It has run longer than we anticipated, and we are, unfortunately, constrained for time. I will go straight to the issue. Obviously we welcome the fact that you have made a submission to our inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and school improvement process. We ask you to make a presentation, and then members will have questions.

932. **Ms Fern Turner (National Association of Head Teachers):** Thank you very much. The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) is an independent trade union and a professional association. We represent members in nursery, primary, secondary and special schools across Northern Ireland, England and Wales.

933. Our team today has three members. Clare Majury is NAHT Northern Ireland president and a nursery principal in Holywood, Jonathan Manning is the principal of a school in north Belfast, and I am NAHT Northern Ireland regional officer and director of trade unions. What concerns our association is that

our children should be at the heart of the education system. Their needs should be our first priority. However, although lip service is paid to the primacy of the child, NAHT Northern Ireland is concerned that what is best for our children is too frequently sacrificed on the altar of bureaucratic convenience, compromise and sound bites.

934. Parents entrust their children into the care of the education system. They expect staff employed in our schools, the agencies established to support the work of schools and the Department of Education to work together to ensure that every child receives a quality education. However, it is of concern to this association that, instead of working together to address the issues that impact negatively on the quality of provision, schools and school leaders have been made the scapegoat for a system that is simply not functioning. For example, as a union, NAHT Northern Ireland respects the right of all employees to withdraw their labour or to engage in other forms of industrial action. In such situations, the employer and the Department should provide advice to governors and school leaders, and should seek to either resolve outstanding issues or clarify for all involved why a solution cannot be negotiated. It is of concern to this union that the Department and the employers simply ignore the impact that industrial action has on our schools. It does not affect them, so why would they worry?

935. To add insult to injury, inspectors, in their reports, will highlight poor communication, but will not refer to the fact that, because of industrial action, teachers are leaving schools at the end of the teaching day and are not engaging in staff meetings or training. If reports are to be of any value, inspectors must be willing to report the context in which our schools are working.

936. NAHT is very concerned about the use of anonymous questionnaires during the inspection process. While we are committed to the concept that all staff should have the opportunity to have an input into the inspection process, we know from experience that anonymous questionnaires can be used by individuals and organised groups as a tool to extract vengeance or achieve payback. NAHT believes that if anonymous questionnaires are to continue to be used in the system, all questionnaires should be signed and copies should be provided for the school. We believe that issues raised by parents or members of staff should be taken seriously and, where appropriate, investigated, followed up and addressed. That cannot happen if the principal and board of governors are not fully informed and are not provided with copies of the signed questionnaires.
937. It is also essential that reports produced by the ETI are fit for purpose. The reports that are produced at present are so vague and general that they are of little value to anyone, and therefore do not represent value for money. The chief inspector, in her presentation to the Education Committee, suggested that the verbal feedback filled in the gaps in the report. NAHT argues that that situation is totally unsatisfactory. We believe that at least two, but on some occasions three, different types of report should be produced at the end of an inspection process. A report in the present format would provide an insight into the workings of the school for parents and members of the community. A comprehensive and evidence-based report that highlights the school's strengths and areas for development should be produced and shared with all members of staff and governors. That report would provide a basis for follow-up after the inspection. Where teachers and school leaders, or support staff, are not working at an appropriate level, individual evidence-based reports should also be produced and shared with the individual, the principal, the chair of the governors and the employers, so that help and support can be provided and tailored to the individual's needs.
938. Reports of the quality envisaged could not be provided by inspectors who had not had recent and relevant experience of the phase of education being inspected. For that reason, NAHT urges the Education Committee to use its influence to promote a new inspection model that is based on the secondment of outstanding teachers, school leaders and support staff who have the knowledge, experience and respect that enables them to assess the work of their colleagues in our schools.
939. The ETI must also accept its responsibility and accountability for the impact that its officers have on individuals and schools. Inspectors are not infallible. On occasions, they will get it wrong, and, on those occasions, it is essential that systems are in place to enable teachers and school leaders to challenge their findings and, where necessary, lodge a complaint. That process should include access to an independent assessor.
940. NAHT acknowledges that the role of the inspectorate is not always easy. Our colleagues in NIPSA highlighted the challenges involved in passing on information that is perhaps difficult for the receiver to hear and accept. That element of an inspector's role could be made much easier if everyone in education was aware of how the process worked and the factors that are taken into consideration in the evaluation of the process. NAHT Northern Ireland is convinced that we need a process that is open and transparent. That is not the case at present. In other words, the outcome of an inspection should not surprise anyone.
941. We believe that it is unfortunate that the trust and respect that used to exist between schools and the ETI and that enabled schools to take on board those difficult messages no longer exists. There are a number of reasons for that, not least the fact that the ETI is no longer an independent organisation. The chief inspector has openly stated

- that the purpose and function of her organisation is to implement the Department's policy. As a consequence, and in the climate of area planning, it is perceived that schools are being treated differently on the basis of those plans. In addition, and because of the high-stakes nature of inspections, there is concern in our schools that some members of the inspection teams do not have the knowledge or experience to enable them to properly evaluate teaching and learning in context.
942. NAHT suggested to the ETI that some of those problems could be overcome if there was a two-way exchange of information prior to an inspection. In other words, pen pictures of members of the inspection team would be provided. However, that suggestion has been strongly resisted by the ETI and the Department of Education (DENI). NAHT finds that difficult to understand because, in the past, everyone in education knew Ivan Wallace, John Birch, Marion Matchett and Stanley Goudie's educational background. Why is the educational experience of the present inspection teams not shared?
943. NAHT Northern Ireland is also very concerned about the use of free school meals as the formula through which either funding is allocated or value added is assessed. It is evident from statistics provided by DENI and the experience of those of us working in education that the uptake of free school meals is dependent on a wide range of factors, including where a child lives and their cultural and religious background. In other words, it is a very blunt instrument that cannot be relied on to allocate resources or measure achievement. It is of concern to this association that, despite being aware of its limitations, the ETI continues to use that measure to assess achievement in our schools.
944. DENI has encouraged all schools to expand their vocational programmes and express their commitment to the promotion of vocational education. It has evidently not communicated that message to the ETI. Children are not all the same. That is a good thing for Northern Ireland as a society. In addition to the doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, dentists, businessmen and businesswomen and MLAs, our society also needs electricians, plumbers, painters, mechanics and builders. It is of concern to this association that the ETI devalues the skill courses that prepare children for skill-based careers. We believe that that is just one of the reasons why some schools appear to achieve less, despite the best efforts of teachers and school leaders.
945. NAHT Northern Ireland argues that, in the total absence of coherent structures and support, it is actually remarkable that most of our children continue to receive a quality education. Indeed, NAHT believes that that can be attributed to the quality, dedication and commitment of the teachers, school leaders and support staff who work in our schools. Therefore, we were very concerned that the chief inspector chose to present her report in a negative manner. She would surely have been aware of the impact that that would have on the morale of staff working in splendid isolation in our schools, as well as on parents and their relationship with the schools. One might also ask why the chief inspector chose to ignore the chaos that exists in almost every other aspect of the service. We could speculate, but there would be little advantage in doing so.
946. In conclusion, NAHT as a professional association and union is convinced that if we are to create a first-class education system, all of the stakeholders within that system should be held responsible and accountable for the role that they play to ensure that every child in every school receives the best education available.
947. **Mrs Clare Majury (National Association of Head Teachers):** I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for looking into this issue. As some of you will know, I am a serving principal, and my school has been inspected relatively recently — within the last three years. What I have found

- is that every principal event that I have attended in recent years has at some point involved colleagues discussing their concerns regarding inspection. That simply did not used to happen, so it has become a major issue for our schools.
948. I would also like to reiterate Fern's comments. At NAHT, we consider that all schools should be accountable for the education that they provide, purely because we deal with children, and our children deserve the best possible education that we can give them. We accept that inspection is a necessary part of that, but inspection and the climate in which it occurs have changed. In a time of area planning and rationalisation of our schools, inspection has become much higher staked. The ETI needs to accept some of the responsibility for the effect that inspection is having in our schools, namely on the health and well-being of all school staff.
949. I regularly hear from our members, and they all report very similar experiences in relation to inspection. What alarms me about this is that their experiences appear to be same, regardless of the grade that they achieve. Principals in our very good and outstanding schools report on the negative effect of the stress that they and their staff undergo in the run-up to inspection and during the inspection itself. They comment on extreme physical and mental exhaustion, and they give examples of varying degrees of ill-health that occur during and after the process — and, on some very worrying occasions, hospitalisation of staff members following inspection.
950. Being judged to be very good or outstanding should be a cause for celebration. Very often, however, the staff in those schools are just too exhausted and emotionally drained to feel anything other than a very strange sensation of anticlimax. That should not be the case, but yet we hear this time and time again from our members and our colleagues. We have a duty to ensure that all our children have the opportunity to attend great schools, and we need a system that evaluates
- our schools, but we should not do that at the expense of the staff who are employed in those schools.
951. Accountability is a double-edged sword. Schools should be accountable. Firstly and most obviously, we are in receipt of public funding, and we should be able to justify that. Much more important — and the reason why I went into education — is the impact that we make on the lives of our children and young people. Good schools can turn things around for our children. However, ETI should also be accountable. Inspections should not put schools under so much stress that they find the experience to be more negative than positive, even if they receive a positive grade. Let us not forget that most of our schools are very good schools. If a school is good, inspection should affirm that, and it should support the process.
952. I will hand over to Jonathan Manning, who is the principal of Edenbrooke Primary School on the Shankill Road. He will tell you about his recent experience of inspection.
953. **Mr Jonathan Manning (Edenbrooke Primary School):** As Clare said, I am principal of Edenbrooke Primary School on the Shankill Road, in an area of over 80% free school meals, and the fifth most socially deprived ward in Belfast. I am here to give you an idea of our experience of the inspection process.
954. To say that it was devastating would probably be an understatement. It was confusing and heartbreaking. Instead of turbo-boosting and accelerating school improvement, it succeeded in knocking the stuffing out of a school that was showing improvement. There was a real buzz of curriculum development and learning in our school before the inspection process started and before the inspectors arrived. It succeeded in taking the hard work and good practice of committed staff who were working in difficult situations and discounting it all.
955. I will give you a bit of background about the years previous to that. The inspection happened in March 2013,

- when I had been in the school for three years. One of the first things that a principal does when they take over is to assess and establish the quality of staff in the school. I had gone in to watch a number of teachers teach throughout the school and, to my benefit, I was very happy to see that we had no weak links in the school — a very high quality of practitioners.
956. On that basis, we still followed a system of curriculum development, which was a fairly intense self-evaluative process, over those three years, putting in place curriculum development and a system of baselining and target-setting for individual pupils. We monitored our progress on a six-weekly basis — very tight — to make sure that the pupils that we were teaching were progressing in line with their cognitive ability and IQ. We also plotted literacy and numeracy scores against IQ scores to ensure that our children were not underachieving. Over that three-year period, the majority of our children were moved into an area where, I suppose, they were exceeding their IQ scores in literacy and numeracy.
957. We had very clear evidence to show that our children were progressing. We had clear baselining samples and evidence of improvement samples in the school. For any children who were deemed to be underachieving, we put systems in place to move them out of those areas and to address that. We had evidence of that over the past three years. Our end-of-key-stage levels had also risen sharply. Before the inspection process started, as a school, we felt that we were ready to welcome any inspectors into the school. We felt that we were in a good place. As a school, we felt that from our self-evaluation process, but we also felt it because it was confirmed to us through members of the Belfast Board. An inspection survey had taken place the previous year looking at dyslexia in the school, and that also commented on the positive, high-quality work that was taking place in the school. Not only that, but we had a monitoring visit from a former inspector before our inspection process started, which confirmed that
- the evidence that we had showed that we were moving those children on and that those children were progressing at their level.
958. With regard to the experience of our inspection process, it was a two and a half day inspection. Before the process started, I asked all my staff to keep an inspection logbook on every single comment that was made to them. Our senior management and the board of governors did the same. In the two and a half days of that inspection we had filled five or six file pages of positive comments on the quality of work that was taking place in the school — comments that were made to teachers after lessons that had been observed, comments to me as principal and comments to members of the board of governors and to the senior management team.
959. To give a snapshot of some of the comments that were made, at the end of the second day of the inspection, one of the inspectors said to me, “I just want to let you know how things are going. Your teachers are teaching great lessons. Your teachers know your children. They are targeting the children effectively and implementing programmes to meet the children’s needs. There is some great improvement in writing. I just want to let you know that things are going very well.” I am sure that you can imagine that we were very happy with that, and we felt that some of the good work that was taking place in the school was being recognised.
960. One of the associate assessors sat with me for two hours on one occasion talking about the great staff that we had and the positive ethos in the school, and said that she would quite like to have taken some of our good practice back to her own school, which we obviously accommodated. So, during the week, the impression that we were given was that we had a good school. We knew that, and we were confident in that. However, the overall grading that was given to us in the feedback on the Friday afternoon was “inadequate”. It was given right at the very outset. To say that we were

- shocked, gobsmacked and devastated would be an understatement. We were angry as well, and certainly felt a sense of injustice and immorality about the grading.
961. When it goes into the following aspects of the inspection that has taken place, even though the overall grading was “inadequate”, looking through the report and the comments that were made, it said that most of the teaching was “good” or better — that is, 85% of the teaching was “good” or better. None was below “satisfactory”. Although the summary of findings that was given on that day said “good” for leadership and management, on the actual report, it said “satisfactory”. Special needs was “very good”, pastoral care was “good”, yet achievements and standards were “unsatisfactory”. So, we were hugely devastated and confused, and there was a sense of injustice and immorality about the outcome and a certain sense of hopelessness and despair from me and the senior management team and from our staff who felt that we were doing a good job and were able to show evidence of that in our internal data in the school.
962. We felt that there was an overemphasis and weighting placed on end-of-key-stage levels over a four-year period. Comments like “The inspection came too soon for you” were made, and there was a lot of toing and froing over the overall grading with the chief inspector on this. Reports on the feedback included, “This grading does not sit well with us”. Someone said, “We would be laughed out of the Public Accounts Committee if we gave you anything other than ‘inadequate’ in relation to the end-of-key-stage levels that you have had over a four-year period”. I suppose that made us feel that if our overall grading was based on end-of-key-stage levels, why even come into our school? Why inspect us? Why watch our teachers teach? Why look at the self-evaluation processes that we have in place? Why look at our file of evidence and our data, which show internal progress, if, at the end of the day, you are going to come out with an overall grading of “inadequate”?
- That is not only our experience, but the experience of a wide variety of schools teaching in a similar area to ourselves. The overemphasis on the end-of-key-stage levels drags down all the other good work that we are doing.
963. We went through a formal complaints procedure with ETI, and that procedure is done internally. It was stated through that formal complaints procedure that, regardless of the other areas that you show that you are doing in the school, the overall weighting is very heavily on achievements and standards. For instance, if your teaching and your leadership and management are good, but your achievements and standards are not at a certain level, that line in the sand — that certain percentage of level 4s — your grading is brought down a level, regardless of the work that you are doing.
964. What is the outcome of that? The outcome for teachers in our school is that the teachers and principals in areas like ours feel a sense of hopelessness and despair that, regardless of the amount of work that we do — including self-evaluation, school improvement and tracking of pupil progress — unless we reach a certain level, we will still be classed as “inadequate”.
965. We also feel that there was a lack of transparency. Where did the grading come from? After going through that formal complaints procedure, which was done internally, we were still not clear about the criteria that was used to give us that grading. We were told that there were a number of aspects of pupils’ achievements and standards that were looked at. They talked about pupils’ books, end-of-key-stage levels and interviews with pupils. My question at that point was that our end-of-key-stage levels are not at the level that you want, yet the work in pupils’ books is outstanding and the talking and listening of the pupils is outstanding. Will that bring up the end-of-key-stage levels? We were told that it is not as scientific as that. So, we were not sure what criteria was used to give us that overall grading.

966. At the moment, we are going through the formal intervention process. We were told that we did not really need to change our action plans. We asked, "What could we have done to have got a different grading?" and told, "There was nothing more that you could have done." We asked, "Where do we go from here?", and were told, "Just keep doing what you are doing. We will be confident that we will be able to come back in six months and tell you that you are doing a great job."
967. I am sure that you will agree that it is very difficult for us as a school to accept those sorts of findings when it was very clear at the time that not only in six months will we be able to be told that we are a very good school, but we felt at the time that we were a very good school and doing a good job.
968. I also feel that good inspectors' hands are being tied by the current system, where schools are classed as "good" or "bad" based on the achievements and standards, and not necessarily on the practice that is going on in the school. Currently, it seems to be the situation out there with colleagues that if your pupils are achieving good levels, regardless of the quality of teaching and the leadership in the school, that school will not be given anything less than "satisfactory" because your pupils are achieving, regardless of the teaching in the school. Whereas in schools like ours, in areas of social deprivation where the children are coming in at a very low level and we are having to put in lots of innovative teaching strategies to try to move those children on, regardless of all those strategies that were put in place, if we do not get those children to the line in the sand that we need to get those children to, we will be classed as "inadequate".
969. I believe that the current system is immoral and unjust, and schools in socially deprived areas, where our aim is to progress the cohort of children that we have to reach their potential, not that line in the sand that they are asking for, are going through this hopelessness and despair, and it is palpable among the Shankill principals' group that we meet with. Everyone is in exactly the same place. We are doing everything that we can to move those children on, yet we are still being told that it is not enough, and that if you do not get those children to a certain percentage of level 4s, you will be classed as inadequate. For me as a principal of a local school and the rest of the principals, there are many who are in exactly the same situation. They are saying that they are doing everything that they can, yet if they do not reach that line in the sand, it is not good enough.
970. The inspection process used to work alongside schools to achieve school improvement, but now I believe that they are destroying schools. I believe that our context was not taken into consideration, and it did not recognise the significant progress that had been made with the cohort of children that we have. We had evidence to show that, but that was discounted in the overall grading.
971. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Jonathan, your final comments are the most telling of all that we have heard. That is not to detract in any way from anything that has been said by Clare or Fern. Having visited the school and spoken to the Shankill principals, I am well aware of the concerns that exist in the area.
972. **Ms Turner:** Mr Chairman, that is why NAHT was totally determined that we would have Jonathan in attendance today. This Committee needs to hear what is happening in schools.
973. **The Chairperson:** It is very sad that the comments that are made in the inspector's report do not add up. I always thought that, if you put two and two together, you would end up with four. That was the case when I left school, and I do not know whether that has changed. If you have a report that has the school as "good" or "very good" and you come to an end point where you have to make an overall assumption, in what is a very objective process, how can you come to the position of it being

graded as “inadequate”? Last week, the representatives of the inspectors, your Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) colleagues, said to us in their written submission:

“Inspectors who conduct the inspection need greater assurances about the finality of their decisions and the fact that evaluations may not be overturned from anywhere outside of the original inspection team.”

974. Clearly, Jonathan, you are saying that the verbal feedback had the school as “good” and that something then happened. It is what that something was and where that somewhere was that changed the final outcome. That is why that comment last week and Jonathan’s comments today raise very serious questions of the ETI and of the Department, let alone the concerns that many principals may have about the issue of area planning and whether that is another method to try to get some schools to fall off the edge of the cliff.
975. I will not ask any questions but go straight to members because we are very constrained for time. I do not want the issue of time to result in the importance of what we have heard to be overlooked.
976. **Mr Rogers:** You are very welcome, and I declare an interest as a former member of NAHT. It is good to see you again, Fern. As a former principal, what I heard from Jonathan is devastating. When those inspectors leave and that report is published, you have to try to build your teachers’ confidence again. You know that those teachers are doing good work and whatever else. On the Chair’s point, there are some things that we do know. The level of deprivation at this school — 80% of its pupils receive free schools meals — and its culture has not been taken on board at all. The publicly produced report does not give the context of the levels of progression. As you and we all know, the next P1 intake will be different to the present one and so on each year. Do you feel that the inspectorate can contribute to school improvement? Fern, you mentioned the recent and relevant experience of

the inspectorate, and, let us face it, if you left teaching 25 years ago, you would find that the culture and so on in schools had changed and that so many things had come in. Last week, we heard from the inspectors’ union that they are under so much pressure and they seem to get very little staff development.

977. The other point that you made was about evidence-based reports. If there is a particular issue, the evidence-based reports would be very helpful. In fact, as Jonathan said earlier, you get a bad report and are left with it. It is simply this: how can the inspectorate effect school improvement in its present form?
978. **Mr Manning:** Over the past three years, we spent time going to a number of schools and sharing practice. Those schools had been given outstanding and very good gradings and were from a similar sort of area — well, they were considered to be from a similar free-school-meals band, but they were very different schools. We put in place an awful lot of the strategies and ideas that they had used. I also sat down with one of the inspectors last year and showed him the system of self-evaluation that we had in the school and asked him what he thought about it and what more we needed to do. He gave me some suggestions that we put in place. The following year, the inspectorate came back and saw everything that we had put in place, yet it came up with the grading of “inadequate”. It does not make sense, and it certainly did not make sense to us.
979. The inspectorate can have an input into school improvement. The inspector whom I spoke to had been an inspector for a number of years, and he told me that things had changed. It used to be that inspectors were more like critical friends who came alongside schools, there were regular visits and they provided more of a helping hand. It has changed, and they now come with a big whip and tell you that you are not doing this or that.
980. We would love to see more input from inspectors in the sense of helping with

- school improvement. We would also love them to come and look at what we are doing with our self-evaluation or what we are looking at in a particular year and ask them what they think and how well we can move on with it. However, it is very hard to do that in the current system. Inspectors could come in one year as critical friends and crucify you the next, regardless of what they have done to help you.
981. **Ms Turner:** One of the concerns of the NAHT is that the system ought to be open and transparent. In other words, it ought to adhere to the Nolan principles. However, that is not happening at the minute.
982. Jonathan's experience was that there was communication between the inspection team and the Chief Inspector, who had never set foot in the school. We have other situations with other principals in which we have evidence of the Chief Inspector communicating with unions. We also have evidence of the Chief Inspector relaying conversations with unions to the Department and the inspection teams. That is not an acceptable system or process.
983. **Mr Rogers:** Apologies, I have to leave now. Before I do, I have another question along the same lines. There is no help from the inspectorate, but I am sure that you also feel that there is a lack of help and support from the Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS) etc, because of the way that the budget has been cut.
984. **Mr Manning:** As far as I am concerned, we have an excellent CASS officer and excellent literacy and numeracy link officers. They have been great support to us in the past three years. However, there is certainly more evident support now that we are in formal intervention. That is maybe the issue: more support could have been given at an earlier stage. At the same time, we know that we had very good practitioners who were doing a good job, and we put an awful lot of curriculum and staff development in place over the past three years.
985. I take on board what you have said. More CASS support would have been great, but we felt that we were in a good place for the inspection.
986. **Mr Kinahan:** Thank you all very much. I have heard it often from you all. In fact, when I started, my first visit was up the Shankill Road where Jonathan very much painted this picture for me. At that time, you told me that two or three principals were ill. Is that still the case?
987. **Mr Manning:** No. They have come back.
988. **Mr Kinahan:** What is the area planning situation? Where does Edenbrooke Primary School fit into that at the moment?
989. **Mr Manning:** That is a good question. I think that the suggestion was that Edenbrooke Primary School might amalgamate with Malvern Primary School, but I am not sure whether that is still the case.
990. **Mr Kinahan:** Are you quite strong in your position? Do you feel confident of that?
991. **Mr Manning:** We have good numbers. Our numbers have increased in the past three or four years. When I arrived, we had around 175 or 180 pupils, and we now have around 220. The school is in a strong position.
992. **Mr Kinahan:** I really only asked that because I am trying to understand what on earth the agenda is that is hiding behind all this, given that you have a successful school and the numbers are right.
993. Clare and Fern, you talked about an independent assessor. That point was raised earlier today, and one of the grammar schools called in a company to look at how they were doing things. Will you expand on the ideas that we should be looking at for how we assess the assessors.
994. **Ms Turner:** Basically, we are talking about 360-degree evaluation and assessment of the whole system. Every stakeholder has a role to play. Ultimately, the role that they play will impact on the quality of teaching and

- learning and the education that is provided to our children. When we look at what is happening in a school and the quality of teaching, we also have to look at the support that is being provided by that school, how that school has been assessed, and the expectations and policies of the Department. The system as a whole needs to be reviewed continually.
995. None of us, including our inspectors, are infallible. Therefore, when there is genuine concern in a school about the outcome of an inspection process, and that concern is relayed to the ETI, it needs to take it on board. It needs to evaluate what school leaders and teachers are saying to it, and, in situations where there is no agreement, there has to be an external process and an independent investigator who can look at what the school and the ETI are saying and evaluate a response.
996. **Mr Craig:** Fern, you will not be surprised that there is no disagreement between you and me on the questionnaires issue. I am not asking you to set union policy or anything like that, but a suggestion was made earlier that the schools need to do something in that area by conducting self-evaluation. If a standard was set, on an ongoing basis, that was more accurate, it would do away with the need for this daft questionnaire.
997. I described the questionnaires as gripe sheets —
998. **Ms Turner:** It is a gripe sheet.
999. **Mr Craig:** — because, inevitably, that is what they become.
1000. What are your thoughts on that self-evaluation being done by the boards of governors and senior management teams on an ongoing basis?
1001. **Ms Turner:** My biggest issue with the questionnaires is that, even when serious issues are raised, those issues are not shared with the school and individuals are not identified. So, regardless of the seriousness of the situation, the school cannot deal with it. Asking parents and staff to fill in questionnaires and not providing the school with the opportunity to deal with them raises expectations. Those people believe that something will happen, and, when it does not, they are disappointed.
1002. We have evidence of those questionnaires being used on an individual or a group-organised basis to sort things out. That is simply unacceptable. School leaders have a difficult job. For example, they have to manage redundancies, deal with unsatisfactory teachers or other issues that impact on the working of schools. Those questionnaires provide a get-back clause.
1003. **Mr Craig:** Jonathan, it must run in the name. Welcome to my world. I ended up in the same position as you. In some respects, the less that I say about it the better. Did you get any impression that there was outside interference in what was in the final report?
1004. **Mr Manning:** It is certainly something that we have thought about. We had a couple of days of inspection, received positive comments and were told that things were going well. We arrived on the Friday expecting at least a “good”. I was ready to argue if we were given a “satisfactory”; I was ready to argue that we were better than that. So, that was something that was in my mind. In addition to the comments that were made, there was a lot of toing and froing over the overall grading. Again, I am quoting what was said to me and am not making my own judgements on that, but there was a feeling that that was the case.
1005. The inspectorate brings a graph of your end-of-key-stage levels over a four-year period. That is what was shown to us during the feedback, and it was very much the evidence for our achievements and standards being unsatisfactory. So, that was something that we had concerns over.
1006. Straight after the report was given to us, I said, “After what you have said to us over the last two and a half days, and after what you have seen in this school,

- there is no way you can say that our school is inadequate.” That is what I was able to say at the time.
1007. So, our concern is that that may have happened. We obviously have no evidence to suggest that it definitely did, but it is something that we were very concerned about. It did not add up for us. For leadership and management, we were awarded “good” in the summary of findings but “satisfactory” in the draft report. That did not make sense to us. How can it be good here and then satisfactory in the report? When you read the report on leadership and management, it is not even satisfactory or good: it sounds like it is very good or outstanding. So, a lot of it did not make sense. Certainly, there were thoughts in our heads that that might have happened.
1008. **Mr Craig:** Clare and Fern, a statement that was made to me by a senior inspector really concerned me. I shared it with the Chair a long time ago. Have you any evidence that inspections are being focussed on one sector?
1009. **Ms Turner:** There is certainly a perception in the system that one sector is being more harshly judged than another. We do not have the evidence to support that, but the perception is there. Whether it is the reality or not, it is an issue that needs to be taken on board, and it is an issue that we need to deal with.
1010. **Mr Lunn:** Thanks, ladies and Jonathan, for your presentations. Jonathan, I will come to you in a second. Fern, you said that you suspected that the ETI devalued certain skills courses.
1011. **Ms Turner:** Yes.
1012. **Mr Lunn:** Is there firm evidence for that?
1013. **Ms Turner:** Yes there is. We have been contacted by a number of our non-selective secondary school principals who have copious evidence that the skills courses that they run in their schools are not valued in the same way as academic courses. I find that very confusing, particularly as the Department has pushed for the development of the skills courses. So, my concern is that, on the one hand, it is pushing this agenda and, on the other, it is penalising schools that follow its direction.
1014. **Mr Lunn:** That is a complete nonsense, is it not?
1015. **Ms Turner:** It is.
1016. **Mr Lunn:** Are you saying that, when the ETI assesses the overall performance of a school by looking at the results, it gives a lower value to those courses officially?
1017. **Ms Turner:** Yes.
1018. **Mr Lunn:** This country has gone down the tubes.
1019. What level of representation can your union provide to a head teacher who has been the subject of a damning report and may have been suspended and so on?
1020. **Ms Turner:** I do not normally mention individuals —
1021. **Mr Lunn:** I do not want you to, please.
1022. **Ms Turner:** I am happy to do so in this case. Annabel Scott from Crumlin, who has featured in many of the newspaper reports, has been destroyed as a consequence of the way that the Department of Education managed the situation in her school. It is an extremely sad case. Only two weeks ago, Annabel and her family had to leave their home and move in with family and friends. To leave any individual in the situation where they are subjected to that sort of treatment is absolutely deplorable. What makes this whole situation worse is that Crumlin was a high-achieving school for its type. It was scoring above the Northern Ireland average. It was maintaining pupil numbers and, in the past three years, it has been destroyed as a consequence of the inspection process.
1023. **Mr Lunn:** Yes, my general impression of unions is that they will give whatever support they can to their members. I really did not want to talk about a

- particular case and still do not. In terms of —
1024. **Ms Turner:** Trevor, one of the things that the procedure states is that unsatisfactory staff should be provided with an opportunity for training and an opportunity to demonstrate that they can improve. Unfortunately, in the case that I previously mentioned, the principal was removed from her school and was never given the opportunity to demonstrate improvement, if that improvement had been necessary.
1025. **Mr Lunn:** Jonathan, with due respect to the two ladies, I am so glad that you came here. I was up at your school, it must be a few years ago now because your predecessor, Betty —
1026. **Mr Manning:** Betty Orr, yes.
1027. **Mr Lunn:** I have been agonising over her surname for the past hour. Betty was very proud at that time — I am probably going back five years — of the progress that had been made at Edenbrooke. With the difficulties of the area and all the paramilitary nonsense that was going on up there at that time, she had good reason to be proud. She retired, you took over, and you have done three years of good work and can see progress, so you have had some kick in the teeth from the inspectorate. That is not a question; it is a fact. That came across in the way that you made your presentation. I am not asking you a question; I am just saying that we acknowledge, or I certainly do, what has happened to you. It is good for us to hear from the chalk face an actual example of what happens during an inspection.
1028. **Mr Manning:** The difficulty, again, is transferring that to the staff who, on hearing something like that, are devastated. I am principal of the school and trying to ensure that everything is in the right place, but the staff are the people who actually do the teaching. You have to be a very good teacher to teach in a school in our area. Unfortunately, that is not taken into consideration by the inspectorate either.
1029. **Mr Lunn:** This goes back to many a discussion that we have had about what is achievement. From the perspective of their starting point, one person's D or E is a terrific achievement, but the inspectorate does not seem to acknowledge that at all. It is a results game.
1030. **Mr Manning:** An example of that is that, when we had the inspection process last year, our end of Key Stage levels had gone from 20% to 70%, which was quite an improvement. The following year, there was a slight dip to 59%. Looking at a graph, it would be easy to question what happened to cause us to go from 70% to 59%. The reality is that we did a much better job with those children who reached 59% than we had done with those who had reached 70%. Yet, that was not taken into consideration, and when you look at a graph on a sheet, you see that it is still not. Our achievements with the children who reached 59% were much greater than they were with those who reached 70%, yet that is not considered.
1031. **Mrs Dobson:** I also thank you for a very powerful presentation. I was busy writing down everything that you said, particularly Jonathan, when you said:
- "The inspection process used to work alongside schools ... but now ... they are destroying schools."*
1032. It has been good to hear directly from you. I am incredulous about the position that you seem to be put in. In Scotland, we learned that inspectors there are more like mentors. I am sure that you agree that we are a long way off getting to that stage with ETI inspections. If you were to wave a magic wand as quickly as possible, what would you do to repair the damage that so evidently has been done? How would you set about it?
1033. **Mr Manning:** Do you mean with the inspection process or our school?
1034. **Mrs Dobson:** No, it is obvious how well you have done with your school. I mean with the inspection process. I think that you referred to a "critical friend" a few times. I said last week in Committee

- that, with friends like that, who needs enemies? What would you do to repair the damage that has been done?
1035. **Mr Manning:** Obviously, the inspection process needs to be rigorous. Schools need to be inspected on the job that they are carrying out. That is important. That has to be there. I would like inspectors, when they come out to inspect schools, to look at individual children the schools are dealing with. They should look at the improvements that are being made with those children. We baseline internally with a sample of work, have targets in place for the children, move them on, look at the improvements that have been made and evaluate those. In the process of an inspection, the inspectors should look at the job being done in the school and the process that you are using to move those children on. If progress is taking place, a school is doing a good job.
1036. **Mrs Dobson:** They need to individualise rather than having a one-size-fits-all approach based on results.
1037. **Mr Manning:** That is the problem at the minute. A lot of our internal data that showed progress did not have an impact on the overall grading.
1038. As far as the critical friend notion is concerned, if your reporting inspector or district inspector called in a number of times during the year to see how things were going and to make suggestions, it would change your attitude towards inspections. There would not be that fear. In many ways, there would not really be a need for the inspection. If that inspector knows the school, is in regularly and knows the work that is taking place, we would be much more willing to share things, but it is totally different now.
1039. **Mrs Dobson:** There is a fear factor and a heavy-handed approach.
1040. **Mr Manning:** There is. The inspectors will say that it has totally changed from what it was.
1041. **Mrs Majury:** Fern mentioned the lack of transparency. It should not be a surprise to a school. We all self-evaluate. You should know roughly what grade you are at; you think that you are “good”, “very good” or whatever. The problem is that the inspectors mark against the Together Towards Improvement framework, which is very vague. It gives a quality indicator and a bland statement. It would be much more helpful if that was broken down to show what that looked like in an “outstanding” school, a “very good” school, an “inadequate” school etc. The fact is that schools really do not know what they have been marked against. They really do not understand why some of the judgements have been made. Jonathan made that very clear. I would like to see more transparency in the process.
1042. I was very fortunate because I went to Scotland last year and got to speak to a lot of Scottish head teachers who had been through the Scottish inspection system. What struck me most of all was the fact that they were very laissez-faire about it. There was no concern. They could not understand why we thought that that was an issue that caused stress.
1043. **Mrs Dobson:** That is certainly a position that we need to be in, but we are such a long way off it.
1044. Have you looked at inspection processes and relationships between teachers and inspectors in countries other than Scotland? Is there any best practice?
1045. **Ms Turner:** We looked at a number of countries, including Finland. It is tempting to say that we will just do without any inspection process. The NAHT, as a professional association, believes that there has to be a level of accountability. Schools value the fact that their work, commitment and dedication can be rubber-stamped, but there has to be faith in the system. At present, there is no faith in the inspection system.
1046. **Mrs Dobson:** Those comments are echoed in my constituency.

1047. **Mr Manning:** On that note, a number of us have been in a number of different schools. I have been in a number of different schools and through a number of inspections. There was one inspection quite a number of years ago in which our school was given a “very good” rating. However, the current practice in our school is better than it was when we received a “very good”. So, in essence, what we are doing at the moment is not being inspected. What is being inspected is the level that the children get to, and that is the problem.
1048. **Mrs Dobson:** I can certainly understand your frustrations and teachers’ demoralisation.
1049. **Ms Turner:** I equate going into an inspection process to doing a driving test. As Clare said, before you go into an inspection process, you ought to know exactly what is required of your school and where your school is. It is the level of — I will use this word — secrecy about the process and about how schools are evaluated that adds to the fear and distress, because people honestly do not know how they are going to be judged.
1050. **Mr Newton:** I will be very brief. I asked a question earlier about openness and transparency, and I was told that the inspection process was fully displayed on the Department’s website, so I do not know how people do not understand it.
1051. It seems to me that the ethos that you describe is wholly contradictory to all my experience in assessment — NVQ assessment, Investors in People assessment and so on — and that the ethos of those assessments is completely contrary to the ethos of the ETI, particularly in how — I will not bore you with the details — the Investors in People assessment is carried out. That seems to me to meet very good standards internationally.
1052. I will make only one comment. I concur with recommendation 3.6 on school closures and amalgamations. I represent East Belfast, and to describe area planning in East Belfast as a shambles is, I think, an understatement. You said that that is the case for your school, too.
1053. In your recommendations, you suggest that the process in area planning is fundamentally flawed. If that is the case, and if there is a case for smaller schools, how do you address the common curriculum formula in the context of smaller schools?
1054. **Ms Turner:** If we look at the inspection reports as our evidence base on this one, we see that they make it clear that small schools actually do very well in delivering the curriculum, but they then go on to comment on the adverse impact that that has on individuals, teachers and school leaders in their schools. The reality is that, if you talk to most teachers and most school leaders, they will tell you that they would much rather have a job than no job. The reality is that small is sometimes beautiful. A small school can have a special link with the community. There is no evidence that children necessarily suffer as a consequence of a school being small. In fact, it can be a great advantage.
1055. Obviously, with secondary education, if we are talking about delivering a range of courses and about the numbers required by the Department, we need to look at how that can be managed. I see no reason why there cannot be cooperation between schools and why schools in an area cannot work together.
1056. We are extremely concerned about how the area planning process has been rolled out. Initially, when they talked about sustainable schools, they identified six criteria. However, when they went out to assess schools, they reduced that to three, not because the other three criteria were not important, but because it was more difficult to assess the impact of those criteria. We either decide on what constitutes a good school and use that criterion or we do not.
1057. In addition, they initially talked about looking at the school resource in total and evaluating the provision that was

needed in an area. They quickly decided that that was not going to be done, so we ended up in a situation in which sectors were looked at individually. That does not constitute good value for money in anyone's book, and, again, we have to ask why. The reality was that individual sectors mounted a good defence of their own position, and the needs of the children and society were ignored. As a consequence, if the plan rolls out as envisaged, we are going to have children travelling huge distances and families being severely inconvenienced because of the plans that are being put forward.

1058. **The Chairperson:** Clare, Fern and Jonathan, thank you very much. You have given us a lot of food for thought in your submission and in your oral evidence. We are glad that we have embarked on the process regarding the inspectorate. I think that some questioned whether this was the right thing to do. As I said earlier, it is a very strange place to be when the inspectorate is getting very nervous about being inspected. The comments that have been made here this afternoon will not be lost on the Committee. We look forward to producing a report, which we believe will be to the benefit of our system rather than merely having an inspector that is to its disadvantage, as it is seen by many in the system at the minute.
1059. **Ms Turner:** I thank the Committee very much for its time and consideration.

27 November 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Ms Michaela Boyle
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Chris Hazzard
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Sean Rogers

Witnesses:

Dr Micheál Ó Duibh	<i>Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta</i>
Ms Áine Andrews	<i>Gaelscoil na bhFál</i>
Ms Róisín Brady	

1060. **The Deputy Chairperson:** You are very welcome. Members, we have Dr Micheál Ó Duibh, Áine Andrews and Róisín Brady. We have a very tight schedule, less so for your presentation than for members' questions. I have just discovered that we will not have a quorum after 12.00 noon. I need to move quite quickly. On you go, please.

1061. **Dr Micheál Ó Duibh (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta):** A LeasChathaoirleigh agus a chomhaltaí Coiste, cuirim fáilte roimh an deis seo fianaise ó bhéal a thabhairt daoibh inniu, agus tá mé buíoch díobh as sin.

1062. Chairman and Committee members, we welcome this opportunity to present oral evidence and to thank you for the invitation to present to the Committee. We want to state at the outset that we value the work of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and recognise the importance of supporting and improving Irish-medium education (IME) and that various bodies are required so that there is constant improvement in our schools. We also acknowledge and recognise that the ETI has inspectors with expertise in the Irish language and in immersion education, and we also note that Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) has a good working relationship

with the ETI. That said, we want to present to the Committee today in the spirit of improvement and in the best interests of children. We have general observations, and we then want, considering time constraints, to look to address the recommendations that we forwarded in our submission.

1063. I will start with our general observations. We realise that the inspectorate, in improving its own processes, should ensure that there is a sufficient pool of inspectors to service Irish-medium schools and the inspections that they carry out. There should be specific expertise and language acquisition in immersion education, which informs the inspection process, and a general awareness and understanding of the distinctive features of Irish-medium education and, indeed, of immersion education. I will put it at its simplest level: I wonder whether any member of the Committee would be happy to have children in English-medium schools if inspectors inspected the school without an ability to speak English. I wonder about your opinions on that. We have to be conscious that this is about children, and, if children are not improving at schools, that is dependent on the inspectorate. The inspections that are carried out should make realistic recommendations, but there are barriers that we need to address.

1064. I will move to our recommendations. It is important that the central place of the Irish language in the planning and development of literacy and numeracy and across the spectrum must be recognised in the Department of Education (DE), the education and library boards and the inspectorate. It is about improving Irish-medium provisions and outcomes. Generally, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and I feel that the education system has displayed a lack of awareness at all levels about Irish-medium education. We have a good

- working relationship with all bodies and endeavour to improve and inform, but I feel that we are always coming back to explain what Irish-medium education is about. To address that, I feel that the inspectorate has to ask itself a question about its understanding of immersion education and Irish-medium education and how it can use and improve its processes to aid school improvement in Irish-medium schools. If we do not do that, we will continue to disadvantage Irish-medium children in schools, and no children should be disadvantaged because of the language and education that they choose. It goes back to parental choice and its importance.
1065. I have a number of points, but I am conscious of time. I will try my best to go through all of them briefly. There is an added value in bilingualism and bilingual education. We feel that it should be assessed and documented through the inspectorate, which it currently does not do. I am conscious that the most recent report by the chief inspector did not specifically mention Irish-medium education other than general comments about general schools, and the previous chief inspector had a section specific to Irish-medium education. If we are to benchmark and improve Irish-medium education, we must have a starting point, and we have to assess and document on a routine basis. That is not happening.
1066. What about broader structures and managerial structures? With Irish-medium units in English-medium schools, it is important that the management has appropriate levels of understanding, expertise and experience in Irish-medium education. We feel that the inspectorate has a role to ensure that it has that level of expertise. Every School a Good School places an importance and emphasis on governors to manage a school effectively. If schools have Irish-medium pupils with specific needs, they need expertise at board level to address that. Currently, there are no requirements on boards of governors of English-medium schools to ensure that they have the necessary competencies in Irish-medium education or in immersion education. The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), the board and the education and library boards need to address that in Irish-medium schools in the Catholic maintained sector and in the controlled sector. We feel that there is a gap in leadership and management that needs to be filled with a systematic overhaul of the current policy for Irish-medium units and Irish-medium controlled schools. The ETI has a very important role in that and should take a leadership role in the best interests of children.
1067. If we address the teaching appointment committees of education and library boards — this is more historical, when new Irish-medium schools come in as controlled schools — there are no Irish-medium assessors for appointments. It is also important that the ETI has a say in the assessment and ability of principals and management to meet the needs of Irish-medium children and the issue of necessary recommendations. With coordinators in Irish-medium units, there are no conditions or *critéir riachtanach* —
1068. **Ms Áine Andrews (Gaelscoil na bhFál):** Criteria.
1069. **Dr Ó Duibh:** — that assure that coordinators in Irish-medium units are on the senior management team of English-medium primary schools. How do we assess the special educational needs of Irish-medium pupils and everything else so that Irish-medium education goes through an entire school as English-medium education does. If you do not have that representation at managerial level, there is a weakness, but I feel that there is also a role for the inspectorate to ensure that that happens and that there are processes in schools that ensure what is in the best interests of Irish-medium pupils.
1070. We need guidance and an engagement between the inspectorate and the Department of Education on the specific needs and requirements of Irish-medium education in formulating guidance for Irish-medium governors, which was

highlighted in the review of Irish-medium education. Áine might comment on this later: we have Irish-medium preschool statutory units, yet the criteria do not allow for a preference for Irish-medium pupils. This is very clear in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. In the context of the sustainable schools policy, if we attract pupils into statutory Irish-medium units and those children transfer to the English-medium side, that questions the sustainability of the school. It leaves stand-alone schools and Irish-medium units in English-medium schools in a position in which they cannot have a prerequisite that those children need to transfer from preschool into primary school, which is reflected in criteria. We need guidance and linguistic continuity from preschool to primary to post-primary.

1071. The ETI also needs to address the immersion environment, which is essential to the delivery of a quality bilingual education on that linguistic journey. There is a formal and an informal approach, and this is probably more relevant to Irish-medium units in English-medium schools. If Irish-medium education is about linguistic acquisition through immersion education, as well as educational outcomes, we have to ensure, to the best of our ability, that we have an environment that promotes and encourages that. There is no guidance. It is up to schools, management and governors to ensure that that happens. We feel that we have no evidence and that we need evidence. We feel that the ETI is probably best placed to provide that evidence, and it needs to address the issue.
1072. The question of special educational needs is ongoing. The review of Irish-medium education identified that as a need. We feel that we need specific units, most likely in Belfast, Derry or Armagh, and the ETI has a crucial input.
1073. Specialists — speech therapists and psychologists — are employed by the education and library boards, and they provide advice. They could provide advice because, in their opinion, a child, for whatever reason, may not

have the ability to go through Irish-medium education because it would be challenging enough for that child to learn one language, and it would be equally if not more challenging to learn two languages. That is a lack of knowledge and expertise. Those specialists may have expertise in speech therapy and psychology but not necessarily in immersion education. If Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta were to provide that information, people could be sceptical. There is no reason to be sceptical, but one may be. If the ETI provided information and guidance, that would be hard evidence for all speech therapists and psychologists connected with the education of Irish-medium pupils that there is a lack of knowledge that needs to be resourced at every level. The ETI is probably the only body that can deliver that, but I do not see it happening at the moment.

1074. From the workings of the group on literacy and numeracy and Irish-medium education, and through our forums, including the Irish-medium principals' forum, our education committee and at board level, we have recommendations about the inspectorate and how it conducts inspections in Irish-medium settings and the level of expertise and fluency required. I mentioned that at the start, but it is important to come back to the issue. We look at judgements, how they are based and the indicators used. As I understand it, that is based on a model of best practice in English-medium education. Mainstream education, whether through the medium of English or any other medium, it is not the same as immersion. Therefore, the way in which we address and assess Irish-medium pupils will be different because it is a different system of education and a different language. If an inspectorate does not have an adequate knowledge or understanding of bilingualism, immersion education or the language itself, that will create difficulties for children, which is unacceptable.
1075. I realise that I cannot expect all inspectors to be fluent Irish speakers

- by tomorrow and to be able to communicate through Irish and English, but they should at least have an understanding and awareness of immersion education and its pedagogy. If they do not, they need to question it and raise that awareness to this Committee and the Department of Education. This is about improvement. These recommendations have been brought forward with the aim of improvement. We are not here to criticise. I do not think that it is productive to criticise, but we want to identify the needs, the areas, the bearnaí —
1076. **Ms Andrews:** Gaps.
1077. **Dr Ó Duibh:** Gabh mo leithscéal, Irish is coming to me today. Hopefully, Hansard will be able to pick that up
1078. Those are our general comments on the inspectorate. We continue our working relationship with the inspectorate, but we welcome the opportunity to give oral evidence and to answer your questions. I will pass over to Áine, who will give the Committee a greater understanding of the inspection process in Irish-medium schools.
1079. **Ms Andrews:** Thank you very much. I have been working in the Irish-medium sector for 35 years and am principal of Gaelscoil na bhFál. It is worth adding that I have played an active role in many of the policy curriculum and assessment initiatives relevant to the Irish-medium sector over the years. I am chair of the regional Irish-medium early years support organisation and led the development and delivery of a certificate in immersion education in association with the University of Ulster. I am a board member of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and the GTCNI.
1080. In immersion education, children are educated through a language that is not the language of the home. It is a unique process in which children have not only all the benefits of learning in the context of the home language but the benefits from the advantages of bilingualism and the intellectual benefits of learning a second language in their early years.
1081. Irish-medium education deals with all the challenges and issues facing English-medium education. However, Irish-medium practitioners face many additional challenges. Some are intrinsic to an immersion learning context. Other challenges relate to the way in which agencies responsible for supporting or interfacing with us respond to our needs or fail to do so.
1082. One of the agencies that has not quite grasped the specific demands of Irish-medium education is the ETI. I do not have time to give you a detailed exposition of what is a complex teaching and learning environment that requires a sophisticated, complex and multilayered approach. I will try to give you a broad-brush overview of some of the main differences between Irish-medium and English-medium education, and I will concentrate on my area of expertise, which is early years and primary. Most of what I will say will focus on issues relating to language for the very simple reason that language is the engine that drives the curriculum. Language is central to learning. It is through language that children access and engage with the curriculum, process their experiences and express and develop their ideas and knowledge.
1083. Language development involves building competence layer on layer, enabling children to engage with learning experiences and concepts of increasing complexity and sophistication. In the English-medium context, those skills are developed within and outside school. Most children in the English medium come to school with fairly well-developed skills in the language of instruction, and their general environment is English-rich.
1084. The Irish-medium context is different. Irish is not usually the language of the home, and the children may have little or no exposure to Irish in the broader linguistic environment. Irish-medium education involves the creation of a learning environment in which children successfully acquire a second language.

That, in turn, requires an approach that offsets reduced exposure to the language outside school. Consequently, the Irish-medium approach to language development is more structured and more systematically planned than in the English-medium context. To be successful, it requires substantial oral output from a teacher and a much higher level of teacher-directed activities than would be usual in the English-medium context. How teachers use Irish in verbal interaction with children is also different, involving more sustained repetition, use of non-language clues, more teacher modelling of language and specific questioning techniques to support language production. In primary school, there is a much greater emphasis on practical, hands-on activities. Those techniques change and evolve in different ways, from foundation stage through to key stage.

1085. One important issue that I cannot overemphasise is that the milestones of children's progress in Irish literacy do not mirror those in English literacy. For example, you would expect to hear most children using English at all times with the teacher and their peers in the early years of primary education. However, in an Irish-medium context, sustained and spontaneous use of Irish develops over time. Sometimes, even when children have the ability to speak the language, they may choose not to do so. In quality Irish-medium education, we develop skills and habits in the children's use of Irish through sophisticated, well-thought-out strategies and approaches. That example raises the broader question of what inspectors should be looking for and looking at when they are inspecting an Irish-medium school. I will give you some examples of criteria specific to the Irish-medium sector that are less crucial in the English-medium sector.
1086. How do teachers and the school plan for language acquisition? What approach do teachers and the school take to integrating planning for language acquisition with other areas of the curriculum, and, equally importantly, how do they integrate planning for other

areas of the curriculum with language acquisition? What strategies does the school adopt to promote language enrichment and language accuracy? How well are children progressing along the continuum of Irish-language development — receptive, productive, spontaneous use, accuracy, variety and breadth of language use — and how are those competences manifested across the curriculum? What strategies are used to promote children's use of Irish not only in the more formal classroom environment but spontaneously with one another in the informal, social and recreational aspects of school life? How successful are those strategies? Does the school nurture a culture of in-house Irish-medium resource development to support teaching and to promote children's progress along the continuum of increasing Irish-language competence? How well does a school support parents, particularly those who do not know the language? How does the school approach the issue of continuing professional development for teaching and support staff in relation to immersion methodology? All those suggestions are reasonable and logical. However, there is no evidence that the ETI has incorporated any of those considerations into its inspection templates. You can find inspection reports that do not refer to a single one of them.

1087. I believe that the ETI also needs to reflect on a number of other key issues, the first of which is end-of-key-stage assessment. The importance that the ETI attaches to end-of-key-stage assessment has come up a number of times during submissions to the Committee. End-of-key-stage assessment in the Irish-medium sector has additional critical complexity. How do inspectors assess or interpret achievement on the basis of end-of-key-stage assessment in Irish-medium schools? The data against which Irish-medium schools are measured are collated largely from the monolingual English-medium sector, based on English and maths. Irish-medium schools do three subjects: Irish, English and maths.

- How do you come to an equitable judgement of achievement when some schools are measured by achievements in one language and other schools are measured by achievements in two? I am not saying that there is an easy solution to the issue, but I am saying that the ETI does not appear to have considered it. There is a further question about standardised tests. In English and maths, these have been standardised to a monolingual constituency and can skew results. Tests in Irish literacy are still being developed.
1088. I want to talk about the make-up of the inspection team. The optimum inspection team in an Irish-medium context should be made up of inspectors who are competent in the language of instruction, have practical experience in an Irish-medium context, have an understanding of the complexities and challenges of the Irish-medium sector and the differences between it and the English-medium sector. This combination of skills, competences and knowledge rarely, if ever, comes together in Irish-medium inspections. These shortcomings are further compounded because of shortcomings in the internal ETI documentation, which guides and supports inspection teams in gathering and interpreting information and arriving at evaluatory descriptors.
1089. Objective, informed and consistent judgements can be delivered only through an evaluative framework that is fit for purpose. Such a framework should provide a clear rationale and an evidence-based justification for the evaluations of a school in a way that stands up to scrutiny and in which schools can see and understand why they have been given one grade as opposed to another. This should include a differentiated rating scale. We believe that the ETI has no such framework for either English-medium or Irish-medium schools. However, English-medium schools are slightly better off because the current documentation, although demonstrating serious shortcomings, at least acknowledges the existence of the English medium. It makes no reference to Irish-medium education, and I refer to one astonishing example of this, the management and recording information system (MARS) report. The MARS report is a document used during inspections. It incorporates over 80 statements or questions relating to school effectiveness. Against each one of those, a school is given a grade. The rationale by which a school gets one grade or another is not clear. The MARS report contains no specific references to Irish-medium education. There are approximately 26 questions/statements relating to literacy in English but none relating to literacy in Irish. I believe that there is an urgent need for a proper dialogue between the ETI and the Irish-medium sector, a dialogue in which the ETI will, for a change, actually listen to experienced and knowledgeable practitioners.
1090. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you, and I hope that you will have some influence on how the inspectorate conducts itself in future.
1091. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you, Áine, and thank you, Micheál. We definitely need that conversational dialogue. I can see exactly where you are coming from. Before you joined the meeting, we were discussing what is the best comparison for knowing how immersion works. A major issue seems to be that no one else is using that as a language technique. Where would you point us to to find out more to learn and compare?
1092. **Dr Ó Duibh:** We can look at what is local to us and what is near to us. We look at the Welsh-medium experience and the experience in the South of Ireland. To a certain extent, we look at the experience in Scotland. On the question of what is good practice and what has worked and has not worked in the immersion educational experience, it occurs to me that it is common sense to look across to Wales while understanding, perhaps, the differences between the experience in the South of Ireland and the North of Ireland. It would be better to have that conversation.

1093. **Ms Andrews:** I certainly support that. One of the questions that we asked under freedom of information was about how inspectors were trained. I do not know whether they still do, but a lot of their trips took them to places such as Estonia and the Basque country, and no doubt those experiences will give broad-brush information on immersion and bilingualism that is not to be disregarded. However, in these islands, we have Wales, we have Irish-medium education in the South and we have Gàidhlig-medium education. When you look at those, you have to take into consideration the linguistic context of immersion education in these situations. In Wales, for example, a significantly high proportion of children still come from Welsh-speaking homes, although that is dropping. There is also the Welsh Language Act, which rigorously supports and promotes the Welsh language. Scotland is a bit more like us in that the heartlands in which Scottish Gàidhlig is used are decreasing. The growth of Gàidhlig-medium schools in urban areas parallels the growth of Irish-medium schools here. Scotland and here are quite close to one another with development: Wales is quite a significant distance ahead of us, but Scotland and here are quite close.
1094. During submissions, the Scottish approach to inspections came up a couple of times: namely the balance between self-evaluation and policing and accountability. I have seen some interesting support material from Scotland. A differentiated rating scale has been mentioned. Scottish inspectors provided some extremely useful information on the road towards excellence. They indicated that they have a very comprehensive quality framework that has subdivisions.
1095. Interestingly, in Scotland, you can look at the quality indicators and what would be given a level 5. If you take the curriculum or some aspect of teaching of learning, for example, there will be a demonstration of what a level 5 looks like. They can tell you what a school that attains level 5 in the inspection process will look like and what a school that attains level 2 will look like. That gives benchmarks to those who are inspecting at the upper and lower ends of excellence.
1096. What Scotland is doing with English-medium education is tremendous. The inspectorate at the Gàidhlig-medium end of things seems to be a bit more on the ball about what it is, how it should be supported, what the issues are and how best to deliver.
1097. From my contacts with Scottish colleagues, it seems that a lot of these issues are coming up in Scotland. I am not saying that everything is hunky-dory in Scotland, but Gàidhlig-medium education seems to be being addressed in a much more comprehensive way than Irish-medium education is being addressed by our top-down initiatives.
1098. **Mrs Dobson:** I was going to ask why you feel that immersion methodology provides a better way of teaching students, but you covered that in quite a lot of detail and are obviously very passionate about it.
1099. Are you aware of the cost implications of the ETI, the Department and the board facilitating the Irish-medium sector administratively and financially? Is that significant? Do you have any detail on that?
1100. **Ms Andrews:** I do not have any knowledge of that. There are roughly 60 inspectors in the inspectorate, and the team that inspects Irish-medium schools is quite small. The people on that team also inspect in the English-medium sector.
1101. **The whole system in Scotland is different:** nobody would inspect a Gàidhlig-medium school who did not have Gàidhlig. That just would not happen. We are in a different situation. I agree with Micheál that we really need to go in the direction of ensuring that all our inspectors who are inspecting the Irish-medium sector have all the skills and competences needed. Maybe in the short-term, that is not possible, but we need to go in that direction.

1102. A situation could arise whereby someone who does not have Irish is inspecting an Irish-medium school. The reporting inspector should always have Irish. For anyone else in the team who does not have Irish, there should be some clarity about what they can and cannot inspect. You can see certain things when you go into a classroom. You can see whether children are engaged in their work, but you will not know how terribly interesting the work is. You can see a teacher taking a class, but you will not know how well prepared the class is or anything about the pace of the lesson, and you will not know anything about how well the teacher communicates with the children. If you look at the children's work, you will not be able to judge the quality of what they write or the quality of the verbal interaction between children and staff. So, there are lots of things that you cannot inspect properly if you do not have Irish. Without putting English speakers or people who are not fully competent in Irish out of the picture entirely — in the short term anyway — I think that their role should be indicated to them more clearly, as should the shortcomings in that role.
1103. **Dr Ó Duibh:** Just so that I understand your question, are you asking whether significant costs would be incurred?
1104. **Mrs Dobson:** No, I am just trying to explore the implications. You have been very detailed in your description.
1105. The Chair touched on, and Áine mentioned, the ETI routinely assessing and documenting the added value of bilingual education. I was going to ask about examples in other countries, and you highlighted Wales specifically. Do you have any indication of the cost of adopting your recommendations for inspecting the immersive methodology?
1106. **Ms Andrews:** My understanding from this Committee is that there will be a review of how the ETI inspects anyway. I would imagine that that will come into the picture as part of the overall review. In any case, if this is to happen, there will be an overall cost, no matter what recommendations are made or begin to be implemented.
1107. **Mrs Dobson:** Do you have any specific figures?
1108. **Ms Andrews:** I think that it is very important to facilitate dialogue between the ETI and those in Irish-medium education who have the knowledge and expertise to carry out such a role. So, I am not terribly sure.
1109. **Mrs Dobson:** That is fine.
1110. **Dr Ó Duibh:** May I add to that? We need a discussion on how we forward plan what is in the best interests of Irish-medium education. It is not just about a solution that we can all agree and sign up to tomorrow; it is about Irish-medium education here, where it is going in the future and how we develop it. The cost for an inspector with the ability to deliver through the medium of Irish language to come in would be exactly the same as that for an inspector with the English language. It is about education and encouraging our current pupils to go through a system. Incentives may be needed — whatever they may be, they will certainly be minimal — to engage them in that field. We realise that a level of expertise is required in an inspectorate — no one is questioning that — but if the inspectorate is to provide a service that we can all buy in to and agree on, that will be in children's best interests.
1111. The cost of that is a linguistic cost. The question is whether we upskill, which is something that everybody should be doing in all their work, no matter what they are involved in. We should be upskilling constantly. If you can encourage current inspectors who have an interest in improving their linguistic skills to do so, that is fine. However, whenever inspectors are recruited, we need desirable criteria and essential criteria to encourage that side of it. We must recognise that, just like in anything else, you have to carry out a risk assessment and a needs analysis in your own organisation. If you identify that there is a need, you address that

- need and recruit accordingly. To me, it is rather simplistic. What we need first, before we even have that recruitment process, is a recognition of the needs. I think that this conversation is serving to be very helpful, as will our further engagement with the inspectorate, in identifying the needs in a sector that is continuing to grow and in addressing them accordingly.
1112. **Ms Andrews:** I think that, in some respects, if this Committee's work moves the inspectorate or the process of inspection towards a more supportive model where less of a deficit model is in action, that dialogue will become part of the process. Currently, it is not. It is very much a them-and-us situation: inspectors are carrying out inspections on us. However, if the purpose of this is to increase dialogue, increase communication and share experiences in a way that is to the benefit of the inspection process, of improvement and, ultimately and most importantly, of our children, I cannot see how the additional issues of Irish-medium education cannot be easily incorporated in that process.
1113. **The Deputy Chairperson:** We can read that all the way through the inspection process of every school.
1114. **Mrs Dobson:** Thank you.
1115. **Mr Rogers:** Fáilte romhaibh. You are very welcome. The inspectorate has moved from having an advice and guidance role to an inspecting role, which poses particular problems for a relatively young sector. You rightly make a lot of comparisons with what happens in Scotland, where self-evaluation is very well embedded in the system. Is the template for inspections in Irish-medium schools the same as that for inspections in other schools? What discussions has the Irish-medium sector had with the Department about adjusting that? For the Committee's information, what percentage of the inspectorate has a working knowledge of Irish? What opportunities are there for the inspectorate, through staff development, to obtain a working knowledge of Irish?
1116. **Dr Ó Duibh:** I will address your first question about the level of engagement that the Irish-medium sector has had with the inspectorate. It has been an ongoing engagement. The one thing that you can say about the Irish-medium sector is that we are not shy; we are quite happy to express our opinions, and we are delighted to do so. I jest. We meet the inspectorate on a regular basis. My engagement with the inspectorate is at chief inspector level. Given those meetings and what is reflected in the view of Irish-medium education, as well as the impetus at departmental level, inspectorate level and in the sector, it is still clear to me that there are challenges that we have not addressed accordingly.
1117. You mentioned the comparison between the inspection template in an English-medium school and that in an Irish-medium school. If nothing else, logic would determine that, where there are two different educational systems, that template cannot be fit for purpose. You mentioned the Scottish experience. If I were the inspectorate, I would like to engage with the sector there and ask how it dealt with those challenges and what its processes were.
1118. **Ms Andrews:** Currently, the only forum for this sort of discussion for practitioners is at the point of inspection. That is not the best place at which to engage with inspectors, because the inspection dynamic does not allow it. It is a very stressful situation. For teachers, it is very difficult to have to defend, for example, the balance of teacher-led activities, which are different in an English-medium context to those in an Irish-medium context. You will see that at the lower end of the school as well, where the lower, or younger, end of the school is all about honing children's skills and about language enrichment. Ours is about language acquisition, so there are a lot more teacher-led activities.
1119. A teacher may be questioned about that in an inspection dynamic, and the inspector may disagree and say, "I think that you should be using more

- open-ended questioning here”, but that may not fit in with the methodology that is most effective at that stage. It is very difficult for a teacher to defend a methodology in that context, and teachers should not have to. Teachers are regularly finding themselves in a situation vis-à-vis an inspector who has a particular take on how things should be done. The experience in the sector is that that is not necessarily the most effective way of doing it, or perhaps a debate about it is needed.
1120. Practitioners need a forum. There needs to be a forum whereby practitioners can express the concerns that have been collated over quite a number of years. There is a commonality in the experiences, as well as the negative experiences, in Irish-medium education that many Irish-medium practitioners have. I think that there must be some way of bringing that experience and that concern so that it allows a discussion to develop. However, that should not happen in an inspection dynamic, because it is totally the wrong dynamic for such a discussion.
1121. **Mr Rogers:** Just to follow up on that, is there any opportunity at the pre-meeting between the inspectorate, your governors and you to discuss the interpretation of the template for inspection? Obviously, it needs a slightly different interpretation.
1122. **Ms Andrews:** To some degree, the problem is that people are not usually aware of what the inspection template is. In submissions that have come forward, people want to know what is happening and how inspectors inspect. That is coming forward through this inquiry. Most schools actually do not know. We accessed information for a particular reason, and it was quite astonishing for us at one level to see what the documentation did and did not entail. Most schools do not know that; most schools are not aware of the underpinnings of an inspection. So, they are not really in a position to say, “Look, I do not think that you should”, or “Why is this particular aspect of Irish-medium education not being factored in to how you assess our school?”, because they do not know.
1123. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Maybe they do not want you to know.
1124. **Mr Hazzard:** Go raibh maith agaibh. Maidin mhaith. To go back to that, and also on the back of Jo-Anne’s comments, from your reports and from listening to you today, it is quite clear that the inspectorate has simply failed to grasp the strategic value of immersion as a theory in itself and even aside from Irish-medium education. Even the dynamics that are at play here with Irish-medium education and immersion in our own system and the fact that there was not an Irish-medium section in the inspectors’ report speaks absolute volumes. The fact that there was the use of the immersion report out in the classrooms with no real focus on the importance of immersion of Irish-medium education speaks volumes. I think that this is a real opportunity to make sure that, whatever review goes forward, we address some of the problems. Jo-Anne’s point about cost is completely irrelevant; the cost of not doing it is huge. So, it is an opportunity that we have to look at.
1125. The Minister gave a statement yesterday about the greater cooperation that goes on nowadays North and South between the two inspectorates. They are doing collaborative work on a whole range of issues, such as numeracy and literacy, and two reports are coming about. On the back of that, to what extent is that work looking at immersion and Irish-medium education? Are you aware of the inspectors working together? Are we reaching a point, if I can put it bluntly, where there should be a team of inspectors North and South across the island who are so well versed in immersion and Irish-medium education that they can go into a school anywhere on the island and whose skills base we can use here in the North to go right round the island?
1126. **Dr Ó Duibh:** I think that collaboration from any source is always good. I very much go with the principle that

it is good to talk and to learn from experiences, no matter where they come from. The benefits of immersion education and sharing that experience on a North/South basis because you have a common language are certainly advantageous to the process. I think that if you look at it from an east-west point of view, you see that it is equally important to learn from that immersion experience. To narrow it down, we can see similarities with the Irish-medium sector and the Welsh-medium sector. Also, if you have Gàidhlig-medium and Irish-medium, you see that the languages are quite like each other. However, I will not bore the Committee with my opinions on how close the languages are. However, where that experience and how to develop it is concerned, I imagine that it would be good for the Gàidhlig-medium schools to learn from us, but it appears that we are actually learning from them. That, in itself, is worrying.

1127. On the question of whether you should have North/South collaboration and whether the inspectors should be a part of that, it should not take something like a committee or a recommendation to encourage that. To me, that should be a part of good practice and good sense; it should be the norm. Certainly, it would be helpful if the Committee could bring forward recommendations that would encourage that level of engagement, which should be engagement at very senior level. If you have local and regional inspectorates, they should also work more closely with each other, and that would certainly be to the benefit of Irish-medium education.

1128. **Ms Róisín Brady (Gaelscoil na bhFál):** Fundamentally, any process, whether it is English-medium or Irish-medium, needs to be clear, open to scrutiny and reviewed regularly. We cannot have a body that just acts independently. Áine already touched on the fact that, if you have clear processes, you are also providing support to the school. It is not about just inspection; it is about how you follow on from an inspection, how you support a school and where you go

from there. So, fundamentally, that is what is needed.

1129. **The Deputy Chairperson:** The inquiry will hopefully bring that out as one of the key recommendations.

1130. **Ms Boyle:** Go raibh maith agat, a Mhichíl, for your presentation. Maidin mhaith to you. You talked about what should happen in future. I know that we are talking about the ETI inspection, but other bodies could assist. In paragraph 2.3 of your presentation you talk about the teaching appointments committee of the boards and how it could assist or do more. You declare that it would be important that the ETI accesses:

“the ability of the Principal and management to meet the needs”.

1131. Where do you see the need for that? Obviously, there is a greater need for that to happen. Where do you see the boards in all that? How would they assist you?
1132. In paragraph 2.4 you state that it should be mandatory that the coordinator is on the senior management team so that the Irish-medium unit is:
- “considered systematically throughout school practice and procedure.”*
1133. Where do you see the role of the boards in that?
1134. **Dr Ó Duibh:** It is rather easy to say that we should have a joined-up approach in all that, but I appreciate the challenges of such an approach. Áine mentioned that that goes wider than just the inspectorate. Certainly, we need to facilitate a sectoral discussion about where the needs are. That does not mean that people have to agree with us, but there should not be a reluctance to listen to the sector. We have the likes of Áine as a principal of a long-established Irish-medium school, and we have principals with a wealth of knowledge. Indeed, Irish-medium principals are working in the inspectorate. We should use that expertise and harness it for the benefit of everyone, including children.

1135. The education and library boards, CCMS, CnaG and the Department all have different but specific roles. It occurs to me that, in the appointment of staff to the education and library boards, it is, to a certain extent, like somebody appointing me as CEO of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta without being able to judge my ability to speak Irish. I imagine that the appointments committee would find that rather amusing. Likewise, if we were to assess Áine applying for a job in her school on her ability to speak Irish, one would question that. We also need the inspectorate to be involved as a key stakeholder in that development process and to bring forward recommendations. That also means that the inspectorate has to go down a certain journey to be in the position to be able to deliver that type of guidance and expertise.
1136. This is not going to be resolved overnight, but we need to start somewhere and to plan. I suggest that we have an engagement about where people's specific roles are in all this, and I feel that the Department of Education can lead that. I also think that it can easily be facilitated through the review of Irish-medium education and the role of the monitoring group, which has not sat in a number of years. It can look at those specific needs, have an engagement with the appropriate people around the table and deliver. We have brought forward a recommendation to the Department of Education, and we have various work streams to implement the recommendation on Irish-medium education. One of those is the crucial role in assessment. If we look at the Department and its vision to encourage or assist children in reaching their full potential at every stage of their development, we can see that we all have to be a part of that. So, to deliver that, we need the appropriate expertise in all parties.
1137. It is about planning, identifying the needs, addressing and reviewing them and identifying further needs. There will constantly be needs in the Irish-medium sector, which you would expect in every sector. It is about a positive engagement. It is not about saying, "There is the fault with that body". It is about identifying the need and coming up with solutions that we can all buy in to and work together on. There has been a lack of that engagement until now.
1138. I do not know whether that answers your question.
1139. **Ms Boyle:** That is fine. The question was particularly about the teaching appointments committee and addressing the gap in its regulations that you alluded to. That covered it, so thank you, Micheál.
1140. **Ms Andrews:** Bilingualism is an immersion education. The systems are different. We are on the edge of Europe, and we are not really familiar with the concept or ideas of bilingualism or the need to speak another language. So, the whole concept of bilingualism in this part of the world is a wee bit difficult for us. There are additional problems on top of that. We are slightly outside the box, and, when you have an education system such as ours, people who are outside the box can sometimes stay outside it or find it very hard to find space for themselves.
1141. The issue about the ETI is not the only issue that the Irish-medium sector has. There is not, in general terms, a factoring in of the needs of Irish-medium education through a whole range of initiatives. I have been involved in the revised curriculum, for example, but that had to be revised again for the Irish-medium sector. So, we had to make a case for the revised curriculum to be revised. When the InCAS method of assessing children came in, again, we had to make a case for Irish-medium issues to be taken into account.
1142. There is a whole rake of other issues, such as extended schools, for example. That is another area where the specific needs of Irish-medium education were not taken into account. Again, a case has been made in the extended-schools initiative for the very specific needs of Irish-medium education. So, we have those tremendous, valuable initiatives,

- but Irish-medium education is not factored in from the word go, which is not in line with the recommendations that the review of education made. That means that we frequently find ourselves at a certain point, having to find a way to either renegotiate or reformulate policies and to find room for the Irish-medium sector. That causes delay in, for example, the revised curriculum, because a case had to be made that Irish needs to be taken into account. The training for the Irish-medium sector was delayed for all of that sector.
1143. So, it is not just about the ETI; it is about a broad range of things. I think that we have to have joined-up thinking, as Micheál said, across all the agencies that have a support role or that interface with Irish-medium education. We will never get 100% consensus, but the problem is that the debate is not going on. Sometimes it is going on in small patches, but it is not going on in a more systemic way that will address our needs.
1144. **Dr Ó Duibh:** To add to that, I think that Áine is right. It is about all bodies and agencies in the world of education understanding that there are two different systems of education here. You may have anybody working in any agency who is monolingual. I find it very hard to believe that everybody out there has some sort of grudge against the Irish language. I think that it is something more simplistic, such as a lack of knowledge and understanding. If people have that understanding, and if that is facilitated through all bodies, issues such as this should not really arise.
1145. Irish-medium education is not only a sector: it is a part of a different educational system. People may think that it is as simplistic as saying, “OK, right, we have that in English, so let us translate it into Irish and that will meet the Irish-medium sector’s needs”. It is not like that. Immersion education is different from mainstream education. When you have an understanding of how those educational systems work, you see that everything that we do — at departmental level, board level and with the inspectorate — is done with an understanding of mainstream education and how it works. Everything is facilitated and made for it. If you looked at the equivalent or likewise understanding of Irish-medium education, you would see quite easily that what meets the needs of mainstream education does not meet the needs of immersion education. When you look at all that through a bilingual eye, you can identify the difficulties. To me, it goes back to need: you identify the need of the organisation and then deliver likewise. You need the expertise in those bodies and agencies to provide that advice.
1146. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I think that we very much see it as a different world —
1147. **Ms Boyle:** I am hearing you loud and clear. It is a battle a day.
1148. **The Deputy Chairperson:** It is. If I had learned French through immersion education, I would probably have remembered some and would be able to use it today. Instead, I have no French, despite doing it for eight years or whatever it was at school.
1149. **Ms Boyle:** It is never too late to learn, Chair.
1150. **The Deputy Chairperson:** The brain has to work.
1151. **Dr Ó Duibh:** I think that that proves our argument that immersion education as the system by which to rear bilingual children is better than the current system at post-primary level.
1152. **Ms Andrews:** There is an additional problem for the Irish-medium sector in one respect. At a certain point, people will recognise the value of bilingualism. Nobody will dispute its value. Usually, if it is bilingualism in the context of a majority language, such as French, German or Spanish, people have absolutely no problem with it. However, the idea that people would choose bilingualism and espouse a fragile minority language is part of what contributes to the issues and challenges that we have with some of the agencies

that support us and that we interact with.

1153. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I very much take your points. Today, in a way, you have highlighted so many of the other aspects that other people did, because it is that much more specific to the Irish language. So, it has been very helpful.
1154. I think that we have got work to do. The meeting has been very useful for us. Thank you very much indeed.
1155. **Ms Andrews:** Thank you, Chair. Go raibh maith agat.

11 December 2013

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Jonathan Craig
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Ms Maeve McLaughlin
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Sean Rogers
 Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Professor Vani Borooah *University of Ulster*
 Professor Colin Knox

1156. **The Chairperson:** We welcome to the Committee Professor Vani Borooah, professor of applied economics, and Professor Colin Knox, professor of comparative public policy, both from the University of Ulster. Gentlemen, you are very welcome. Thank you for your submission not only as it relates to the inquiry but to other elements of the Committee's work. The time that you have taken and the content that you have provided for us are appreciated. Your submission is timely. I was saying just before you came in that, given the document that was published yesterday by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), our inquiry is also timely. There is much for us to mull over. I am sure that all members will read the OECD report and the inquiry documentation over the Christmas period. I am sure that they will desist from slacking off. Colin and Vani, I will hand over to you to speak on your paper, after which members will have questions.

1157. **Professor Colin Knox (University of Ulster):** Thank you very much indeed, Chair, for inviting us along and for the opportunity to engage a little further with you. Our opening remarks will be brief. I will open by looking at some of the

context for the work. Then, I will hand over to Vani, who will discuss some of the substance. I will then finish off.

1158. We started by asking this question: "What are we trying to improve in the education system here in Northern Ireland?" The focus of our paper is mainly the post-primary sector, but we have done quite a bit of work on the primary sector as well. The obvious starting point is to look at the traditional measures of achievement performance; the typical five GCSEs including English and maths. Table 1 of the paper shows the performance across each of the management-type schools. It will come as no surprise that there are quite significant differences between the education outcomes of grammar schools and non-grammar schools. The fact is that the average non-grammar school here has only around 36% of its pupils achieving five GCSEs including English and maths at grades A to C. I will not go into those statistics in a lot of detail; you can look at them yourselves. There are, clearly, significant differences between the performance of Catholic maintained non-grammar schools and controlled non-grammar schools in the order of around 41% to 30% respectively with regard to GCSEs at grades A to C including maths and English. That is a very quick overview of the focus of our paper. It is really on those education outcomes.

1159. We started off by asking what the current system and policies are that look at school improvement here and how good they are in tackling those significant differences between sectors. Again, you will know that a lot of the Department's efforts are focused on the policy document 'Every School a Good School — A Policy for School Improvement'. Central to that whole policy is the notion of self-evaluation and self-improvement. We will challenge that notion in the course

- of our work. Part of the way in which the Department rolls out or puts into operation Every School a Good School is that it gathers lots of information at the level of pupils, classes, year groups, key stages and the entire school. From that data, it asks schools themselves to set targets for improvement. Those targets then become part of the school development plans. In setting those targets for year-on-year improvements, schools are supposed to look at trends in performance, the prior attainment of each year group in the school, the context in which the school operates, and priorities that have been set in the school development plan itself. An important part of that is to benchmark each school in particular categories and, essentially, to disaggregate that data into two categories. One is whether the school is a grammar school or non-grammar school and, then, what percentage of pupils in that school is eligible for free school meals. Out of that whole process of setting targets and benchmarking against comparable schools, the notion is that, by their own efforts, those schools will move towards improvement. That is the first strategy for school improvement.
1160. The second one is another policy document that you will be familiar with called 'Count, Read: Succeed — A Strategy for Improving Outcomes'. Again, that is about self-improvement, particularly around literacy and numeracy. More recently, there has been OFMDFM's Delivering Social Change strategy around improving literacy and numeracy — the so-called signature project. Again, you will be very familiar with the fact that extra graduates have been employed to help schools to improve those basic education outcomes.
1161. The final part of the existing policy is the setting up of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). I do not need to give you any details about that. ESA, in part, is about improving education standards, promoting equality and enabling more resources to be directed to schools. We are not here to talk about ESA. However,
- a passing observation is that the whole process of setting up ESA, and the body itself, is about institutional change, which, in itself, is not necessarily causally linked to improving education outcomes. So, although that is part of the strategy, if you will, along with those that I have just mentioned, towards improving education outcomes, in and of itself, institutional change will not improve outcomes. I suppose that the parallel example I would use is the review of public administration. That includes a whole series of structural reforms, which, in and of themselves, will not necessarily improve the quality of our public services.
1162. Just to finish my input, one thing that I think is very stark is the recent chief inspector's report, in which she said that only around 32% of children from disadvantaged backgrounds will leave school with five or more GCSEs including English and maths. That is a major indictment of our education system. I will hand over to Vani, who will talk us through some of the detail.
1163. **Professor Vani Borooah (University of Ulster):** Thank you again, Chairman, for this privilege and honour. It is with great pleasure and, also, in a sense, with humility that we offer our views to the Committee. Forgive me for the nasal tone in my voice. I am afraid that it is a seasonal hazard in this country at this time of the year. Please overlook it. *[Laughter.]* I want to talk about three issues that have emerged from the type of research that Professor Knox and I have done on education in Northern Ireland. The first is inequality in Northern Ireland's education system. The second is performance. The third is funding, and how that might reduce inequality and enhance performance.
1164. I will start with inequality. We think that there are two types of inequality in Northern Ireland. One is access inequality, which is to say that there is a top tier of schools to which children on free school meals do not get adequate access. They are underrepresented in those schools. The whole issue is why and whether we should do something

- about it. If we should do something about it, what can we do?
1165. There is also the issue of performance inequality between schools, primarily between grammar schools and secondary schools. However, within even the secondary school sector there are serious inequalities in school performance between schools. There are some very good schools that perform close to grammar school levels and some that are abysmally bad. The question is whether we can reduce inequality between schools and what sort of policy we should follow.
1166. To take an analogy from athletics, can we raise the personal best of each school? Can we convert a school that has 70% GCSE passes into one that has 75%? Can we take a school at the bottom of the scale and lift it from 15% to 20%? We want a tide that raises all boats. That is the kind of thing that we are looking at.
1167. All of that begs the question of what determines school performance. I will start with the negative. One thing we found that does not determine school performance is school size. There are small schools that do very well and large schools that do very badly. Therefore, what determines school performance? One thing that determines performance is what happens within a school. If you take attendance as an indicator of school discipline, you find that school performance is significantly affected by attendance rates. Regardless of whether it is a large or small school, good school discipline, as encapsulated in school attendance, means good results, and bad school discipline means bad results. We should be focusing on what happens in schools.
1168. Some sectors outperform others. Why do maintained secondary schools do better than controlled secondary schools? We need to think about what we can learn across that divide. That is another important issue that we need to talk about.
1169. We know that the presence of children with entitlement to free school meals pulls down school performance. We need to talk about what we can do to ensure that those children do better. That is a third thing that we need to talk about in the context of school policy. In the context of school discipline, what can one type of school learn from another, and what can we do about deprivation of pupils in terms of school performance in the context of that trinity of factors?
1170. The issue of school size is a red herring. We do not save money by closing schools that are below an approved size because we do not take into account the cost of travel or the cost to a community of having a school wrenched out of its heart. If we did take those costs into account, you would find that closing schools is a completely counterproductive policy in that it loses more money than it saves.
1171. More importantly, large schools do not equal better schools. That is our central message. If you want better schools, you have to focus on what happens within schools.
1172. Let me go back to the point that the presence of children with entitlement to free school meals pulls down school performance. One reaction of the Salisbury committee to that was that schools that had a large number of those children should get more money. Although that may have the right motivations, it is ill conceived. It basically throws money at a problem without understanding the mechanism that leads children with entitlement to free school meals to cause their schools to underperform. We suggest an alternative. We know what we can expect of a school, given its circumstances. Some schools perform better than expectations; we call those overperforming schools. Some schools underperform; they are underperforming schools. We have drawn up a list of all schools in Northern Ireland that over-perform and a list of schools that underperform. We think that school funding should take school performance

- into account. So, rather than simply throwing money at a school, regardless of performance, we should take performance into account and reward schools that are performing well and, perhaps, penalise schools that are not performing well. We are prepared to share methodology and our results with the Department of Education.
1173. Without taxing your patience further, Chairman, let me come to access inequality. The issue is that children with entitlement to free school meals do not get the kind of access to grammar schools that their position in the population deserves. We feel that one of the reasons for that is that grammar schools adopt a purely passive relationship with those children. They make no attempt at outreach; they make no attempt at mentoring; they make no attempt at support policies etc. Let me make a personal observation. My son went to a grammar school in Belfast. His school had complete indifference towards children with entitlement to free school meals. He then went to Oxford. His Oxford college bent over backwards to get state school pupils into the institution. It had outreach and mentoring policies, and it organised visits for state school children to visit Oxford to have a look at the place and to see what it was like.
1174. In order to reduce access inequality, we have to reduce inequality in opportunity. We are not against selection tests per se, but we are against selection tests as they are presently constituted, because they are without any regard for the kind of opportunities that pupils have to do well or badly. We think that grammar schools in this country must take on a much greater sense of social responsibility. They should realise that they severely under-represent a very important part of Northern Ireland's population, and they should do something about that in outreach, mentoring and support. Access inequality is a very important issue to address.
1175. Lastly, there is the issue of why there is performance inequality between schools. Why do some schools do well and others badly, even though they have the same government-funded ethos? Why do some schools do badly and why do some do well? More to the point, how can we reduce that inequality? I think the issue is one of strategic partnerships — aligning schools with each other and what they can learn from each other. Professor Knox will speak about those partnerships that we recommend.
1176. **Professor Knox:** I will finish, fairly briefly, Chair, with the point that Vani referred to. One of the ways in which we think you can address some of those inequalities in our current system is through collaborative or peer learning. Quite a bit of emerging research in the rest of the UK is about stronger-weaker school links. Those words are pejorative, but they are the words that the research uses. There are lots of educational benefits associated with the kind of collaborative or peer learning that there is where you have schools that are fairly close together geographically and schools that are fairly close together educationally — educationally proximate. I think that the additional overlay in Northern Ireland is that the geographical proximity often means that those are schools from different sectors, so they are schools from the controlled or maintained sector. Where we have the opportunity to achieve education benefits through peer learning, Northern Ireland affords us the opportunity also to accrue reconciliation benefits. Some of the principles of the shared education programme, for example, where schools collaborate on the basis of improving education performance, would align with that kind of collaborative learning.
1177. To conclude, the Minister announced a number of measures, including educational improvement; a new teacher education strategy, which is about trying to get the right people into teaching; providing leadership programmes for principals; rewarding principals on the basis of improving underperforming schools; stimulating mobility in the profession; and enhancing the professional standing of teachers. We

are very supportive of those measures, but we do not think that they go far enough.

1178. To tie in with Vani's presentation, there are a number of specific suggestions that we make in the paper. One is that, in order to tackle the issue of access equality, grammar schools should be set quotas for selecting kids with entitlement to free school meals and pupils with special educational needs. We think that, when it comes to performance inequalities, we should create more opportunities for peer learning. The ministerial advisory group report talked about a shared education premium. The word is, perhaps, a bit emotive, but we should incentivise schools to engage in peer learning. We think that the system that Vani outlined is about providing added value to the system rather than self-improvement, through which the current system operates. Finally and perhaps somewhat controversially, we think that the education selection debate has become toxic and that the problem should be reframed. The reframing of that problem, as we see it, is that it is not about having an elite group of schools and a less elite group of schools, but about putting in place a system that raises the education standards of all schools.

1179. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, Colin and Vani. There is a huge amount there, as there is in any report. The difficulty — it is the same for any Committee — is that you have your report and we have this discussion, but a wide range of issues come out of it and we could take any one of those elements and drill down into them. If I have learned anything in the years I have been in this post — some people may think that I have not learned very much — it is that there no single issue or silver bullet in education that would transform everything. It is a fallacy to suggest that the answer lies with ESA or a policy, or whatever. There needs to be a holistic approach to these things.

1180. I am trying to stay focused on our inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate. Vani's comments on many

of the issues were very useful and helpful, but where do you see the role of the inspectorate in all of that? Is it to assist self-evaluation, complement the quality and assure the methodology of schools and recognise the value added in schools? In all this, generalisations can, unfortunately, exclude areas of good practice and where things are happening that are to be commended. I know that the inspectorate listens keenly to what is going on in this inquiry. It is a wee bit nervous about being inquired into, which is a bit ironic. However, it has said that it does not recognise the fear factor. I was in a school just this week that has had an inspection, and the staff will tell you that it was a very testing and trying time for them. Is the inspectorate the mechanism that could be used to assist in peer learning, added value or on the issue of comparability between schools? Rather than being seen as the draconian enforcing officer of a very rigid set of policies against which you are judged, it could be there as a mechanism for assisting and helping to improve. It could be the tide that raises all boats.

1181. **Professor Borooah:** Mr Chairman, thank you for that. First, structural and institutional answers to the restructuring of the education system may be important, but they are of a secondary order of importance in raising educational outcomes. One of the latest observations that the latest 'The Economist' magazine makes is that, in the UK, we have three different systems in Northern Ireland, Scotland and England but that the performance levels of those three different systems is virtually uniform. The conclusion that one draws from that is that it is not so much structures and institutions that drive educational performance, but what is actually happening in the schools. So, coming to your point, Chairman, I think that school inspectors can play an enormous role in raising school performance, not in an adversarial context but in a cooperative context. That is to say it can tell schools how they could perform better and how someone else down the road is doing

something better that they could emulate. To be told by a third party that someone else is performing better is slightly different from finding out for yourself. I might tell you that school x down the road is doing something better, but you would learn much better by actually talking to school x. That is exactly the point that we are trying to make. As you say, there is no single solution to the problems of education. Yes, school inspectors adopting a particular role are a part of the solution, but only a part. Another part of the solution is schools talking to one another, and, overlaying all of this is, of course, the appropriate institutional and organisational structures that would support this.

1182. **Professor Knox:** To add to that, Chair, your suggestion around the role that the inspectorate could play is hugely important in the context of some of the things we have outlined. For instance, I think that it could take a very hands-on approach to the implementation of a value-added approach rather than the self-improvement approach. I think that it could be responsible for monitoring access performance and performance inequalities. It could play a role in monitoring how that is operating. Finally, I think that it could play a very active role in looking at peer learning. It could take a kind of helicopter view of pockets of learning that could provide exemplars for other parts of Northern Ireland. The Education and Training Inspectorate has a very valuable and supportive role to play in the component parts of our thesis.

1183. **The Chairperson:** I think that all of this is helpful, following on from yesterday's publication of the OECD report, because a huge part of that report — an entire chapter almost — is on the issue of assessment. That is a very useful element of the report. Over the past number of weeks and months, the Committee has had many discussions about levels of progression, the failed computer-based assessment process, and all of that. Some of that is down to the incompetence of the

Department in not being able to procure a process properly and implement it, but it has done damage, in a sense, to the product, which is the issue of assessment. Alongside that has come the debate around self-evaluation and self-assessment. Am I picking up from you a concern about the validity of that self-evaluation and self-assessment, as opposed to the process of how we assess pupils in schools? Can you give us some sort of delineation of those two areas? That is a key area, and I have been interested in this issue for some time. The debate is around assessment as opposed to selection. It is about ability as opposed to a range of socioeconomic indicators, although those can play a part.

1184. **Professor Borooah:** As you said, Chairman, there is no one single solution. We do not deny that self-assessment has an important role to play, but it is not an end in itself. Alongside self-assessment of schools, there can also be an objective assessment of schools. You can have two schools that are in virtually similar circumstances and yet one is doing much better than the other in respect of an objective assessment, even though the self-assessment of each school might be that they are both doing well. Sometimes an objective assessment can point out the kind of contradictions and inconsistency that can exist between self-assessment and objective assessment. So, I do not think that we can say that self-assessment is bad per se. However, I do think that we can say that it is not enough in itself and that it needs to be complemented by a more objective form of assessment. That is one of the things that we have been working on. We have established an objective assessment of schools in Northern Ireland. Perhaps it would be useful to marry schools' self-assessment with that kind of objective assessment.

1185. **Professor Knox:** Yes. Part of what we are trying to get at here is to be slightly more scientific about how we expect schools to perform given the

- range of circumstances in which they find themselves. We have developed a methodology. It is in the paper, and we would be happy to share it with the Department. Essentially, what we attempt to do in that model is to look at what we predict in respect of school performance against actual school performance. If schools are over-performing, we will want to know how they are doing that and whether could we incentivise them as a result of that over-performance. If schools are underperforming — and this is the value-added bit — we will look at how we can support, help and assist them. Again, that will be done with the thesis of trying to improve the overall performance of all schools rather than seeing grammar schools as something —
1186. **The Chairperson:** I will conclude with this point. Another individual carried out some work in relation to super-output areas. It was almost predictable how a school would perform on the basis of super-output areas, although there will always be exceptions to the rule. Does that marry in with over-performance and underperformance on the basis of the methodology that you have used?
1187. **Professor Knox:** Yes. One aspect of that is deprivation. It struck us in the development of this methodology that we do not see much attention being given to the key factor of absenteeism. That comes out in our work as being very important to school performance. Absenteeism may be the surrogate for a number of other things, such as lack of parental and community support and children being involved in childcare duties. We have attempted to be slightly more empirical around what factors cause, or are associated with, school performance and how we can seek to address them.
1188. The second strand is learning from the schools that, in relatively poor socioeconomic circumstances — against the odds, in a sense — actually perform well. What is happening in those schools that perform well against the odds versus those schools that become almost stereotypical socially deprived, super-output-area-type schools?
1189. **The Chairperson:** OK. There are a couple of other things that I want to come back to, but we will do that later.
1190. **Mr Kinahan:** The humility should be on our side. Thank you very much for coming to us and sharing your thoughts. The whole time that I have been on this Committee, I have been really unhappy with the fact that we have this constant divide, which is always being made bigger by the debates we have. It is fantastic to see a really well thought out, considered view. However, it raises certain questions. I have various questions.
1191. On funding, you talk about a shared education premium. However, when I speak to some school principals, they tell me that they need a little bit more funding to give them the flexibility to individualise — if I can put it that way — how they help pupils. There is another factor needed there. Will you comment on that?
1192. Another issue is the maternal and community influence. There are a whole lot of other influences outside the school that you have not really touched on.
1193. You commented on bilateral schools. There are some good ideas out there in different ways. Strabane has a bilateral school, although I have not yet had the chance to visit it. The Priory and Sullivan need to share the good examples that you have talked about.
1194. You mentioned quotas. Do you have an idea of how you find the best quota? Are we talking about a 35% or 40% quota? Is there a calculation?
1195. My last query is on rewarding principals. What sort of thing do you have in mind other than pay and a good pat on the back? Are there any other ideas there, please? It is a fascinating report.
1196. **Professor Knox:** I will take a couple of your questions, and Vani can take the more difficult ones. *[Laughter.]* You referred to the premium. The starting

- point is that all schools respond to incentives. If there are financial incentives, those will change schools' behaviour. One of the things we had in mind on the peer learning approach was that providing slightly stronger schools with an incentive in the common funding formula to work with slightly weaker schools would encourage that type of behaviour.
1197. **One of the obvious questions to ask is this:** what does the stronger school get out of it? Three schools in Derry/Londonderry — St Cecilia's, St Mary's and Lisneal — have done work under the shared education programme. Lisneal was in formal intervention at one point. St Mary's and St Cecilia's worked with Lisneal, and it is now out of formal intervention. The two maintained schools benefited significantly from the counselling services that happened in Lisneal, so there was reciprocal learning. There are ways of doing it. With the whole review of the common funding formula, there is an opportunity to incentivise these kinds of productive relationships, which, ultimately, will have both educational and reconciliation benefits.
1198. The second point I would make is that we accept absolutely that there are things that we have not touched on in this paper. Importantly, one of those is what is happening in the communities surrounding schools. You cannot just look at schools in isolation. They are not an oasis of peace or isolation. All of those kinds of contextual factors, such as what parents do, are hugely important. We have not addressed them, but we do not devalue their importance.
1199. We have not gone into the detail of the quota-reward system. We simply throw it out as an idea. If the Department were interested in it, we would want to engage with it on the detail. It would provide an opportunity for grammar schools to show, as Vani described it, that kind of social responsibility. There is no reason why it could not operate in practice.
1200. You mentioned rewarding principals. We are very much for the process of incentivisation. We like, very much, the Minister's idea of rewarding principals to take over schools that, in the pejorative sense, are failing schools, rather than seeing the prime jobs as being the jobs in high-performing schools. It is really about bringing leadership to those schools.
1201. **Professor Borooah:** Let me take your point about quotas. My starting point is that Britain is unimpressed by the fact that 50% of the intake of Oxford and Cambridge is from independent schools even though only 8% of school leavers in Britain are from independent schools. There is that gross inequality. There is a larger perception in Britain and in the UK that this is unequal. More to the point, there is a perception within Oxford and Cambridge that it is unequal and that they must do something about it.
1202. When we speak of a quota, we do not mean an absolute quota that has to be imposed. However, schools and institutions should have a notional target that they should aspire to in terms of addressing social inequalities. In so doing, they have to be much more flexible in their selection procedures. It is no longer four As at A level going into Oxford and Cambridge but an assessment of a person's ability, what that person has to offer or may gain. Grammar schools here are too content to rely on that mechanistic early A level-plus exam regardless of the kind of opportunities that pupils had to do well or badly in that exam.
1203. There has to be a sense of obligation on the part of grammar schools before change can come. However one does it, that sense of obligation to society has to be there.
1204. In terms of deprivation, a lot of educationalists observe that school performance is determined 50% by the school and 50% by home. Those who come from supportive homes have an enormous advantage in school over people who do not come from such supportive homes. When schools have a large proportion of children from free-school-meal backgrounds, they are,

- in some sense, obliged to act as in loco parentis for those children. They have to perform a function that goes beyond classroom instruction and lies in building expectations, self-belief, self-regard and aspiration in those students.
1205. That is the question before us. It is not just classroom teaching but how to instil a sense of self-belief and aspiration in pupils who may not have had those familial advantages where they get those aspirations at home.
1206. **Mr Kinahan:** Thank you very much.
1207. **Mr Craig:** I noted with interest your comments on quotas around free school meals. You have a complex formula as well and I have no idea what it all means. Another aspect that I think schools find not difficult but challenging are special educational needs children. Is there the same percentage spread across all schools with that or is that based largely on a particular school base?
1208. **Professor Borooh:** I think that there is the same access inequality for special educational needs children as exists for free-school-meals children. When we speak about access inequality, we should also have said access inequality of pupils from free-school-meal and special educational needs backgrounds.
1209. We found in primary schools that special educational needs and free-school-meals pupils underperform. When special educational needs children go to post-primary school they pick up but the free-school-meals children slightly regress. We need to see what happens to the maturing process, as children become adolescents, and why some close the gap and for others it increases. I do not know whether that answers your question but special educational needs children need to be put into the category of access inequality along with free-school-meals children.
1210. **Mr Craig:** I just think that, from school point of view, you are right: there are two big challenges. How do you deal with the children who come from families with a deprived background and have not had the same advantages as others? That is a very challenging situation. However, it is equally challenging, and in some cases a lot more so, to deal with children with special educational needs. Some financial help and assistance is given when those children are statemented etc, but, by and large, that does not cater for their entire needs and there are challenges there. I find it interesting that we concentrate solely on the social issue but do not look at the special educational needs issue as well. Both skew the system. What is your logic with regard to that problem?
1211. **Professor Borooh:** The logic is that we should have put children with special educational needs along with children eligible for free school meals in speaking about access inequality. However, I would say that, if there is one comfort, it is that the gap between special educational needs children and others diminishes as they grow older. However, for children who are eligible for free school meals, the gap widens. I do not know whether there is any comfort in that.
1212. **The Chairperson:** Vani, on that point, you can have anomalies — and I am thinking of one particular school, which I will not name, where you have what you could describe as a moderate intake of children who are eligible for free school meals but which has an exceptionally high element of children on EMA, in fact almost 70%. What I worry about — and we have seen this played out in the common funding formula debacle — is that we pick one indicator and use only that and it distorts. Despite all the denials, it has been repeatedly set as bluntly as that. Probably, EMA, on its own, is a blunt indicator and you can get a raft. Could EMA also be included in some quota to determine deprivation? That is an indication of another element of need. A set of criteria must be met to enable access to EMA.
1213. **Professor Borooh:** We could debate what constitutes deprivation and we could ask whether this or that is the right measure. I am sure that there is profit to be made from making those

- distinctions. However, I submit that that is of a secondary order of importance, because, however we do it, there is bound to be an enormous overlap between the measures. By focusing on the differences, I think that we are focusing on matters that are of a secondary order of importance. The first order of importance is to identify deprivation, however we define it. We know that there are different measures of deprivation, and we might get differences in detail, but we will get a lot of overlap. We should ask: why does deprivation, however we define it, impact on school performance? Then we can turn our minds to asking whether we have the right measure of deprivation and fine-tune our policy.
1214. **Professor Knox:** I think that the same is true for EMA. You will find that there is quite a bit of overlap with respect to background deprivation measures associated with it.
1215. **Mr Rogers:** It is a very interesting report, and thank you for it. One of the first things that jump out at me is that there is a line in the report which says, interestingly, that school improvement policies are failing to realise their objective and meet the need. I prefer the term “self-evaluation” to “self-assessment”. Why is self-evaluation not well embedded in our schools at this stage? It has been on the go for 10 years. That is my first question.
1216. **Professor Knox:** In the paper, we do not argue that self-evaluation is not a useful tool. However, clearly, it has not made the kind of difference that one would have expected it to make. There has been a marginal improvement in the performance gap between grammar schools and non-grammar schools. So, if we have a self-improvement/self-evaluation system in place, why are we failing to make that kind of shift in performance? If these policies are about trying to get schools to consider their own practices and, by a process of comparison with other schools in the same circumstances, improve, we are not really making a significant impression on that. That is where we need to look at measures other than what we are doing currently. We are not suggesting that that is not a good thing to do, but simply that, over a period of time, it has not made the kind of difference that was expected.
1217. **Mr Rogers:** To really embed self-evaluation in schools, we are talking about two or three cycles of a school development plan. Do you think that among the contributory factors is the lack of high-quality continuous professional development for teachers? Do you think that that particular theme should be developed? Do you think that that is a contributing factor?
1218. **Professor Knox:** The quality of teaching is hugely important in all this and so is supporting teachers through continuous professional development. No matter what system we use in trying to measure that, the focus needs to be on education outcomes. Looking at education outcomes over that period of time, we can see that what we are doing currently has not worked sufficiently well. The Chair started by saying that this is not a magic bullet. Some measures that the Minister outlined will be helpful with respect to what you are suggesting — continuous professional development and leadership in schools — but they are part of a plethora of things. Depending on schools to pull themselves up by their own boot strings, just by comparison with other schools, does not appear to have worked thus far.
1219. **Mr Rogers:** Related to that, when we talk about school performance, that means measuring how many pupils they have with five A to C grades including English and maths. You mention the phrase “value-added” very often. To see the real value-added learning in schools, do we not need a mechanism for measuring value-added learning other than counting how many pupils get five A to C grades? I have said this over and over again: if a child starts post-primary school with, let us say, a reading age of nine and gets five A to C grades at the end of fifth year, and another child enters post-primary school with

a reading age of 13, there can be no comparison. Do you not believe that we need a better mechanism for measuring value-added learning?

1220. **Professor Borooah:** In some ways, however imperfect, we try to provide that kind of measure. We look at a school's circumstances in the broad and ask, given those circumstances, what we can expect from that school. The circumstances of any two schools will be different. So, if your school has better circumstances, we will expect more from your school than from mine. Then we will compare your performance to mine and against what we would expect. Our measure of value-added learning is this: what you deliver relative to what we expected you to deliver. However, what we expected you to deliver was conditional upon your circumstances. If your circumstances were bad, our expectations were low and, if you delivered more than that, we were pleasantly surprised and you will have over-performed. So we certainly take that into account.

1221. Let me make a second point. We have also looked at why parents choose schools. What determines their first preferences? The most important thing that parents use for that is school performance. Sometimes, bad performance can be cumulative. So, you can have a school that does badly and parents know of it, so they shift to another school, and the school goes into a downward spiral. Sometimes, it is very important to arrest those downward spirals before they take place. Once they have taken place, it is very difficult to build the reputation of the school again. So, parents are sensitive to school performance and that is what our results show.

1222. **Mr Rogers:** Thank you. You make a very interesting point about ESA, and we have taken our eye off the ball there. The original idea behind ESA was to raise standards in schools. I was a school principal at that stage and I was really looking forward to ESA getting more money to the classroom. Part of our problem is how money is allocated

to education in Northern Ireland. Take a look across the water: 85%-plus of the money goes to the schools there, yet barely 60% of it goes to schools here. Does the way our education budget is organised limit the ability to plan education strategically? Do you think that that is a major problem for us?

1223. **Professor Borooah:** The major element in the education system is the age-weighted pupil unit. That is precisely why closing schools does not make any sense; the money simply follows the pupil and one can only tinker at the margins. Giving money to school principals and allowing them to use their initiative, provided it is used properly, makes much more sense than having central control of funds.

1224. **Professor Knox:** I will add one minor point to that, which is our fear that the area planning process will result in large, single-identity schools. There is no evidence, as we have said, that large schools perform better. It is certainly not good for reconciliation in Northern Ireland to have large single-identity schools. That drift in the area planning process could be entirely counterproductive.

1225. **Mr Rogers:** Closing small schools is not the solution. In the case of our primary schools, their intake has to be below a certain number. Obviously, the figure of 105 is way out in relation to rural schools. Where do you believe that figure should lie for rural primary schools?

1226. **Professor Borooah:** We are not saying that schools should never be closed. Occasionally, there may well be a strong case for schools to be closed, but they should not be closed heedless of the consequences for pupils and for communities. That is very important. It is a qualitative judgement, but that qualitative judgement is missing when we apply a purely mechanistic formula.

1227. **Mr Lunn:** Thank you very much for your presentation and your report, gentlemen. It is fair to say that it has given everyone something, because

- there are different views here. I am sure that we will refer to it a lot in the coming weeks and months.
1228. **Professor Borooah, you gave us an interesting statistic about the 50:50** ratio between home and school in the learning experience . We have been force-fed a diet of 20% school:80% home for as long as I have been on this Committee, and it is a figure that I have always struggled with; I just cannot see it at all. Is there a scientific measurement, or have you some basis for the 50:50 ratio?
1229. **Professor Borooah:** I am quoting a lady called Alison Wolf, who is a professor of education at King's College in London. The point is that it is not about whether it is 50:50 or 80:20; the point is more qualitative. Home has an important and significant influence on a pupil's outcome. We can debate how much of an influence it is, but it is undeniable that it exists. The point is, when students are disadvantaged by not having that kind of a parental background, what should the school do about it? Should it simply ignore it and see that pupil as simply another occupant of a desk, or should it act, as I said, in loco parentis to try to fill that gap? That is the basic issue.
1230. **Mr Lunn:** OK. You are probably agreeing with me that the 20% figure that we have been given so often is completely unrealistic, and that a school would have to provide more than 20% of the learning experience of any child.
1231. **Professor Borooah:** I am quoting a particular economist, and some other economists always disagree. Two economists will have three opinions, as we all know. We might say that it is 50% or 20%. The point is that it is significant. Home has an important role to play.
1232. **Mr Lunn:** Yes, but if we were arguing between 20% and 25% we would say that that is a difference between experts, but this margin is quite significant. Anyway, I was delighted to hear you make that comment.
1233. You talk about peer learning as being very important in various contexts, particularly in the shared education process. I agree with you, and I see that your report refers to:
- "significant, measurable educational and reconciliation benefits."*
1234. I would not disagree with that at all, although I think that the primary benefit is meant to be educational and the reconciliation comes along as a bonus product. Where do you think that the integrated model fits in that?
1235. **Professor Knox:** That is probably a leading question from you. To re-emphasise the point that Vani made earlier: we did some analysis of how parents choose their school, and a key influence in that is the educational performance of the school. There will be parents who will choose their school simply because there are significant reconciliation benefits, but I suggest that they are in the minority. If you can get educational benefits and reconciliation benefits, that becomes a significant contribution to raising educational standards and to addressing some of the reconciliation needs in Northern Ireland.
1236. If you look at the table where we look at school performance, you will see that integrated schools are somewhere between maintained non-grammars and controlled non-grammars. That has got to be an influence in parental choice. We are not here in any shape or form to devalue the role that integrated education plays in Northern Ireland but simply to try to interpret how parents select their schools and the reasons why they send their children to particular schools.
1237. **Mr Lunn:** I was not asking you to advocate for or against integrated schools. That is not the point, but the report states:
- "extending curriculum choices for pupils on a cross-community basis".*
1238. That is the effect of a shared education model. The extension of that would quite

- naturally be an integrated model. Are you saying that it is at least possible that having pupils learning together on a cross-community basis and on a full-time basis rather than the odd class during the week might have a long-term benefit?
1239. **Professor Knox:** I have to disagree with you about the “odd class” bit.
1240. **Mr Lunn:** That was an unfortunate phrase.
1241. **Professor Knox:** It is not a criticism. It is important in the sense that shared education is about sustained contact. That is where you get the education and reconciliation benefits. According to our data, the choice is based primarily on education outcomes, but that is not in any way to devalue the important societal benefits from shared integrated education.
1242. **Mr Lunn:** OK. Our next investigation will be to compare shared and integrated education.
1243. I want to briefly go back to the question about school size. The former chief inspector, Mr Goudie, expressed his opinion one day that class size does not matter. Big classes do not lead to a fall in performance, achievement or quality of teaching. That is another statistic that I found amazing. Have you got a view about that?
1244. **Professor Borooah:** The evidence is mixed in the sense that we do not deny that there are good large schools, but equally, it is undeniable that there are good small schools, and equally, it is undeniable that there are large bad schools. So, simply to focus on size as the most significant factor misses the point. The point is that there are certain things that cut right across schools that affect school performance, such as school attendance and discipline. What happens in the school is much more important than the size of the school. Maybe the size of the school sometimes acts as a proxy for these things, but one should focus on the essentials.
1245. **Mr Lunn:** I was asking you about class size. Most of us tend to think that 30 pupils is about the optimum figure, but when Stanley Goudie was here, he indicated that having 36 up to 40 was not going to be a problem. The corollary of that is that a class of 15 is not in any way beneficial.
1246. **Professor Borooah:** One of the things that we show is that the number of teachers in a school is also very important. You could have a large class size, but you could have specialist teaching from a large pool of teachers. So, we find that schools that have a sixth form, for example, do better in GCSEs than schools that do not. Why is that? It is the case in the same way that universities that have postgraduate courses have better undergraduate performance than universities that do not. The reason is this: you get a more specialist kind of teacher teaching you, albeit at a lower level. I do not deny that class size may not make a difference, but, certainly, the kind of teacher body that you have does make a difference.
1247. **Mr Lunn:** So, you tend to agree with the chief inspector that, provided that the quality of the teaching is right, a bigger class than 30 should not make a difference.
1248. **Professor Borooah:** Yes, what we are saying is that large schools, per se, abstracting from everything else, are not a significant determinant of school performance. Size per se does not make a difference. Size has to be taken in conjunction with a number of other factors. When those other factors are taken into account, size recedes into the background, and those other factors come to the fore. That is what we are saying.
1249. **Mr Sheehan:** Thanks for your presentation, gentlemen. I have a couple of short questions. At the outset, you said that maintained secondary schools perform better than controlled. What is the reason for that?
1250. **Professor Borooah:** I would not like to speculate.

1251. **Professor Knox:** I think that that is a hugely important question, put in a very pithy way. I do not think that we have the answer to that. If you ask people in the maintained sector, they will talk about the Catholic ethos and say that it has an important role to play in that. That is perhaps one of the factors that go beyond the school. Perhaps the aspirations of children from that sector, or the family support for children from that sector, play an important part. It is a question that needs more investigation. Why do schools, probably with similar demographics, from the maintained and controlled sectors do better or worse? Research has been done on this. There was the Dawn Purvis stuff about the lower aspirations of children from Protestant working-class backgrounds. It would be interesting to look at the small number of cases in which schools from that area do better than they are expected to. What is different about those schools that make them perform better?
1252. **Mr Sheehan:** Aspirations among the children is one thing, but is there any evidence of a lowering of aspirations among the teaching staff? They do not expect the kids to perform well or to go on to third-level education, and so on and so forth, so they lower their expectations.
1253. **Professor Borooah:** One of the questions that you asked was a fundamental question. However, I think that it takes us beyond what is happening in schools to what is happening in society and to the lost generation, sense of hope, lack of aspiration and feeling of emptiness regarding the future on the part of one section of society, but hope and regeneration on the part of another. I think that that is going beyond the school debate to a comment on society.
1254. Teachers have a very important role to play in aspirations. You see this in England. What is institutional racism? Institutional racism is this: if an Indian child comes to a teacher and says, "I would like to be a doctor", the teacher says, "Yes, good, that is what you should be". If a West Indian child comes to a teacher and says, "I'd like to be doctor", the teacher says, "Why don't you try athletics? That is more your line". It is exactly that. The aspirations of children are killed or nourished and nurtured by the attitude of the teacher. Teachers go with stereotypes when they approach children. They can play an important role in stunting a child or allowing that child to grow.
1255. **Mr Sheehan:** Thanks for that. Vani, you said that directing funding based on free school meals and using that as an indicator is ill-conceived. If that funding is linked to evidence-based interventions, is it still ill-conceived?
1256. **Professor Borooah:** No. It is ill-conceived in the sense that, if I require surgery, the surgeon takes an axe rather than a scalpel. It is not the operation that is ill-conceived; it is the instrument that is being used that is ill-conceived.
1257. Giving money to schools based on the number of children who get free school meals as a policy and operation is not ill-conceived, but it is too blunt an instrument as it is proposed at present. You need a scalpel here rather than an axe, and you need to tease out those schools that, notwithstanding having a large number of children on free school meals, are putting in a good performance. It is about asking why and rewarding those aspects of behaviour that are leading to good results but not giving a blanket coverage of money to all schools that have children on free school meals. At the moment, it is much more of a shotgun approach. What we need is much more of a sniper's bullet or bullets.
1258. **Mr Sheehan:** A good analogy. *[Laughter.]*
1259. **The Chairperson:** Maybe for some parties but not for all.
1260. **Mr Sheehan:** The Committee has been talking over the past few weeks about peer learning and peer tutoring. I do not know a lot about it. It sounds like an interesting concept. I am not sure how much research there is on it. What is the evidence of the improvements that

it may make in schools, and how does it work?

1261. **Professor Borooah:** Colin can answer that, but let me make just one observation. If you look at the UK, you will find that London has the best-performing schools compared with any other part of the UK. That was not always so. There were a lot of what were pejoratively called sink comprehensives. Many of those are now not sink comprehensives. A lot of imagination was brought to London schools to improve performance. One example of that was the London Challenge, which was when schools with one level of performance learned from schools with another level of performance. They were role models. There is no single solution, but many solutions have been brought to improve school performance in London, one of which was peer performance.
1262. **Professor Knox:** Most of the evidence on peer learning is based on schools in England. There is emerging evidence around the significance of education improving as a consequence. The best example in practice in Northern Ireland is the shared education programme, where schools collaborate around an extension of curriculum and shared learning in core areas of the curriculum. The Minister acknowledged the fact that that kind of approach has education and reconciliation benefits based on evidence from schools that were involved in those programmes.
1263. We would condition that by saying that you need to get schools that are fairly close so that there is not a lot of travelling between them and children do not spend a lot of time on buses. You also need to get schools that are performing relatively close to one another, with one being slightly stronger. Those circumstances create opportunities where that peer learning will evolve. If you overlay that with some financial incentive for schools to do that, we think that that is the cocktail for peer learning to become embedded. Colleagues from Queen's said that schools become interdependent. That gives them access to a wider range of resources and different kinds of teaching specialisms. The beneficiaries of that are children who are part of that network of schools.
1264. **Professor Borooah:** I will give you two examples off the top of my head. We have drawn up a long list of schools that might collaborate. St Mary's Grammar and Methodist College might collaborate. They are both good schools, but Methodist College is slightly better in maths and so has something to offer. Collaboration is possible between Aquinas on the Ravenhill Road and Wellington College, which is half a mile up the road. Knockbreda is not too far away. What can one do about that? Those are all possible partnerships that are very feasible with regard to distance.
1265. **Mr Sheehan:** In practical terms, what happens? Is it just that children from the two schools go into one class together?
1266. **Professor Borooah:** Yes, and teachers.
1267. **Professor Knox:** They share resources of teachers as well. It feeds into the whole entitlement framework. Schools, in and of themselves, might not be able to offer particular specialisms. If they collaborate for educational reasons, they widen the scope of the curriculum and also get that consistent regular contact, which breaks down all the cross-community barriers that we know exist. We think that the double hit, if you like, would be shown through the value for education and reconciliation.
1268. **Professor Borooah:** One cannot micromanage those things and say, "This will happen in every partnership". It is important to establish the principle of sharing but to leave the details of sharing to the individual schools and their specialist needs.
1269. **Mr Sheehan:** I will stay on the issue of collaboration between schools. Some of the research that I have seen suggests that schools that perform best are those that have pupils from a wide range of social backgrounds. Would you advocate that schools with pupils from different social backgrounds collaborate or that they should have the same social mix?

1270. **Professor Knox:** I think that it can happen organically. I do not think that we would want to say that you must have schools from different socio-economic backgrounds in order for collaboration to be effective. I think that it is likely to be the case that you can have collaboration involving schools from socially deprived areas as long as they are educationally proximate. You will not put — for want of a better phrase — a top-performing grammar school with a lower-performing non-grammar school. It is about making sure that you get parental buy-in to that where those schools are educationally proximate and, as a consequence, both schools or the tripartite of schools benefit from the experience.
1271. **Mr Sheehan:** Thanks very much.
1272. **Mrs Dobson:** Thank you both for your presentation. It has certainly been very interesting to listen to it. Professor Borooah, I was interested when you referred earlier to Oxford and Cambridge and the students who go there. My son got into Cambridge through the excellent education that he received in our local grammar school. I am very proud of the quality of education in Northern Ireland.
1273. **Professor Borooah:** As, indeed, did my son. We both have to thank Northern Ireland —
1274. **Mrs Dobson:** We have something in common. Which college?
1275. **Professor Borooah:** He went to Balliol College, Oxford.
1276. **Mrs Dobson:** Right. My son is at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. I am very proud of the education that he received here from his grammar school, Banbridge Academy.
1277. I want to touch on quotas again, if I may. I suppose that the flip side of quotas is often their unintended consequences. Are you concerned that, by introducing a quota, it could possibly adversely disadvantage some students where the schools may decide to stick rigidly to quotas rather than allow more pupils in?
1278. **Professor Borooah:** We misspoke when we talked about quotas. The quota that one has to have is an aspirational quota in one's mind.
1279. **Mrs Dobson:** OK. So, it is not a rigid percentage?
1280. **Professor Borooah:** No. There has to be a realisation in grammar schools, just as there is a realisation in Oxford and Cambridge, that they are not doing enough in societal terms and should do more. In order to do that, they should have some aspiration in their mind with regard to a quota, which might be perfectly flexible. Unless that realisation comes from within them, I think that it is impossible to impose something externally and say, "You must do this whether you like it or not".
1281. **Mrs Dobson:** That is good because I would be concerned that, if there were a rigid quota, it would disadvantage pupils with special needs. I am particularly interested in supporting pupils with special needs. Would your proposed quota be based on your view that the current support for those students is possibly not adequate? What changes would you like to make to reflect that?
1282. **Professor Borooah:** I would quote the equal opportunities legislation that you have. It is not positive discrimination. It is not adverse selection or whatever. It is outreach. You encourage and support people to apply, but, ultimately, you take the best. What we have to realise is that it is not so much about equality of outcome. We want equality of opportunity; we do not want equality of outcome. At present, we do not have equality of opportunity. A child who comes from your background or my background has an enormous advantage in getting into a grammar school or Oxbridge over children from more deprived backgrounds. We want to remove that disadvantage. Let them compete on an open playing field. Then, if my child gets in, great. If he does not get in, that is also fine. At the moment, the playing field is not level. That is what I am saying.

1283. **Mrs Dobson:** I was concerned that they should earn their place through ability rather than being seen as meeting a quota.
1284. **Professor Borooah:** Absolutely. They should earn their place through ability, but their ability should have the full opportunity to demonstrate itself.
1285. **Mrs Dobson:** Of course.
1286. **Professor Borooah:** At the moment, it does not.
1287. **Mrs Dobson:** OK. I want to touch on something that Danny mentioned earlier about schools' popularity with parents and the reputation and standing of schools in the local community. Often, I feel that it can be a double-edged sword for schools. How do you overcome the fact that some schools are more popular than others and are oversubscribed? What role do you see for inspectors in helping to raise the public perception, particularly of schools that have traditionally been viewed as less favourable in a community but have come on leaps and bounds in recent years? Do you see inspectors having a role in that?
1288. **Professor Borooah:** I think so. In Europe, you just go to the local school. All schools are the same. The fact that some schools underperform and some over-perform is not the norm; it is an aberration. In most European countries, the whole idea of not going to your local school would be bizarre. So, I think that we have to embrace the idea that all schools can lift their performance in such a way that they provide a decent education. One cannot ask for more than that. At the moment, when there is such disparity of performance between schools, that is unacceptable.
1289. **Mrs Dobson:** Thank you very much.
1290. **The Chairperson:** I think that Trevor wants in very quickly. We have run badly over time.
1291. **Mr Lunn:** I will not take a moment. Pat raised the point about the difference between Catholic maintained, non-grammar and controlled, which is probably the most startling figure in all your statistics. It is stark. Your statistics show a 10% difference. It means that one third more Catholic pupils succeed than those in controlled schools. The popular perception is that that is historical. It almost comes back to the question of how much learning comes from the home. The perception is that the fathers and grandfathers of the children in controlled schools expected to have a job in Shorts, Mackie's, the rope works or Harland and Wolff. Hopefully, that is fading into history now. There must be some reason for it. Can any work be done, or have you guys done any work, that would give some clue about why that is? There must be more to it than just a Catholic ethos. Although it is to be valued, I do not think that it could really account for that huge difference.
1292. **Professor Borooah:** Let me give you a slightly different statistic. If you look at the top 10 performing grammar schools in Northern Ireland, you will see that eight of them are Catholic grammar schools. Schools such as Methodist College only start to kick in after the first 10. It is not something that is peculiar to the maintained secondary versus controlled secondary; grammar schools also have that characteristic.
1293. **The Chairperson:** You run the risk of straying into another discussion and debate. The only thing that I will say is that there are other statistics. We need to be very careful, because we have seen NISRA's statistics for controlled non-selective secondary schools that outperform maintained non-selective schools. It all depends. The NISRA figures for last year clearly indicated that, in certain areas, non-selective secondary schools were outperforming others. You take a general brush —
1294. **Professor Borooah:** It is the average.
1295. **The Chairperson:** It is the average. We always have to have that caveat. It is a bit like the language that we use. Unfortunately, this morning, a senior bishop decided to use language that I

think was very regrettable. He described the process a jungle and, out of that, you will always get beasts that win. That was very unfortunate. It was not language that should have been used. We always need to be careful.

1296. **Mr Lunn:** I would tend to agree with you if the difference was not quite so stark. It is a huge variation. That is the only point I was making.
1297. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Your paper is very valuable and useful. It will inform us in our deliberations on the inquiry. There is no doubt that we will come back to you, Colin and Vani, maybe with regard to the performance information that you referred to. We look forward to working with you in 2014. We wish both of you God's richest blessing this Christmas time.
1298. **Professor Borooah:** Likewise, Chairman. It was a privilege and an honour. Thank you.

8 January 2014

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	<i>Council for Catholic</i>
Mr Terry Murphy	<i>Maintained Schools</i>

1299. **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.

1300. **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.

1301. 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.

1302. 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.

1303. 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.
1304. 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.
1305. 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.
1306. 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.
1307. 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.
1308. 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.
1309. 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.
1310. 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.
1311. **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.
1312. **Mr Murphy:** Yes.
1313. **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.
1314. 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.
1315. **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.
1316. **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.
1317. 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.
1318. **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.
1319. **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.
1320. **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?
1321. **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.
1322. **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?
1323. **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.
1324. 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?
1325. **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.
1326. **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.
1327. **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.
1328. **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.
1329. **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.
1330. **Mr Kinahan:** I am all for the rebooting side of it.
1331. 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?
1332. **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.
1333. 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.
1334. 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.
1335. 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.
1336. **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.
1337. 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.
1338. **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.
1339. **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?
1340. **Mr Murphy:** Into year 8, yes.
1341. **Mr Rogers:** So, it is a post-primary.
1342. **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.
1343. **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.
1344. **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.
1345. 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.
1346. **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.
1347. **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?
1348. **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?
1349. 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.
1350. **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.
1351. **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.
1352. **Mr Crudden:** I think that teachers would welcome a shorter notification period because those four weeks can be a bit nerve-racking.
1353. **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.
1354. **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.
1355. **The Chairperson:** The inspectorate is uptight about the Committee inspecting it at the minute, so what goes around comes around.
1356. 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?
1357. **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.
1358. 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.

1359. **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.
1360. **The Chairperson:** That is a valid point, Malachy.
1361. 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.
1362. Malachy, to clarify, did the ETI change in the grading go from "satisfactory" to "good" in the specific instance that you referred to?
1363. **Mr Crudden:** Yes, it went from "satisfactory" to "good".
1364. **The Chairperson:** Was that after consultation with the board of governors and the ETI?
1365. **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.
1366. **The Chairperson:** We have been told that the ETI does not revisit its grading and —
1367. **Mr Crudden:** No. This was while the inspectors were still in the school.
1368. **The Chairperson:** This was during the inspection?
1369. **Mr Murphy:** They had not reached their final judgement.
1370. **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."
1371. **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.
1372. **The Chairperson:** We all share that concern.
1373. **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.
1374. **The Chairperson:** That is a valid point, and it has been raised in submissions and contributions to the Committee.
1375. 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.
1376. **Mr Crudden:** Thank you very much indeed.

8 January 2014

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:

Dr Liz Fawcett *ParentsOutloud*
 Ms Roisín Gilheany
 Sir Robert Salisbury

1377. **The Chairperson:** I welcome to the Committee Dr Liz Fawcett, the Northern Ireland representative of ParentsOutloud; Roisín Gilheany from ParentsOutloud; and Sir Robert Salisbury, who is a consultant to ParentsOutloud and someone with whom we have worked previously. The subject will, no doubt, continue to be a matter of debate and discussion in 2014 following on from a number of reports. It is lovely to see you all. Thank you for taking the time to come and see us, and, at the outset, I wish you a very happy new year. We look forward to a useful and worthwhile exchange this morning.

1378. **Dr Liz Fawcett (ParentsOutloud):** Thank you very much, Chairman and members of the Committee, and a happy new year to you all. We should first point out that Sir Robert is here to talk on his own behalf and not as a consultant to us. However, he shares a number of our concerns.

1379. We thank you for the opportunity to give this oral submission on what we consider to be a very important issue. I will present a summary of some of the key points from the written submission that we made to the inquiry on behalf of ParentsOutloud, and Sir Robert will then make some comments of his own.

Roisín will interject later on, but for the sake of time we know that you do not want to spend a lot of time on the presentation, Chairman. I will talk on the first bit.

1380. We greatly welcome the Committee's inquiry. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has always maintained a very low public profile compared with its extremely well-known counterpart Ofsted in England. Part of the reason that Ofsted is so well known is because not all teachers like what it does, and it has had some criticism. However, it has also made a great effort to be very proactive in communicating, on a positive front as much as anything, and that has engendered a level of public debate about school inspections in England that we really have not seen over here. Therefore, we are hoping that the Committee's inquiry will help provoke a constructive public debate about school inspections here.

1381. In our view, school inspections are absolutely vital, because every child gets only one crack at a school education. Children, however, have a very limited voice. They have a limited ability to know whether the teaching that they are receiving is good or bad. Parents hear only at second hand from their children about what goes on in school. Moreover, if they do have cause for concern, it can be a very daunting process to go to the principal or the board of governors. Schools have a great deal of autonomy. Therefore, it is absolutely vital that schools get regular, robust and consistent inspections that treat all schools in a fair way. It is also important for parents to be reassured about the quality of their children's education.

1382. Parents also have a right to good, up-to-date information about the quality of provision in each school. How else are parents supposed to make an informed decision on which is the best school for

- their child? It is a great disappointment that the current official guidance for parents choosing a post-primary school does not list inspection reports as one of the sources of information to which parents should refer. We ask why that is. Finally, it seems very unfair to good schools that parents are unable to consult an up-to-date report on a school and may instead have to rely on an out-of-date one that does not do justice to the school. Moreover, where there is a vacuum of good, recent information, it is much more likely that parents will rely instead on gossip, which is hardly fair to any school.
1383. We raise a number of issues in our written submission, and we are not going to have time in the next 10 to 15 minutes to go through them all. However, we hope that at least some Committee members have managed to look at our submission and will ask us questions on some of the other aspects. We feel that they are all very important, but we are going to pick out three to talk about. One is the content and breadth of inspection reports. The second is the frequency of those reports. The third is the resources available to the inspectorate.
1384. We will look first at the reports' content and breadth. We are impressed with the clarity, consistency and quality of many of the comments in the inspection reports that we looked at. In that respect, the reports compare favourably to Ofsted. Our concern really lies with the limited subject focus of the reports, particularly at primary level, and the limited comments on a number of other important areas. We are concerned that ETI does not appear to carry out full standard inspections of primary schools. Instead, it seems to focus on specific areas of schools' provision in both primary inspection and focused inspection reports. We believe that that is entirely inadequate. We carried out two analyses of 20 recent primary school inspection reports. We are told now by ETI that this is all changing, but there were five categories of primary school inspection report last year, which is a rather bewildering array. The closest thing to a full inspection report seems to be in two categories: primary inspection and focused inspection. Those are the ones that we looked at. All 20 reports focused on the provision of literacy and numeracy, but eight focused mostly on achievement and did not really look properly at teaching quality in those specific subject areas. Only 14 reports commented on information and communication technology (ICT). Just one report — one out of 20 — looked at the provision of science and technology, which we feel is a vital subject area that all primary inspection reports and post-primary reports should look at and comment on. Only four reports commented on physical education. A number said that there were opportunities for physical activity during break times, but we would expect that anyway. We are especially concerned about the importance of physical activity, given the current high level of child obesity. It is quite inadequate for ETI's comments to be limited to things such as, "The kids can run around at playtime". If the inspectorate is there, it could quite easily look at the provision and comment on it.
1385. We have been unable to carry out any proper analysis of post-primary school reports because we are volunteers and have not, I am afraid, had the time. However, we are concerned at the apparent lack of sufficiently rigorous attention accorded to the quality of teaching across the full range of subjects in those recent post-primary school reports that we have examined. We welcome the fact that recent reports generally, although not always, contain detailed assessment of the quality of teaching in two or three subject areas, normally including English and maths. We would like to see that assessment extended to include a wider range of key subject areas. In addition, there appears to be little or no specific comment on the quality of teaching at sixth-form level. We think that every post-primary report should look at sixth-form teaching and comment on it.

1386. We have comments in our written submission about parental communication and student involvement. Those are important aspects that we feel should be properly looked at by all inspection reports. We have comments in our written submission about parental input into inspection reports and the fact that there is little, if any, summary of parent and student views. Again, we can come back to that, Chairman, if you wish.
1387. We should say that, on 6 December, we requested information from ETI on many of the points that we raise in our submission. We received information from ETI at 5.45 pm yesterday. ETI states that it looks at literacy and numeracy in all primary school inspections and at other areas. However, it is not really clear whether it looks at those other areas properly. It is certainly not commenting on them. I think that ETI has also given a response to the Committee pretty much to the same effect.
1388. I move on now to the frequency of school inspection reports. Look at Ofsted: if a parent in England wants to find out how often inspection reports happen, Ofsted provides clear information in its parent information leaflet about their frequency. No such information is evident on the ETI website. However, on the basis of the available evidence, we believe that ETI's full inspections are far too infrequent. We looked at the frequency of inspection reports for 10 south and south-east Belfast schools and for 13 schools in the Omagh area. We excluded short, specialist and follow-up reports — we wanted those that most closely approximated to full inspection reports. We asked ETI whether our Belfast research had missed any reports. At 5.45 pm yesterday, ETI said that all its reports were on the website and available through the search facility, which is what we used. The most recent available inspection reports for two Omagh primary schools date back 15 years and 14 years respectively. One of the two schools recently amalgamated with another, and, as far as we are aware, that new school has not been inspected either. To get the closest approximation to anything approaching a full report, you have to go back 15 and 14 years respectively. There is no full inspection report available for a well-known Belfast grammar school on ETI's website. In the version of the written submission that you have, you can see that we said that there was one 12 years ago, but it looked only at pastoral care. When we carried out this analysis, we found that the most recent available inspection reports for a further four Belfast and Omagh area primary schools dated back nine years. A full inspection report from one primary school has just gone up on the website. That inspection was carried out in November of last year. Where previous inspection reports are available, there are gaps of up to 11 years between them. All of that is in our written submission.
1389. Therefore, it now appears that the issue is not the inadequacy of ETI's search facility, which is what we had stated might be the case in our original written submission, because ETI is simply telling us to use that search facility. Therefore, it seems that it does indeed represent the long period between full inspections, and, in some media comments today, that appears to be the case. ETI does not seem to be saying that we have got it all wrong. Either way, the paucity of regular and comprehensive inspection information is, as far as we are concerned, quite unacceptable. We note that the Department has told the Committee that, until 2010, ETI "aimed" — that is perhaps a pretty important word — to inspect every school once every seven years. However, it seems that there is now no stipulated maximum period between inspections and that a risk-assessment approach is used. We do not consider that to be acceptable.
1390. We also provide figures in our most recent written submission, in which we looked at how many full primary and post-primary inspections took place within the most recent 12-month period. Going on the reports published, the

- figures show that just 7.8% of primary schools received the nearest equivalent to a full inspection. At that rate, every primary school can expect to receive a focused or primary inspection just once every 13 years. The picture is only a little better in post-primary schools. Only 32 full inspection reports were published in 2013, which represents just 14.9% of all post-primary schools. So it seems that each post-primary school can expect to receive a full inspection just once every seven years. Those figures contrast sharply with the rate of Ofsted's inspections. In a recent 12-month period, 27.5% of maintained schools in England, which is more than a quarter, were inspected in a single year. Therefore, on average, each school in England can expect to be inspected once every four years. Ofsted does not have short inspections, and we do not include certain follow-up or monitoring visits. The figures are for its equivalent of full inspections. As far as we can see, Ofsted has a much simpler approach to how it goes about things.
1391. We would like full inspections once every three years, and there are two reasons for that. First, teachers and principals can move on, and things can change in a school quite quickly, whether it is a good school or a bad school. Secondly, we live in a very fast-changing society, and it is very important that our young people are being prepared properly for the changing needs of society and employers. We believe that, in a society in which technology and so on are changing ever faster, it really is important that there are regular and frequent full inspections. We would like them to happen once every three years. We know that some teachers here feel that inspections are a real ordeal, but surely they would be less of an ordeal if they happened regularly and schools had all the paperwork and so on that they needed. Now, we come on to the level of resources. In one of the media articles out today, a school principal suggested that the issue is probably down to resources, and she may well be right. The resources available to ETI to undertake its role properly are crucial, and we are aware that ETI has told the Committee that its budget is, rather unbelievably, being reduced by 20% between 2011 and 2015. We were appalled to learn that that is the case, when the evidence that we provide strongly suggests that more resources need to be invested in ETI. Moreover, this is in the context of an annual budget that is only £5 million, which is 0.3% of the whole education budget. Indeed, we understand that two or three large schools might typically have a joint annual budget of £5 million. Some Committee members will probably know about that better than us, but there are 1,200 schools in Northern Ireland, and two or three of them might have an annual budget of £5 million, yet the body inspecting them, and supposed to be monitoring and ensuring the quality of education in all of them, is getting a budget of only £5 million. To us, that seems quite wrong.
1392. We would like to emphasise that, as far as we can judge, the quality of inspection reports and the overall system now in place has been improved in recent years. Although we have touched on the most important issues, which we raised in our written submission, there are other areas of concern in that submission, and we ask the Committee to consider those with care.
1393. We also want to highlight the fact that a long gap in inspections does not mean, automatically, that a school's provision is going to be poor: it could be quite the contrary. We would like to highlight the response to an Assembly question for written answer which suggests that many schools that have been inspected in recent years were not judged by ETI to be particularly good, and we forwarded that information to the Committee; I am not entirely sure if the Committee has that yet. It is broken down in percentages by board and shows that, in 2011-12, the percentage of schools that were judged to be good or better ranged from 10% to 23% depending on which board area you are looking at. Let us just turn that around for a minute. It means that the percentage of schools

- judged as being less than good ranged from 77% to 90%.
1394. In very stark contrast, the most recent Ofsted annual report published very recently shows that 78% of maintained primary schools and 71% of maintained secondary schools in England are now judged to be good or better. Surely, that is a truly stunning contrast. It may be that Ofsted's inspection regime is much kinder to schools in Northern Ireland, but we think that that seems unlikely. We suspect that Ofsted's more frequent inspection regime is a significant factor, and we believe that all the points that we raised are worthy of very thorough investigation by the Committee. We hope that the Committee will take the trouble to read our written submission and further investigate all the issues that we raised. I will now hand you over to Sir Robert.
1395. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** Thanks, Liz. Good morning everyone. I have some very brief notes, and you will have heard me say many of these things before in Committee.
1396. It seems to me to be fairly straightforward that if you want to raise standards in a school, you have to concentrate on what happens in the classroom, and you have to concentrate on improving the quality of teaching and school leadership. All the evidence shows that you need to raise the expectations of everybody in the school, and you need to have some inspection process, whether internal or external, to make sure that that is happening.
1397. One additional point that I want to put on to what Liz's report has said is the need for the encouragement of greater self-evaluation in schools. It is very cost-effective, and it seems to me that good schools should know more about their organisations than any external organisation. They should have practical things in place, such as what constitutes a good lesson. Do they have regular mini-reviews? Do they have lesson observations? Do they have teacher appraisal? Do they talk about the quality of teaching in the place? It seems to me that, if schools have clear strategies for self-evaluation, external evaluations become more of an audit than a criticism. It seems to me that a lot of work is needed in Northern Ireland that would be very cost-effective.
1398. In the case of schools where the audits are very comprehensive and accurate, I see a future where you could have light-touch inspections. You could go along and see that everything is in place. That could be done very quickly and economically. Ofsted found that schools are very good at assessing their positives and less good at assessing the negative side of things. So you would have to have almost a carrot and stick so that, if schools are not evaluating fairly and honestly, an external inspection ought to be triggered automatically. Therefore, my first point is the need to encourage the growth and development of self-evaluation in schools. Part of the process of running a school is knowing exactly what is happening inside it and having plans to put things right.
1399. As Liz said, it is unacceptable that schools can go many years without inspections. In my view, we should shorten the timescale for informing schools that inspections are pending. It seems to me that it creates a lot of stress. Teachers and head teachers have said to me that they are working night and day and every weekend because an inspection is coming up. My question is this: what are they doing that they should be doing anyway? What is it they are doing when an inspection is threatened that you ought to have running in an ordinary school every single day? It was put incredibly succinctly by one of my three sons. Their post-primary school was being inspected, and my youngest son, who was then 11, asked, "What's all this inspection stuff about?" The older one, sage-like, said, "Don't worry about it, son. If there's a suit at the back with a clipboard, you're in for a good lesson." That says it all, does it not? If it does not represent what happens in a normal school, it is pretty pointless.

1400. There was a lot in the literacy and numeracy review about the importance of informing parents and listening to the parental voice. I fully endorse all the things that Liz and the report said about that.
1401. There is one further point, which, I think, has been overlooked. There is a lot of very good practice in schools in Northern Ireland. There are some exceptional teachers in Northern Ireland, and it seems to me that we have a wasted opportunity here in not using their good practice by disseminating it to other schools and other teachers. One of the key things that an inspection service should do, in my view, is identify where there is excellent practice and make sure that it is spread around to everybody else. Again, that is a wasted opportunity to do something very cost effective. We have good practice. We have exceptional practice in some schools, and it is not being disseminated widely enough, in my view.
1402. There has been a marked improvement in London schools. One of the things that struck me when I looked at why that was the case is that there is no satisfactory category in England now. The categories are either good or outstanding. I am talking about post-primary schools. If a post-primary school falls below 40% attainment of five A to C grades, it automatically triggers an inspection of some sort. So, for every school that does not get 40% or above, an inspection is triggered to have a look at what is happening. There are three categories in that 40%. The first is schools that require improvement: the school may be working in the right direction and improving, but it still requires improvement. Secondly, there is a category to which we give notice to improve, if the school seems to be going nowhere. Lastly, there is the category for which there will be special measures, if the school is deemed to be in dire straits. In all three of those categories, schools are given very short timelines to bring some action into effect.
1403. I looked at the figures for Northern Ireland just out of curiosity. If you applied those measures to post-primary schools here, you would see that 87 out of 215 schools would require some action of that sort, which is pretty staggering. I also thought, when we wrote the literacy and numeracy review, that there would be importance in creating a value-added measurement for schools. That is still ongoing. A subsidiary element of that is that inspection services look at specialisms, particularly in primary schools. It is my suspicion that there may be some smaller primary schools where there is no mathematical specialism, so it should also be part of an inspection report to see what the team's capacity is.
1404. One last key point from me is that, if you inspect schools, it is vital that there is a follow-up to that. As you know, many moons ago, I took over the seventh-worst school in the UK to see whether it could be run in a different way. After two months of being the head of that school, I came up with 20 key things that we needed to do. We set off doing them. Almost two years in, I was clearing away some old papers. There was an inspection report from five years previously that I had never seen before. Its 20 recommendations were almost identical to the ones that I had come up with. I asked this question: what was the purpose of an inspection if nothing had happened since to ensure that its recommendations were carried out? A very powerful point is that you must have follow-up for all inspections and it must be time limited to make sure that some action happens.
1405. I think that we also need to change the culture of inspections. The system is often seen as threatening for schools. We should turn it on its head and make it seem like a positive audit such as those that you have in the commercial world, which come along to endorse what you are doing or to suggest areas for development. I think that we have somehow got to change the notion that exists in the minds of teachers, governors and leaders of schools so that they see inspections as an external

- audit that is helpful to, rather than critical of, what they are doing.
1406. Finally, we have to build a culture of self-evaluation, have more frequent and searching inspections that are triggered at short notice, have more rigour in the terms of the follow-up process, and, in short, create a culture where every school operates every day as though it were being inspected tomorrow. Once you get to that, the inspection service externally will become less of an issue. Thank you.
1407. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. I suppose, as in all these matters, it is about where you start with the wide remit of many of the issues that are raised in the report. The fact that the Committee for Education has embarked on this particular inquiry is a reflection of our belief as a Committee that there are issues that need to be raised. Certainly, on the basis of the responses that we have received to date, it is very clear that there are issues about the inspection process, in both its approach and application, to which we need to pay attention and get some resolution.
1408. Sir Bob, you made a comment towards the end of your remarks that is really, for me, one of the crucial issues. That issue is the purpose of inspections. That is why, as a Committee, I think that we were right to link inspection and school improvement. Is there a correlation between the process of inspection and the improvement of outcomes in schools? We have been gathering information about the purpose of inspections. It is interesting that ETI, which does not recognise the culture of fear in schools that are being inspected, has become very fearful of this inquiry. We have seen correspondence from the inspectorate to organisations that have responded to this inquiry, yours being one of those. Clearly, it is becoming nervous about being itself inspected. There is a correlation between those two things. If the inspectorate feels nervous about us inspecting it, then, clearly, schools must feel nervous about being inspected.
1409. Sir Bob, do you believe that self-evaluation could lead to a place where inspection of what we currently do in Northern Ireland is no longer required? Finland is taken as the great example of how education should be delivered in other jurisdictions. It has no inspection regime at all, but depends heavily on self-evaluation. How do we square that circle to convince parents? Liz has been key about the role of parents. How do we convince parents that what they are being told is an adequate reflection of the value of that educational provision?
1410. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** It is a gradual process that you have to move towards. As I said earlier, the best school leaders see evaluation of their own schools, the publication of those results and the interactions with parents about those results as being part and parcel of the job. It is quite dangerous to compare systems in Finland with ours, because there are other things that you miss out. Most teachers in Finland are given a sabbatical every two years for retraining, and their qualification levels are higher. It is not quite a straight comparison.
1411. I believe that, long term, the way forward is to have the very best self-evaluation schemes that we can have in schools. As I said earlier, that has to be about practical things such as looking at what teachers are doing, appraising them and working with them about how we all collectively improve. You can then start to have more light-touch inspections. However, in the culture that we have at the moment there is still a need for an external inspection service, particularly to look at those schools that are clearly underperforming in some way or where there is dissatisfaction from parents. That needs an external body to look at what is happening.
1412. In the very best of schools, where self-evaluation is absolutely part and parcel of the daily running of the school, an external inspection becomes almost an irrelevance and a helpful external audit and is not seen as threatening. The more data-rich schools become, and the more that school leaders know their schools, it is very challenging for

- an inspection team to go in and say that the school is not doing things right because the evidence is usually there to challenge what they are saying. When they came to the school where I worked, inspection teams said to me personally, "It is very challenging coming in here, because everything we say, you challenged and you show us the data." That is the thing we should aim for in the future of a healthy organisation. In essence, if they are doing their job properly, no one should know better about what is happening in a school than the governors, the head and the teachers.
1413. **The Chairperson:** Do you think that, in order to have confidence in that process, it would be better to have an inspectorate that is independent of the Department to which it is responsible? There are concerns about the Ofsted model. To date in the inquiry we have picked up a concern from a variety of respondents that we would move too much towards an Ofsted model. One recurring issue is the independence of the inspectorate. The Department says that it is the arm of the Department, so it is there to carry out the Department's wishes. Is it more a case of the inspectorate evaluating a school on the basis of what the Department has set out as the norm rather than what is really the best for that school in the context and circumstances in which it finds itself? That is allied to the issue of added value, because added value is hardly taken into consideration in any of the inspections. That can really distort the outcomes and the perception that people have of the report that is ultimately published on that school. Should the inspectorate be separate from the Department?
1414. **Dr Fawcett:** From our point of view, it probably should, ideally. The one thing that would concern us — Sir Robert may take a different view — is that the situation at the moment seems to be so serious, with such massive lengths between full inspections, that more resources are needed. If you are trying to set up a separate body at the same time, there are always going to be teething problems and a run-in period with a new organisation. From our point of view, it is really urgent that schools that have not been fully inspected for many years get an inspection as soon as possible. In theory, yes, it would be desirable, but our fundamental concerns are about the gaps between inspections, what has been inspected when they are there and the resources. The fact that there is a 20% cut in budget is crucial, we think.
1415. **The Chairperson:** To conclude, before I go to the vice Chair and then to members for questions, the issue of the frequency does not take into account the role of the district inspector. If there is one thing that we have picked up in this inquiry it is the value of the district inspector in the process and the relationship between the schools and the district inspectors, who have an idea of whether there are particular issues or problems in the schools under their remit. That is one issue in terms of how you deal with the frequency of inspections.
1416. On the other issue about resources, the briefing paper provided by the Assembly's research service we will make it available to you if you do not already have it clearly indicates that we in Northern Ireland do not have the lowest level of resource per head available to our system. It is £17·80 per pupil in Northern Ireland. In Scotland it is £12·68, in England it is £19·26, in Wales it is £27 and in the Republic of Ireland it is £11. So, in relation to other jurisdictions that have larger school populations than we have in Northern Ireland, we are not at the bottom of the league in terms of the resource.
1417. The issue, for me, is not so much the resource but how that resource is being used and the information that comes out of the inspection. Is it valid and useful, and does it give us a clear indication of whether that school is deemed to be a satisfactory school or good school? Sir Bob's comment about the post-primary schools is the most worrying. Take the London Challenge

- process, the way that it has changed and the outcomes resulting from that. If you were to use that model and apply it to Northern Ireland, you would have 80-odd schools that fall below that threshold. We have seen that in other indicators, where there are schools that have particular challenges.
1418. **Dr Fawcett:** We appreciate that there is a role for district inspectors. The problem for us, as parents, is that it is not a transparent role. The only information that parents have is the published inspection reports. I will highlight some of the information that ETI sent us last night. As you will be aware, it has had short inspections as well as those that are not full inspections but what are called focused inspections. It said that the focused inspections — the ones that we were looking at — were typically carried out over five days in a primary school, and inspectors typically spent two days on a short inspection. The inspectorate said that that system was replaced in September 2013, and it now has one category of primary school inspection.
1419. Chairman, you think as I do about that, which is that we are now not told how long inspectors spend in a school. There is now a single approach to primary school inspection, with the differentiation being two days for low-risk small schools and five days for higher-risk larger schools. In other words, some inspections labelled primary inspections will last for only two days; others will last for five days. We will not be told.
1420. Our submission asks for much more transparency in the inspection reports: how they were done; how many lessons were looked at; how long the inspectors were there; and how many inspectors took part etc. That is what happens with the Ofsted reports. We are concerned about this. ETI said that, by the end of the current academic year, almost 90% of primary schools and 97% of post-primary schools will have been inspected within seven years. I do not know how it will do that, and in what sense will they have been inspected? Will there have been a full inspection?
1421. Perhaps the Committee will feel that we are being unrealistic when we ask for inspections every three years. Until fairly recently, Ofsted carried out full inspections every three years. That is what we want because we believe that even an outstanding school can fall below par. All schools can change, and any improvement should also be recognised. Ofsted now inspects all schools rated below “good” once every two years, and that is a full inspection. It now fully inspects every “good” school once every five years. For outstanding schools, it seems to be more a matter of assessment. Even that system would be better than what we have now. Seven years, if that is the inspectorate’s aim, is, in our view, too long. That is what the inspectorate in Scotland had been doing, and it seems to have moved to doing even fewer. However, it may be quite convinced that all schools are self-evaluating really well in Scotland. We take on board what Sir Robert said, but there would be some differences. As parents, we feel that there has to be a transparent process, and, ideally, we would really like a proper, full inspection every three years.
1422. **The Chairperson:** It is interesting that, since we launched the inquiry, we have had correspondence from the Department on changes already being implemented and brought forward. Call me a cynic, but I suspect that that may be as a result of this inquiry.
1423. The availability of inspectors was raised. On the day when their union representatives came here, no inspectors were available because they were busy. However, when others came to make representations to the Committee the following week, an inspector found time to be in the Public Gallery to take notes. I think that we are now being inspected by the inspectorate, which is healthy and the reason why we embarked on the process. We value the comments made in your submission.
1424. **Mr Kinahan:** Thank you very much. This has been very useful. Like the Chairman, I am very pleased that we are inspecting the inspection system, and

- you have given us a load of extremely good points. Sir Robert, you talked about self-evaluation, but teachers tell us that they have no time. One school that we went to had 39 different forms of consultation and review going on. From what you have seen, do we have good self-evaluation? From what I have seen, we need a complete change of culture so that schools have more time to do it properly.
1425. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** It is good in some schools but non-existent in others. I have always thought that there are some very cost-effective, practical things that all schools should do that do not take time. As I said, there is the establishment of what constitutes a good lesson in a school: all teachers should agree what that is and what elements every lesson should have. Those elements should be fully understood by every teacher and every student. Where that has been done in schools, you can instantly see an improvement in the structure, preparation and delivery of lessons. It seems to me that that is a question not of time but of getting together and deciding what every good lesson should be and of talking about the whole business of teaching and learning.
1426. There are many such practical strategies that I think can be brought in quickly and easily. It is a mindset. It is an easy get-out to say that we have no time to do that, but in my view, it is an essential part of what should happen if you are a teacher and a leader in a school.
1427. **Mr Kinahan:** Time is very real to all of them, so it may be something that comes from the Department rather than from the inspectorate. Is that what we should be pushing for now?
1428. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** I think that we should be pushing for it. I agree with Liz that a lot of schools now need inspection anyway, but long-term there is a solution to this if the best leaders and schools really demonstrate how effective self-evaluation can be. It can be, and is, very effective.
1429. **Mr Kinahan:** Liz, if I could move on, I want to play devil's advocate slightly. I agree that more inspection can happen only if it is done in the right way and in the positive form that Sir Robert mentioned. However, have you come across any evidence that things are going wrong in the schools that are not being inspected? We discussed the district assessors, who are giving a fairly good link, but is much evidence coming forward to you that shows that schools need more inspection? That seems to be the right thing to do, but we do not have much money and need more resources. Have you seen any evidence of that?
1430. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** There is quite a lot of evidence from Ofsted, particularly in the early years, that, when an inspection is looming, it is like a see-saw. Performance comes up, displays are better, and everything is better. When the inspection is over, and as teachers often say, "We got away with it", performance often then drops to lower than it was before the inspection. Do you know what I mean by that? I think that that is the real danger with having a long run into an inspection and almost a wedding-day attitude to the inspection week.
1431. That is why I keep coming back to saying that, as part and parcel of the everyday culture of the school, you need to have the whole notion of assuming that it will be inspected tomorrow and of having the structures in schools, whether they are mini-reviews or teacher observations, that go on daily. That means that, long-term, the external inspection then starts to be irrelevant.
1432. **Dr Fawcett:** I think, Danny, that you are asking whether Roisín and I have circumstantial evidence that schools are not always satisfactory when they have not been inspected for a long time. Is that correct? We have some circumstantial evidence that we cannot relate directly to whether a school has been inspected for a long time.
1433. One issue that concerns us is that the revised curriculum came in in 2007, but we have circumstantial evidence that not

all primary schools are implementing it fully. That really concerns the elements outside literacy and maths. I do not know whether you want to say anything on that, Roisín. We are not going to start naming schools, if you do not mind, Chairman.

1434. **Ms Roisín Gilheany (ParentsOutloud):** Once we started to look at some sample schools and their reports, it was evident that there was no proper evaluation of what was being taught through the revised curriculum. That narrow focus that Liz mentioned seemed to be the only thing that was being assessed.
1435. The other concern is in the tables. Some schools that were looked at had gaps of 14 years between inspections, and it was impossible to assess what was happening or for a parent to find out any information about the quality of the school. Quite a few schools had that lengthy gap between inspections. Maybe there were a couple of inspections in that time, but one was perhaps just a short inspection, so one page of an evaluation could not in any way give a clear picture of what was happening in that school.
1436. **Dr Fawcett:** The information that we have highlighted to the Committee about the recent proportion of schools rated good or above in Northern Ireland and how very low that is compared with England says a lot. That information is also easily available for Ofsted. When Ofsted's annual report says that a large percentage of primary and post-primary schools in England is rated good or above, it does so on the basis of the latest inspection report, which is fairly recent in all cases. That is collated information included every year in the annual report, which you can find easily on the Ofsted website. We should have a comprehensive picture. You should be able to go onto the ETI website and see clearly what the gaps are between inspections and the comprehensive picture of how good the education is. However, you cannot do that because so many inspections are out of date. For example, I am trying to pick a post-primary school for my son. On the one

hand, you have a school that had an inspection in 2013 and does at least rate the school in English, maths and science; however, there is nothing comparable for the other schools. In the case of another school that I might be looking at, there was an inspection in 2001 that looked at pastoral care; another inspection in 2005 also decided to look at pastoral care plus ICT. There was a follow-up inspection in 2008, which was five years ago. That is all there is for a well-known grammar school. Parents are entitled to that information. To ensure that there is good-quality education and to provide it for parents, we must have full regular inspections.

1437. **Mr Kinahan:** It seems vital that we need more resources so that we can have much more inspection. You commented on what more we can tell parents. There seems to be a great gap, with nothing available for parents. Do you want to expand on that?
1438. **Dr Fawcett:** When parents are choosing a post-primary school, the Department's guidance does not even suggest that they look at inspection reports. Perhaps that is because it knows that so many of them are hopelessly out of date. Many parents are not aware of how to access inspection reports. Again, that is circumstantial. We would like ETI to play a much more prominent role in public debate and be much more proactive. That is as much about disseminating good practice as anything else. We raised this issue in our submission. We would like to see more thematic reports and more publicity around them. Very few schools seem to be judged outstanding, as far as we can see. When a school is judged to be outstanding, we would like ETI to shout about it. We totally concur with Sir Bob that there should be more dissemination of good practice. If there were more publicity generally, one would hope that more parents would make use of inspection reports and would be much better informed as a result.
1439. **Mr Craig:** I listened with interest to what you said about the frequency. I sit

- on a number of boards of governors, and I concur with you. For one school in particular, I think that it was almost 12 years between inspections. I do not know how anybody justifies that, to be quite honest.
1440. I have a huge question mark over the quality and detail of the reports' conclusions. We need to be honest with ourselves about what parents will actually look at. Will they bother to read through the book that is produced? My guess is no. They will do what everybody else does: they will read the conclusions. There is a lack of detail in conclusions at the minute. Given those facts, do you still stand over the view that all reports should be made available to parents at this point in time? There is a major issue in that regard. If it is infrequent or, say, 10 years out of date and if there is little or no detail in the conclusions, which is the part that most parents will actually read, is there any real value in having a look at that?
1441. **Dr Fawcett:** For the sake of transparency, we certainly do not believe that any inspection report should be taken off the website. Roisín, you came across one example where there was nothing at all. There are certainly schools for which it is hard to find even the previous full report. Possibly, it is not on the website because it predates 1998 and is deemed a work of history at this stage. We really need ETI, as quickly as possible, to get round all the schools. We need a plan of action. We are really concerned that it appears that its intention is to do a number of short inspections, rather than full inspections, for all primary schools. Perhaps one thing that could be done, Jonathan, is for the inspection reports that are really old to be labelled as such. Perhaps some sort of warning should be put on the website by ETI that a report may well be out of date. That would only be fair to the school. Roisín, again without naming names, you know of a school that has improved hugely but has not been inspected for years.
1442. **Ms Gilheany:** Yes, there are quite a few examples. One is that of a school that has not been inspected for nine years. When it was inspected, it did not get a very good rating. In a lot of cases, those reports do not have very clear bands or even any grades, so you have to read between the lines. That seems to be a problem with a lot of the older reports. That school looked like it was way beyond unsatisfactory, but I know, circumstantially, that the reputation of that school has much improved since then. It seems totally unfair that that school has a report that gives it a very poor rating. On the other hand, there are schools that, as we mentioned, have experienced a gap of 14 years since a full inspection. They were given a rating below good, and they got a short inspection eight years ago that resulted in the school being rated as satisfactory. If a school is rated as satisfactory, there should be more follow-ups. More action needs to be taken to improve that school. The length of time since the inspection has to be looked at. It is totally unacceptable. The information is just not out there.
1443. **Dr Fawcett:** Is ETI's proposal for short inspections in some cases — it will decide which — and for fuller ones in others fair to the schools? Is it fair that the inspectors come in only for two days at certain schools? Maybe some schools would be much happier if that is all that happens but, at the end of the day, it is not as robust an investigation. I am sorry that we are labouring this point, but we are really pushing for full inspections for all schools, ideally every three or four years, or perhaps every five years if that is more feasible in the near future.
1444. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** You raised an excellent point about communication of the outcome. It seems to me that a summary, written in straightforward language, ought to be at the front of all reports so that the key findings are shown and you can go on to read the detailed report if you want. That would be a good move.
1445. **Mr Craig:** I accept what you are saying, and I think that warnings should be

posted about the length of time since a report was done. If we had that and a more detailed summary of what is in a report, it would become a very useful and informative tool for parents. I worry that we do not have that.

1446. You touched on another important issue: the interaction with the inspectorate when it comes to a school. How does it interact? Obviously, it interacts with the teachers and the senior management of the school in particular. I do not think that it interacts very well with the boards of governors. On an ongoing basis as a governor, I have met the inspectorate about three times, and that was only because a full inspection was going on in one of the schools whose board I am on. I am chair of the governors, so I was legally obliged to meet them. That is the only interaction that there has ever been with the inspectorate in my 11 years' experience of sitting on three boards of governors. That is fundamentally wrong. The inspectors are an incredibly useful tool with regard to understanding the finite detail of what is actually going on in a school. Is it your opinion that they should interact better with boards of governors, the people who are given the responsibility or burden to ensure that schools are operating efficiently?

1447. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** It certainly would be my opinion. I did not get the chance to say earlier that an independent inspection service would be my way of going forward. You find that Ofsted often says things that the Department in London does not want to hear, and it says them very forcefully. I think that an interaction with the governors, such as saying, "Here are 10 key points that you ought to be looking at" would be very useful. It is done as part of the Ofsted inspection process, and I think it should be done here too.

1448. **Dr Fawcett:** Can we just add that we would also like to see better interaction with parents, with regard to what has happened with recent inspection reports? That is another point that we brought up in our submission. ETI has some sort of parental survey and it reports the proportion of parents who

respond. In very recent reports that we looked at, that proportion has been very low, and ETI states in the reports that this is because it is trialling certain methods. Those methods are clearly not working. An average of 15% responded to the reports that we looked at, which is far too low. If the new methods are not working, ETI should go back to the old method. It must find some effective way of surveying parents' views.

1449. In addition to that, we have highlighted that what Ofsted was doing as best practice, it sadly does not do any longer. It printed the 13 questions to parents that were always asked at every inspection, and then it printed the results for each question. We think that that is really important. To be honest, we think that the older-style Ofsted reports from a few years ago were of better quality than the ones that are currently produced, which have been slimmed down because Ofsted's budget has been cut quite considerably. We take the point that perhaps resources can be managed more efficiently. If it needs more resources to get all this in place, so be it. From our point of view, children have only one chance at school, so we ask you please to invest resources.

1450. **The Chairperson:** On your point about resources, I have seen the website and there are 11 organisations, technically, that ETI inspects. It is not just education, and that is another issue that impacts and impinges on the delivery and the organisation. I think that that is very starkly presented when you see the 11: alternative education provision; Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure; institutes of further and higher education; initial teacher education; independent schools; post-primary schools; primary schools; pre-primary schools; special education; work-based learning; and youth. That is a huge task for any organisation, and it is an area which we need to clarify with ETI as to how it operates its inspectors.

1451. **Dr Fawcett:** We asked ETI about the budget specifically for primary and post-primary inspections, and it did not give us a separate figure for that. Education

- for Scotland has also replied to that question and provided a figure. We must ask why this cannot be broken down.
1452. **The Chairperson:** Liz, I meant to say that we are happy to supply to you the information that we have received and, equally, if there is information that you have —
1453. **Dr Fawcett:** We will forward this to you, Chairman, most certainly.
1454. **Mr Lunn:** Thank you very much for your presentation. You have answered most of my points. I indicated that I want to speak about an hour ago.
1455. There are just two things. Let me follow on from what you were saying about the input from parents, Liz. You mentioned a figure of, I think, 15% for parents responding to the questionnaire. Is that so bad? Going by other fields of work, 15% might not be regarded as being too disappointing, particularly as that 15% are probably the parents who think that there are problems and the ones that you want to hear from. You could assume that a fair proportion of the 85% who did not bother to reply to the questionnaire are reasonably satisfied.
1456. **Dr Fawcett:** One would hope that the way in which the inspectorate communicates with parents encourages those with positive views to respond as well. We looked at some reports before the trialling system was introduced, and the percentages seemed larger there. We would expect at least a third, and preferably over half, of parents to respond. If that is not happening, there is an issue with effectiveness.
1457. We looked at the percentages of teachers and teaching support staff who responded to survey forms, and they were not always as high as one would have expected. We would have thought that, if the inspectorate is surveying teachers and teaching support staff in school, surely they should all be required to respond purely to ensure the quality of the entire process and to ensure that their views can be taken into account. Would it be acceptable if 15% of people voted in elections?
1458. **Mr Lunn:** We are getting close to that.
1459. **Ms Gilheany:** It is 15% of a sample of parents who are being questioned. We are not sure how that sample is picked.
1460. **Mr Lunn:** The online questionnaire seems to be the way that Ofsted has gone. That would reach more parents.
1461. **Ms Gilheany:** It would if all parents were made aware of it.
1462. **Dr Fawcett:** The questionnaire is sent to each parent. Sorry, there is a letter for each parent. Oh no, there is a letter sent to each parent directing them to the online questionnaire: sorry, that is exactly what happens. It is not a sample, though. Every parent is told about the inspection and is directed to an online questionnaire. Are you agreeable that if only 15% of parents are responding —
1463. **Ms Gilheany:** That is very low.
1464. **Mr Lunn:** Let me get the procedure right: all parents get a letter to say that there is to be an inspection and there is an online questionnaire that they complete if they would like to respond in advance of the inspection. Is that correct?
1465. **Ms Gilheany:** Yes, that is what we have just been made aware of.
1466. **Dr Fawcett:** That is what we have just been told. That said, the ETI said in its very recent inspection reports that it was trialling various methods, although the Committee would have to take that up with the ETI.
1467. **The Chairperson:** We will have to write to the Department to clarify the position on that.
1468. **Mr Lunn:** I may slightly be playing devil's advocate, but, if I were the inspectorate, I would prefer to see the responses online for ease of analysis. You could say that, instead of sending the parents a letter directing them to an online questionnaire, you could just send them a questionnaire. However, you would get paper back, which we are trying to do away with in the modern world — witness what is before me. There

- are two ways of looking at it. As you said, perhaps they are just trialling that approach.
1469. I do not want to go into the frequency of inspections, because no one would argue that the current regime is anywhere near satisfactory. However, the notice given for an inspection is an interesting area. I read in your submission, or in the Committee Clerk's summary, that the Republic operates a one-day notice. I remember the Public Accounts Committee looking at a different inspection regime, namely the RQIA inspection of nursing homes. That revealed some interesting stuff, which, put simply, meant that an unannounced inspection could not be followed by another unannounced inspection: the next inspection had to be announced. So, if you had an announced inspection that produced problems, the result was an unannounced inspection. If there were still problems, the next inspection had to be announced. That was daft, and I think they have done something about that.
1470. Perhaps you could tell me what Ofsted does. Is there a compromise between the notice that schools get at the moment, a three-week notice, a one-day notice or perhaps no notice at all? If I was the principal of a school and was told that I was getting one day's notice of an inspection, it might not be conducive to a really efficient inspection. Effectively, I would not have had any time to prepare for it. I wonder about the one day's notice.
1471. **Dr Fawcett:** We have suggested a compromise. Shorter school inspections are conducted in the Republic of Ireland with no notice, and Ofsted now gives schools just one day's notice of full inspections. We urge the Committee to look at how it is that such systems can work for schools in England and the Republic but not in Northern Ireland.
1472. We have suggested that the ETI should provide schools with one day's notice for full inspections and no notice for shorter or follow-up inspections. However, to allow schools time to prepare the necessary paperwork for full inspections, we have suggested that there should be at least three months' notice. So, at the start of term, the ETI could tell a school that it will be inspected at some time during that term.
1473. It really goes back to Sir Robert's point that, at the end of the day, all schools should have all the paperwork in place. If they operated all the time as if there might be an inspection and inspections were more frequent, inspections would not be so stressful in the first place.
1474. I visited a primary school in Devon to look around it. I arrived at 10.00 am, and the school's secretary told me that they would only be able to give me 20 minutes to look around the building as inspectors from Ofsted were there. She told me that the Ofsted inspectors had turned up at 7.30 am. I said, "Oh my goodness. Was anybody here? Do you mean to say that you got no notice?". She told me that they had not been given any notice, as Ofsted does not give notice, but of course they were all there at 7.30 am anyway. They were all so calm and unruffled, and it was no problem. That school got an outstanding grade, Chairman. It was clear that the inspection was no hassle whatsoever.
1475. **Mr Lunn:** Sorry, Chairman. This is my last question. We know about the mechanics of the one day's notice of inspection in the Republic. However, we do not really know how effective it is, and maybe we should look at that. The Committee does not know whether that produces a better system, better inspection reports, better outcomes and better improvements than other systems, including what we have at the moment.
1476. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** It goes back to the Chairman's earlier point about the purpose of an inspection. There is a feeling that, in some schools, a short notification period is in order to catch you out in some way, so it is clearly threatening. However, if it is seen as a positive audit of what is actually happening day by day, it seems to make sense. If you do not have the relevant

- papers in place that you should have, there is a question for you. It seems to me that shorter inspection notification periods are much better, because they give more realistic views of what schools are actually doing.
1477. The other point — it goes back to the point that I made at the beginning — is that a school that has excellent self-evaluation will be talking to parents anyway. They should be interviewing all the parents. We used to use a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis so that all parents could see what those were in the school, and it was a very ordinary and normal part of the procedures to invite groups of parents in to challenge what we were doing. Getting opinions from parents is part and parcel of what you should be doing anyway. I include in that opinions from students. How often do inspectors ask the students, who are the key people who should be asked, about the quality of lessons they receive? A good school that does self-audits should teach students what the composite parts of a good lesson are, so that they can have a proper opinion.
1478. **Dr Fawcett:** To follow on from what Sir Robert said, another issue that we raised in our written submission is that very rarely is there any summary of parental and student views. In fuller inspections, inspectors talk to a sample of students, but we are not told what they think. Why should the students and, indeed, the parents be so silent in all of this? We think that it is important that a summary of views is provided.
1479. **Mr Lunn:** Just to finish, Chairman, I completely agree. I do not see any point in doing consultations or interviews and not reporting the opinions expressed in whatever detail is appropriate. It just does not make any sense. Why would you do it? If there were problems, I absolutely think that the follow-up visits to a full inspection should be unannounced. There should be no notice whatsoever, and that goes back to the nursing homes thing.
1480. **Mr Hazzard:** Thanks, guys, so far. To go back to that last point about students and parents: I agree with the caveat that we need to find something shrewd to avoid this becoming a rate-the-teacher exercise. I have no doubt that pupils would be nailing teachers left, right and centre for a wide variety of issues. Parents, no doubt, have their own bugbears as well, which would come out in all these surveys. So, we need to be creative and careful about how we do this. When we talk about Ofsted, one of the changes would be to drop the word “satisfactory”; schools are either “good” or “not good”. Perhaps, you could talk about that. Is that something that we should look at doing? What is a “satisfactory” school? Rather, is it either “good” or “not good”?
1481. **Dr Fawcett:** I think that Sir Robert would probably agree with us that it is the case that all schools should be looking to continually improve and be on the road to doing so. Perhaps we should let Sir Robert speak on this. From our point of view, we certainly do not feel that it is good enough, as Roisín said, for a school that is judged “satisfactory” to be left alone for, perhaps, eight years. Is “satisfactory” satisfactory? I think that there should be a clear path to the next level up, so the inspection report should perhaps state, “OK, you have got ‘satisfactory’ this time, so here is what you need to do to be ‘good’ or better”. You would like to hope that the school would commit itself to ensuring that it is working towards that.
1482. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** I have always thought that “satisfactory” is a pretty damning indictment of what you are doing, is it not? If 40% of youngsters are getting five grades A to C, then 60% are not. If you spin it round to say that, then you clearly need movement.
1483. There should be a “good” or “outstanding” category, and all schools should be moving towards that. It seems to me that we should not be satisfied with the notion of being a “satisfactory” teacher. In schools where parents are consulted, informed and brought into the school and where students are asked

- their opinions of teachers, it is, by and large, positive, and they will definitely defend their school totally when an external inspection comes. I found that the difficulty was that you could not get parents to say negative things to Ofsted although some negative things needed to be said: they were just loyal. So, it is again back to the culture of the school and how you interact with parents.
1484. I have forgotten in which review we said — I think that it was on literacy and numeracy — that there is an enormous area for expansion in Northern Ireland for working with parents in schools. In some schools it is done excellently and in others they are almost kept at a distance. There is a massive resource there of using parents in partnership with the school. That, too, must be part of an inspection.
1485. **Mr Hazzard:** Liz, you talked about the need to ramp up publicity around inspection reports. To play devil's advocate again, I have a fear in and around competition and market forces within and between schools and communities. If that is the case, when the league tables come out, schools in challenging circumstances suffer under the weight of such publicity. Is that the danger of that publicity? Do we need to be careful in and around that?
1486. **Dr Fawcett:** We think that there should be as much publicity about good schools and outstanding schools. One of our main concerns is that outstanding practice is currently going under the radar.
1487. Sir Robert mentioned value added earlier, I think — or was it the Chairman? That subject came up, and we stress that in our written submission. At the moment, whatever your view of academic selection, there is absolutely no doubt that many parents feel that grammar schools are good schools and every other type of post-primary school is bad, full stop. That is incredibly simplistic and is why we would like to get more up-to-date, thorough inspection information out there. We think that that should be value-added. There is absolutely no doubt that there are schools that are perceived as poor that do excellent work, and that is not being recognised. It is impossible to avoid the bad publicity when a school is judged by the inspectorate to be not up to scratch, and there is probably very little that you can do about that given the media's news values. However, if a very proactive effort was made by the inspectorate — thematic reviews would be one very good way of doing that — to really emphasise the good practice and to engage parents in the importance of that and the importance of the value added, that would really help.
1488. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** You raise a very good point, and it is crucial for some schools when they are just moving on that improvement. Once it is under way, the evidence suggests that, even if a report is not glowing, the impact is very short term as long as it shows movement in the right direction. People will read it but, a week later, they have forgotten — if they recognise that the school is working. What matters most is that your youngsters are coming home and saying that they had a great day, the lessons were interesting and that we are moving forward. That is the key thing in a school. However, you raise a key point for some schools that are in very tough circumstances. The school that I ran — it is a long time ago now — was seventh worst in the UK, and whatever you said in the early days, people just said, "It's that place".
1489. **Mr Hazzard:** I have a final thought. I agree that there needs to be certain changes to the inspection process, and I do not think that we are in the position of the culture in Finland, but I am a great believer that it is about the culture, the teacher training and the continual professional development of teachers. For me, the development of good middle leadership in schools is very important here too. I am not sure who said it, but we can weigh a pig as much as we want but it will not get any fatter — it is that idea that we need to look at the culture behind it. So I would be wary about concentrating too much on giving the inspectorate sharper teeth and portray

- what we are doing here as that, when so much resources need to be put in to the other side of things. To me, a lot of international examples seem to display that. Am I right in thinking that, or can you point to examples of where that sharper inspectorate that you seem to want — that is how it has come across at times today — is a better idea?
1490. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** It is a matter of timing. You need a sharper inspection service initially to make sure that whatever service you offer is up to standard, but I agree with all that you say about developing middle managers and the internal cultures in schools. As that develops, you can reduce the external and turn it into an external audit, as I said earlier, rather than a threatening process. That is already happening in parts of England. I think that the Ofsted process in the early years was too harsh. It was almost silly in the first few years. I remember some coming into the school and looking at what was in all the drawers. I thought that that was just pathetic, but they have eased off from that sort of role. It is a matter of timing, and you need a sharper service initially. However, as the culture changes, you can start to ease off.
1491. **Mr Rogers:** Thanks for your presentation. You are very welcome.
1492. We have heard sound bites this morning about how many years it has been since inspections took place, but, for me, the reason that we are all here is to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to improve experiences for our children. There is a distinct difference between a school that had an inspection eight years ago and has a culture of continuous improvement and a school that had an inspection eight years ago and is failing. That is a very serious situation.
1493. I go back to Chris's point about developing a culture of reflective practitioners. Our young teachers come out of their teaching practice and are expected to do an evaluation at the end of each lesson. A lot of work is needed to develop that culture within a Key Stage or a department. Confidence needs to be built so that another teacher can come into your room and you can perhaps mark each other's homework and all that sort of thing, going up to heads of departments and the principal. It is about asking this question: what did I, as a school leader, get wrong and what did I get right? It takes all that. Particularly where there has been a long gap since inspection in schools that are not achieving, there is no link to effect improvement. It has been mentioned to some extent that to effect improvement we need good-quality staff development at every stage.
1494. You talked, Sir Bob, about it not being the same in Finland. You made a couple of interesting points about our teachers being qualified to masters level and about taking time out for professional development, and so on.
1495. Our Chair made an interesting point about the impartiality of the inspectorate. It is, I think, quite difficult for the Department to be completely impartial in its role when, on the one hand, we all know that we need better staff development but, on the other hand, another section of the Department decides to cut £15 million from the staff development budget. That is a key area. Self-evaluation is a culture that you need to develop over two or three school development plans over eight or 10 years. That is a major concern.
1496. You talked quite a bit about Ofsted. Do you have any experience of what is happening in Scotland? In Scotland, the self-evaluation process is perhaps better embedded, and more is put into staff development and that type of thing.
1497. My other point is something that I am very passionate about and that scares me: science in primary schools. When I asked the Minister how well science is embedded, I was told that science comes under The World Around Us, is embedded and is inspected. However, you are telling me that there was one school. How? We know where science is in primary schools: it is buried. That is a major concern for us all.

1498. **Dr Fawcett:** It is a major concern for us, as parents, especially as we have children who are quite keen on science, or who would be, if they got it at school.
1499. Part of the problem in primary schools with the revised curriculum — we believe that the Association for Science Education (ASE) highlighted this to the Committee a number of months ago — is that now, instead of science, we have The World Around Us. It really seems to leave very vague exactly what schools are supposed to do on science. We are talking about circumstantial evidence, but we feel at the moment that there is certainly good circumstantial evidence that primary schools really are failing pupils when it comes to science — not all primary schools, but some. We believe that that should be looked at.
1500. There are science aspects of The World Around Us, and we believe that the inspectors should ask the question of every school. We understand, having heard on the grapevine, that the inspectorate has just started carrying out some specific The World Around Us primary school inspections, presumably with a view to writing a thematic report. However, that is still going to be for only a few schools, if that is the case. We think that every school should be asked what it is doing in science. Most importantly, Chairman, we think that the inspectorate should look at whether children are learning by doing. We talk about the need to develop certain skills. It is not enough that pupils are given a few worksheets on certain science issues. It is absolutely important that experiments are undertaken and that the kids are getting out, doing nature trails, getting into the forest or whatever. We would like the inspectorate to look at whether The World Around Us and science especially is being dealt with properly and whether there is a proactive, learning-by-doing approach.
1501. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** There is one thing that I wish to add. I mentioned right at the beginning in passing the importance of school leadership, and I hesitate to say that you should do a review of the training of school leaders in Northern Ireland, but I really do think that that is crucial. If you have a school leader who sees the importance of self-evaluation and of continuing with training teachers under them, that will be a key role. It has certainly been a key factor in Finland and in Scotland, and it should be here. We need a review of the training of school leaders in Northern Ireland pretty urgently. I am talking not about the initial training of teachers but the practical how-to stuff for leading a school in the year before you take up post.
1502. One key thing would be around how you build self-evaluation in a school and how you keep training going for all the people in your team. The best measurement of the best leaders may be how the people under them in a team grow as professionals during their leadership. If you look at good schools, that is what is happening. If you look at poor schools, it is not happening. As I said, you perhaps need to do another review after this one.
1503. **Mr Sheehan:** Liz and Sir Bob, you both said that in an ideal world the inspectorate would be independent of the Department. I can see some reasons why that might be a good suggestion. One of you mentioned Ofsted, which is inclined to say things that the relevant Department does not like: when the inspectorate is tied to the Department, maybe you do not get that. Can you elaborate on why it would be completely better than the current system here? Who would fund it? How would it be funded?
1504. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** That is a good question.
1505. **Dr Fawcett:** How would it be funded? It would be funded by the Department of Education as an independent agency. You could look at how Ofsted operates, but, as we said, our priorities are that we have the resources and the management of those resources in place and that all the things that we are asking for happen. That will be our priority.
1506. Sir Bob certainly feels that independence is important, but as to why it is creating problems now, there

are a number of reasons. The very fact that ETI changed its policy on the frequency of inspections in 2010 and has had another change recently that we are finding out about only through asking questions leads me to wonder why all of that was not publicised. Why were we not told about the fact that there is a 20% reduction in ETI's budget? Why was there no public debate before that happened? Why do we not know about the actual frequency of inspections? From our point of view, it appears that, if the inspectorate were independent, one would hope that it would tell us about those things. One has to wonder, if it is in the Department, did the chief inspector want to tell people? Perhaps she might have liked to. She told the Committee about the 20% cut in her written submission, but if there were an independent agency, and it was told that it was getting a 20% cut, it might feel moved to make a public statement about that straight away. It is only a suggestion, but to deal with the practicalities, we can only direct the Committee to look at Ofsted.

1507. Sir Bob, I do not know whether you want to add anything to that.

1508. **Sir Robert Salisbury:** You might need a halfway house in Northern Ireland to move from one to the other over time — a compromise.

1509. **The Chairperson:** Yes. It could take a while to get that.

1510. **Mr Hazzard:** It could be 80% independent.

1511. **The Chairperson:** Yes, 80% or 90% that way. I am not going there.

1512. Thank you, Liz, Robert and Roisín very much for your submission. Thanks for your contribution thus far in the debate. I have no doubt that you will continue to pay attention to and take an interest in the inquiry as it unfolds. Thank you for taking the time to see us today.

1513. **Dr Fawcett:** Thank you very much. I really appreciate the opportunity.

5 February 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Jonathan Craig
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Chris Hazzard
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Ms Maeve McLaughlin
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Seán Rogers
 Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Dr David Hughes *Department of*
 Mrs Karen McCullough *Education*

1514. **The Chairperson:** I welcome to the Committee Mr David Hughes, the director of the curriculum, qualifications and standards directorate in the Department; and Karen McCullough from the planning and performance management team at the Department. Apologies for keeping you waiting. Thank you for coming and for the information that has been provided. David and Karen, I ask you to speak to the issue, and members will then have questions for you.
1515. **Dr David Hughes (Department of Education):** Thank you very much. I am very grateful for the opportunity to brief the Committee. I will set a little bit of context, and Karen will speak about the specific proposals and the consultation responses received.
1516. The Committee will be aware that the Department's school improvement policy, Every School a Good School (ESaGS), was introduced in April 2009. That was intended to set out an overarching approach to raising standards and tackling underachievement in all schools. The purpose behind it was to support school leaders, boards of governors and teachers in implementing good practice in their school to address any barriers to learning that pupils might face and to improve the outcomes for all pupils. The underlying principle is that schools are best placed, through open and honest self-evaluation, to identify and implement changes that will bring about improved outcomes for their pupils.
1517. A critical element of the policy was the introduction of a set of formal procedures to ensure that there would be follow-up on all published school inspection reports. So, if a school inspection report demonstrated outstanding or very good practice, that would be shared and made more widely available, and action plans would be developed by the school, with support from the managing authorities, for any areas that needed further development or improvement. Additionally, more intensive support would be provided where provision was less than satisfactory.
1518. The Every School a Good School policy included the introduction of a formal intervention process (FIP), which provides robust intervention support arrangements when a school is evaluated as less than satisfactory. The FIP is outlined in annex C to the 'ESaGS' document.
1519. The formal intervention process is one of a number of processes aimed at school improvement. The focus throughout these is on ensuring that pupils receive the highest possible quality of teaching and learning so that they can fulfil their full potential. Schools receive tailored support from the relevant education and library board, or the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) for the Catholic maintained sector, and commit to working with the board or CCMS to deliver an agreed action plan to address the areas for improvement identified

- in the inspection report. Action plans are quality assured by the inspectorate, which monitors and reports on schools' progress in addressing the areas for improvement.
1520. That process has achieved a much greater focus on school improvement following inspection. That focus is applied by schools, boards of governor of schools, the boards and CCMS. As a result, 80% of the schools that entered the formal intervention process have improved, resulting in a significant improvement in the life chances of the pupils in those schools. We calculate that about 3,500 pupils have been in schools that have exited the formal intervention process and are now getting a better standard of education.
1521. We believe that the process is working well. However, there have been a number of proposals to improve it and clarify elements of it. We wanted to test those proposals with key stakeholders. The revisions put out to consultation were intended to improve the overall quality of education in an area through the refinement of the formal intervention process; to clarify some elements of the procedures; and, critically, to reduce the length of time that pupils are in schools in which the quality of education provision is satisfactory or less. They are also intended to ensure that, when schools are judged satisfactory and do not improve to good, they, too, receive the tailored support they need. Fundamentally, it is about ensuring that children spend time in education experiencing the highest quality of teaching and learning available and that schools get support in providing that.
1522. I will now pass to Karen, who will go through the specific proposals.
1523. **Mrs Karen McCullough (Department of Education):** Thank you. Questionnaires were issued to all schools, boards, the CCMS, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG), the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), the Governing Bodies Association (GBA), the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI), the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) and the teaching unions. By the closing date, we had received just 26 responses. Five responses were received after the closing date, meaning that we had a total of 31 responses to the consultation.
1524. We have made proposals in four areas. The aim of the first proposal was to clarify the managing authority's plans for a school entering FIP so that support relevant to the circumstances of the school and its pupils could be developed. The proposal suggested that the formal intervention process would include an immediate assessment of a school's sustainability, taking account of local area plans. So, if a school entering FIP is identified in an area plan as part of the future education provision in an area, the managing authority would be asked to confirm that that remains the case. If it has been highlighted in the area plan that a school is to be closed or merged, we would ask the managing authority to submit, within six months, a plan including timescales and proposals for the future education provision of pupils at that school.
1525. Stakeholders were asked whether any factors other than the area plan should be taken into account. Just 19 respondents suggested other factors. Five mentioned the stability of school leadership, and a number of respondents asked for consideration of schools' special circumstances, for example, their location, management type or pupil characteristics.
1526. In the comments received about this proposal, questions were raised about the reality of moving at the pace proposed. There was also a comment that inspection findings should not be linked to any process other than school improvement. The responses highlighted the need for us to be very explicit that the proposal was about clarifying plans and ensuring that we can quickly move to improve the standards of education for pupils.

1527. The second proposal looked at revised timings of follow-up inspections of schools in FIP. Currently, if a school has an inspection finding that is less than satisfactory, it will receive its first follow-up inspection 12 to 18 months later, and a second follow-up inspection 12 months after that. The proposal was that when a school entered formal intervention, it would have only one follow-up inspection within 18 to 24 months of the original inspection, the timing being informed by two interim follow-up visits. If, after two years, a school continued to have a less than satisfactory evaluation, we suggested that further action should be considered. Almost all respondents — 27 of the 28 who expressed a view — agreed that, rather than having two follow-up inspections, schools in FIP should have one follow-up inspection. Comments suggested that 18 to 24 months provided a more appropriate time frame, allowing schools time to address the issues raised. Another respondent suggested that there should not be any interim visits from ETI because they would be classed as inspections when they are really visits.
1528. A similarly high proportion of respondents — 23 of the 27 who expressed a view — agreed that, if a school is in FIP and has not improved to at least a satisfactory evaluation after 24 months, further action should be considered. A minority commented that schools that had not made sufficient progress should be given an opportunity for a second inspection. Most agreed that further action should be considered because the education and life chances of pupils in any such school could be seriously hindered in the absence of such action.
1529. Under this proposal, we also asked stakeholders to consider the case of schools that had gone into FIP because they were less than satisfactory at the first inspection and, at the follow-up inspection, having received two years of support, were found to be satisfactory. It was proposed that such schools have a further follow-up inspection within 12 months, at which point we would expect them to have improved their provision to at least good or have further action taken. So the issue is continued improvement. Respondents' opinion on that was more mixed, with 12 agreeing and nine disagreeing. The concerns expressed were about the length of time that we proposed to give schools and the nature of any further action that might be taken. A particular concern was that the impact of this proposal would be to assign a time limit to a satisfactory judgement, the threat being that, if measurable improvement was not visible within a specified period, a school would be treated in the same way as one in which provision was less than satisfactory, even if it had managed to sustain its initial improvement.
1530. Although agreeing with the concept of a move towards Every School a Good School and the proposed time frame, some respondents cautioned that some schools may need longer to secure a good rating in all areas, particularly those facing a range of complex issues, which can often take a bit longer to sort out. A number of comments related to the interpretation of the term "satisfactory". Some felt that satisfactory was acceptable, and others said that it was not good enough, adding that a school should not exit FIP until it has received a good inspection.
1531. The third proposal looked at clarifying arrangements for schools that are in FIP and are then evaluated as satisfactory at the follow-up inspection. We wanted to make it more explicit that a school will not automatically exit FIP on an ETI evaluation of satisfactory. Instead, as has sometimes happened in practice, the decision about exiting FIP would be based on all of the available evidence, including a recommendation from the managing authority. Again, opinion was mixed, with 14 agreeing and 12 disagreeing. Those in agreement believed that the different circumstances should be taken into consideration, particularly the information from the managing authority. Again, it was suggested that no school should exit

- from an intervention unless its outcome is at least good.
1532. The proposal, like the previous one, generated comments on the use of the term “satisfactory”. It was suggested that agreeing to the proposal would indicate that the current use of the term “satisfactory” to describe the quality of provision of a school was a misnomer and that it would be better described as “improvement required”.
1533. The final proposal looked at revising arrangements to support satisfactory schools, where improvement is proving difficult or unsustainable. The expectation in Every School a Good School is that all schools should be striving to be at least good. However, we are aware that, in a small number of cases, schools have not improved their provision from satisfactory over quite a number of inspection cycles. Since the implementation of Every School a Good School back in April 2009, 13 schools have fallen into that category.
1534. Respondents were asked whether they agreed that a school evaluated as satisfactory should have a maximum of up to two follow-up inspections — the first after 12 to 18 months and the second after a further 12 months — to improve provision to at least good before further action was considered. Again, opinion was divided, with 12 respondents saying yes, 10 saying no, and five saying that they were not sure. Very few respondents offered further comment, although the point about the use of the term “satisfactory” was reiterated.
1535. There was stronger agreement with the suggestion that further action should be considered when a satisfactory school is evaluated as satisfactory in two follow-up inspections, with 16 respondents agreeing. The key message in the comments was that the quality of education provision should be at least good. However, it was also noted that sustained improvement should be recognised and further consideration given to why the school had not been able to improve within the given timescale. The point was made that, depending on where they are in their improvement journey, some schools may require more time and that consideration should, therefore, be made on an individual school basis, with high quality external targeted support provided to facilitate improvement.
1536. The final question that respondents were asked was whether, in addition to the further actions outlined in annex C to Every School a Good School, there were any actions that we should consider taking when schools had not secured the necessary improvements in provision. Ten respondents said yes. They made a range of suggestions including extra funding, educating the community, lowering the quota for grammar schools in an area where there is demographic downturn, and employing, seconding and incentivising effective principals with a proven track record to work with the schools and take up leadership roles.
1537. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, Karen and David. Basically, 70% of schools did not respond. Indeed, the responses were not all from schools — some were from organisations. Given the small number of respondents, is there not now a serious issue of how you ascertain the real views of the system that will ultimately be subjected to any proposed changes? Earlier, we were struggling with the issue of how we, as a Committee, make information available to people beyond the confines of this room. The Department is in a more difficult place in that it has a responsibility, albeit one that is partly devolved to managing authorities, for the everyday running of schools. David, is there not a concern that the consultation process is so fundamentally flawed or damaged that such a fundamental proposal to change the intervention process could not be implemented as currently proposed?
1538. **Dr Hughes:** The proposed changes are to the formal intervention process as it exists and has been working for a number of years. It is an adjustment of a process with which schools are familiar, either because they have experienced

it or because they are aware of the existing arrangements, even if they have not been affected by them.

1539. This is extending, quite logically, the position that the Every School a Good School policy has taken. It is not taking a radically different approach. It is adjusting and clarifying it and making the point that the Department's strategy is called Every School a Good School, so that is what we are all aiming for. In many ways, I am not so very concerned about the small number of respondents, because it was not introducing a radically new policy. It was adjusting and developing an existing one. I am fairly confident that, if there were a very strong view — I know that some views were quite strongly expressed — consultees would have made that response.
1540. **The Chairperson:** Karen raised a point about a change of terminology. There is a debate about what we mean by satisfactory. Does using the words "formal intervention", not give rise to an issue that needs to be further expanded on? It goes to the heart of what this is all about: why do we need to have this process when we have Every School a Good School, a policy that everybody buys into? This goes back to an earlier comment by the Committee: generally, the Department's policy takes the right direction of travel, but the wheels seem to fall off the cart when it comes to implementing it, and it gets into all sorts of problems. Placing a "formal intervention" label on a school is like sending a pupil to the headmaster's office. The pupil has to wait outside the door for whatever is going to come. Does that not give rise to a serious issue? I agree that the terminology and categories need to be amended, but do we not need to go back a wee bit further and say that we have to call it something different? Maybe that is where the consultation went badly wrong, in that the Department did not seek feedback on whether FIP should include an assessment of a school's sustainability. Yet many schools believe that this, in conjunction and association with area

planning, is all about whether, ultimately, a school will stay in existence.

1541. **Dr Hughes:** Your point about the name of the process is very well made. We have been considering this internally because some responses made it very clear that the perspective of the formal intervention process is that it is punitive. In particular, I would say that the perspective for those who have not been through the process is that it is punitive. A formal intervention process does sound slightly threatening. If the process had a different title, and if we were able effectively to make the point that its value is that it is supportive, we may be in a different place. The process needs to be supportive: it needs to both challenge and support the schools in improvement. You make a very valid point about the perception of the process, and that is an element of what we need to work on.
1542. **The Chairperson:** I have one final query. David, was it you who said that the exit element of the process was quality assured by the inspectorate?
1543. **Dr Hughes:** The action plans, yes.
1544. **The Chairperson:** Is that not the police investigating themselves?
1545. **Dr Hughes:** The action plan is the school's action plan.
1546. **The Chairperson:** Yes, but surely it should be in conjunction with the inspectorate and the district inspector in the first place. There is a growing concern. We now know that the inspectorate is asked for comment on development proposals. If a development proposal is published, the inspectorate is asked for its opinion. How can the inspectorate be an independent arbiter of whether an action plan is fit for purpose to address the needs of a particular school if it has some other view of what should be the long-term sustainability and future of that school?
1547. **Dr Hughes:** It is important to completely distinguish between the two evaluations.

1548. **The Chairperson:** Can you? They are so inextricably linked — forgive us for using that phrase in Northern Ireland. How do you draw that distinction?
1549. **Dr Hughes:** The development of the schools action plan will be against what the inspectorate has identified as the areas in the school's educational provision that need improvement. If there were not the reference to the inspectorate, as a professional body of educationalists outside the school, one would not necessarily have the assurance of the adequacy of the action plan to address the issues that the inspectorate had raised. That is about the quality of the educational provision. I am not sure how one makes the connection between that and issues of development plans. I confess that I am not familiar with every detail of the area planning process in the production of development plans. I am looking at the school improvement process.
1550. **The Chairperson:** It is reasonably straightforward. A school, a board or whoever decided — well, it is only a board, or CCMS, that can bring forward a development proposal to close school A. We now know that the inspectorate is asked for its opinion on that development proposal. How is the information from the inspectorate validated in such a way that it is not biased against a particular school? We are dealing with the inspectorate. It is part and parcel of the senior management team of the Department, and its view, in conjunction with the board, may be that school A has to close.
1551. **Dr Hughes:** I cannot comment on the professional advice given by inspectors. That may be a question to raise with the inspectorate rather than with officials.
1552. **The Chairperson:** Yes, I accept that.
1553. **Mrs McCullough:** From personal experience, the action plans that go from the schools to the inspectorate are about the school asking the inspectorate, which has been in the school, whether this is the right set of actions to address the issues that they found with the provision of education in that school. That is then reflected in the school development plan. It is all about the quality of the education and whether this will do the right things for the children in that school. My personal experience has been that that is what it is concentrated on. It is very professional in its response.
1554. **Mr Craig:** David, good to see you again. I am sure that you are glad to be in education at the minute. David, there is an issue with the name and the titles given in the final inspectors' report. Is there not also a real issue around how help or assistance is given and even the means by which the inspection is carried out? I was listening, and you said that high-quality targeted support should be given to the school. I applaud you for that. Yes, it should be. However, in reality, nothing is given. I am speaking from experience, and I can tell you now that nothing is given. You are given a small level of assistance from your particular board.
1555. The inspectorate itself is very much a stick in this regard. The inspectors come in, and they condemn. They tell you exactly what is wrong here, there and everywhere, and then they disappear. The process is incredibly damaging for any school. It is not supportive or helpful. I have noted that, in practically every school that goes into intervention, the inspectors highlight serious managerial issues. That is the other thing, David. Once a serious managerial issue is highlighted, even if it was being addressed at the time or was about to be addressed — we all know about senior management positions in education. We are talking about approximately two years before you can sort that issue out. That is the reality of education. It is a long-term process. I am just interested to know this: what is the high-quality targeted support that we are talking about? At the minute, I do not see it.
1556. **Dr Hughes:** I make the point that the support that goes to schools is coming from the boards and CCMS. In the boards, the work of CASS is focused

- on schools that are in the process. Therefore, support is coming from the boards to the schools to help them. It is very important to note that it is about supporting self-evaluation and self-improvement. It is not that CASS is doing it for the school or to the school, but rather it is supporting the school so that the school itself is able to identify an action plan that will address the issues that have been brought to its attention by the inspection process and able to put that action plan in place. In so doing, the school is developing the capacity for continued self-evaluation and self-improvement — responding positively to what is being brought to their attention, and then being able to take that forward.
1557. **Mr Craig:** To be honest with you, David, all schools react to any report. An interesting thing the Chair talked about earlier, and it is factual, is that the first thing the inspectors actually do is an audit on the viability of the school. Why would that be?
1558. **Dr Hughes:** I am not in a position to speak for the way in which the inspectorate conducts its inspections. Specific questions like that need to be raised with the inspectorate.
1559. **Mr Craig:** Surely the whole thing about inspection is that you go in to look at the quality of teaching in a school. As you said, it is either satisfactory, unsatisfactory, good or excellent — all of those criteria.
1560. **Dr Hughes:** It is important to make the point that they are evaluating the quality of the educational provision; teaching is a large part of that, but it is not the entirety of it.
1561. **Mr Craig:** But it is interesting that they do a complete audit of the school, its viability and its future viability. Why would that be part of the inspection report? What does that have to do with the quality of teaching in a school?
1562. **Dr Hughes:** Again, you are asking a question that I am not in a position to answer. That is a question for the inspectorate about the way that it conducts its inspections.
1563. **Mr Craig:** The other issue is the lack of people who have contributed to your consultation process. Have you even looked at the rationale behind that? Is there a lack of interest — I doubt it — or is there still a fear factor out there? A lot of schools have gone through the process over the past five to 10 years. I just wonder how many of them have actually made a return to you on this, or are they, as I suspect, just like every other school, afraid to?
1564. **Dr Hughes:** I do not know whether we have the detail of whether any of the schools who have responded reflect the views of a school that has been through the process. I do not know whether we have that information. I am not sure what you are implying about the fear factor of responding to a consultation by the Department.
1565. **Mr Craig:** Work it out, David. If you have got yourself out of the process, you will not want to upset the apple cart in any way, shape or form because you will find yourself back in the process. That is the real fear out there.
1566. **Mrs McCullough:** Sorry, I do not know the circumstances of your particular school, but I want to go back to the evidence that we have about whether the FIP works and people's reaction to being in it. One thing we do is meet the board of governors of schools that are in FIP. A message that comes across from them is that it is not pleasant when they hear the findings and are put into the formal intervention process, which is actually a support package. Generally, the comments that come back to us acknowledge the support that they have been given by the boards, CCMS and the ETI. In the long run, it does help focus on school improvement. It drives that. That is qualitative evidence. The quantitative evidence includes the NISRA survey, which schools that have been inspected complete. The findings there are very positive. You have probably seen all of the information that there is about the contribution that

- they are making, but when you talk to leaders in the school, 93% say that they have been treated fairly and that the inspection process has helped the school and organisation to plan for and promote improvement in the outcomes of learners. So, there is quantitative evidence there as well to show that, in the long run, it does help improvement.
1567. **Mr Craig:** They are very small numbers.
1568. **Mr Kinahan:** It is 93% of 3%.
1569. **Mr Craig:** Yes.
1570. **Mrs McCullough:** But it is 93% of those who have been inspected and gone through the process, which is a very valid point.
1571. **Mr Craig:** That is an interesting issue, David. I would be grateful if you would do a bit of research into how many schools that have been through the process actually responded. For those that did not respond, would there be any way of finding out the rationale for not doing so, because they are the ones with the real experience as to how this happened?
1572. **Mrs McCullough:** That is a good thing in the process that we have: we talk to the people who are going through the process while they are going through it, so we can pick up on things like that.
1573. **Mr Craig:** I hate to say it, but those who have been through the pain are the ones who will know exactly what issues are real and what issues are not.
1574. **Mr Rogers:** You are welcome. I suppose I just want to take on a point from Jonathan. David, you have mentioned quite often this morning the idea of support: support from managing authorities and so on. Does the Department feel that the education and library boards have sufficient resources to address the issues when a school falls into formal intervention?
1575. **Dr Hughes:** We are aware that the boards will prioritise the support to schools in FIP when it comes to the resources of their CASS service. It has not been brought specifically to my attention that the boards feel that they are unable to provide the support to schools in FIP. However, it is recognised that the current position of the CASS service is that there is still room for more support to be given to schools. But the boards are prioritising schools in FIP.
1576. **Mr Rogers:** They are prioritising, but when they were in here it was clear that they were struggling. Say your school falls into formal intervention in, for example, history. I do not know how many, if any, history CASS officers are left in the North. In my board area, in maths, for example, all they can do is firefight. Do you think that is a reasonable place to be, if you want to raise standards, where all you can do is firefight? There are teachers who may not be at the formal intervention stage but are not far behind it who need help, but there is none there.
1577. As you sit in the Department and discuss things with your accounting friends, do you bring it home to them that the severe cuts that they are making, for example, in staff development budgets are having a terrible effect on raising standards?
1578. **Dr Hughes:** There is certainly a recognition that the reduction in the strengths of the CASS service in the boards has been very dramatic. With the proposals to establish ESA was the proposal to have, as part of that, a school development service. That not being progressed leaves the CASS service generally in a weakened position, because it is neither what it was nor what it should be.
1579. I recognise that there is a real challenge there. I am not sure whether the answer will ever be to revert to the levels of resourcing that existed in the past, partially because of the levels of resourcing in the public sector generally and partially also as a recognition that there is a future position where the available support which already exists in the education system is not being tapped to the degree that it might be, in that support is not necessarily always to come from a board or an equivalent

- external authority. There is a huge amount of expertise in other schools as well. That is not an answer in itself, but there is a clear need to establish a model of school-to-board — or ESA, or whatever authority it is — support but also school-to-school support because of the expertise that already exists.
1580. **Mr Rogers:** Yes, but school-to-school support has implications for the school that is providing the support as well. You said that you do not know whether the potential has been tapped. Has the potential within the Department and ETI to take the lead on school improvement been tapped?
1581. **Dr Hughes:** There have been some developments in the way in which ETI will be able to provide support following that pattern of an inspectorate. At the moment, I know that the inspectors are working with a number of schools on the teaching of English and maths. That is a departure from the previous pattern, and it is taking things in a particular direction. You get a fuller and more sensible answer from inspectors who know the detail of how they are taking that forward. There are other forms of support as well, which will all need to be developed. CCEA, for example, also has a function in the support and delivery of the curriculum, and it also has resources that can be used in a supportive fashion. At the moment, we are in a position of moving from one model, with CASS in the boards, to a school development service in ESA.
1582. **Mr Rogers:** The inspectorate witnesses some fantastic teaching out there and has a wealth of information on doing this. How is it going to develop that role if, on the other hand, there has been a 20% cut in the ETI's budget? When you listen to inspectors, how are they going to be able to give more for less?
1583. **Dr Hughes:** You would need to put questions about the business model of ETI to ETI and inspectors. I am not in a position to give any detail on that.
1584. **Mr Rogers:** OK. One other point, then. A point was raised about the formal intervention and the terms and the language. In future, will you be looking at language such as “unsatisfactory” and “inadequate”? If somebody tells me that I am unsatisfactory, and particularly if they tell me that I am inadequate, it certainly does not do anything to boost my confidence. Morale can be low. Someone made the point earlier that although viability audits have already been carried out, you come back again to look at sustainability etc, which is linked to a very high stake of whether a school stays open or is closed. I am just thinking of the language — the “unsatisfactory” and “inadequate”. If somebody tells me that I have development needs and they can itemise them, that is OK.
1585. **Dr Hughes:** You make a good point about the perception of the labels — what the evaluation categories actually feel as though they mean, as well as the definition that the inspectorate uses. It is for the inspectorate to look at that use of language, rather than me and my team. However, it has been raised here and it has been raised elsewhere. Does “satisfactory” actually mean “satisfactory” according to its dictionary definition? These are things that we are taking on board, and I know that the inspectorate is aware of them.
1586. **Mrs McCullough:** When the chief inspector came to the Committee she mentioned that the inspectorate would be undertaking a review of performance levels and engaging with the sector in 2014. We can feed this into that process.
1587. **Mr Craig:** As a point of information — because I find this intriguing, David — has there been a policy change that no school will get out of intervention until it is deemed “good”?
1588. **Mrs McCullough:** No. That was one of the proposals that was here.
1589. **Mr Craig:** I have a good reason for asking that.
1590. **Mrs McCullough:** No, that is not the case. When a school has been in formal intervention and is deemed satisfactory,

- we go through that process. The ETI evidence is just one of the elements that is looked at. There is a wider consultation about whether the school should exit formal intervention.
1591. **Mr Craig:** It is quite right that it drives the school towards being good and not just satisfactory. I agree with that, but there is an underlying issue there. Have they moved the goalposts?
1592. **The Chairperson:** Is the answer to that not: what is the evidence of any school that has come out of FIP that was deemed satisfactory?
1593. **Mrs McCullough:** We do have schools like that. Schools that are deemed satisfactory do come out of FIP. It is a minority that do not.
1594. **Mr Craig:** It is satisfactory in all areas, not just in a number of areas.
1595. **Mrs McCullough:** It is satisfactory overall.
1596. **Mr Hazzard:** Thanks, folks, for the update. Just on the back of it, I maybe come to it slightly differently, and I am not sure how other members feel, but I do not think we should accept “satisfactory” at all. I agree with what they did in England in getting rid of the term altogether. A school is either at least good, or it is not good enough. I think we waste a bit of time on the notion of “satisfactory”. We should just bin it. We need to be moving out of it. I was alarmed when the chief inspector implied on the radio that every satisfactory school would receive an improvement inspection within two years of its original inspection. Is it more than two years presently? Can a school that is deemed to be satisfactory go for more than two years without a sustainable inspection?
1597. **Mrs McCullough:** I think it is meant to be 12 to 18 months. It is laid out in the —
1598. **Mr Hazzard:** I know that it is meant to be, but —
1599. **Mrs McCullough:** I do not know what it is in practice, but, as far as I am aware, that is what it is meant to be.
1600. **Mr Hazzard:** Again, I am very alarmed about that. We want to move away from “satisfactory” as soon as possible.
1601. **Mrs McCullough:** Sorry, it is 18 to 24 months.
1602. **Mr Hazzard:** That is what it is supposed to be. I have no doubt that it is probably not. That is alarming for me. You mentioned, David, that discussions are going on around the term “satisfactory” and various terms. Is there an idea of losing that term?
1603. **Dr Hughes:** It could come into the discussion that is taking place within the inspectorate, which will actually be taking the decision on how that it is done. I know that that will be a matter of engagement, but the inspectorate will be in the lead in taking that forward.
1604. **Mr Hazzard:** Has the Department had any discussions with colleagues in England around their decision to remove the term “satisfactory”, what fed that and what the effect has been? Is there any sort of dialogue at all there?
1605. **Dr Hughes:** Again, I am not aware of whether the inspectorate is speaking to its inspector colleagues, but it has not been a matter of discussion between the policy division and any policy officials in England. I am not sure whether the policy was made by the Department or by the inspectorate in England, I must admit.
1606. **Mr Hazzard:** That is OK. Most of the other things have been more or less covered. I have just one final question on the 20% cut. What has been the effect of that, and what is likely to be the effect going forward?
1607. **Dr Hughes:** The 20% cut in —
1608. **Mr Hazzard:** In the inspectorate's budget.
1609. **Dr Hughes:** Again, you may be asking questions that are for the inspectorate to answer. It maintains an inspection programme. There are still schools that are evaluated as unsatisfactory or inadequate, and so on. There are still schools going into formal intervention.

Those schools are still getting the support from the boards and CCMS. Schools that are going into formal intervention are seeing improvement and coming out. When we are looking at whether the process works, I come back to the point about the benefits to the children who happen to be in that school at that time. They are seeing an improvement in the education provision that they receive. That still goes on, which I think is probably the most critical point.

1610. **Mr Kinahan:** Thank you, David and Karen. I am afraid I am not really concentrating on the excellent detail that you have prepared from what you have learned, but more on why you did not get a good number of responses. Do you chase it up to get people to respond, or do you just send it out and let the world respond?
1611. **Mrs McCullough:** It was sent out and then a reminder was sent out, because we extended the time period. We were told that it was too short a time period for people to come back to us, so we extended it and then let everybody know that we had extended it.
1612. **Mr Kinahan:** Karen, you mentioned that you talk to people. I do not mean that glibly. Therefore, you must get a feeling. David, I was slightly concerned about your comment that you felt that, if people had something that they really wanted to say, they would respond. I think that there is a danger that hiding behind it all is a fear of the system or that no one is listening, and, at the same time, the questions do not have an opening at the end that really encourages the respondent to say that there is something else that is really important. We are getting stuck in our silos. From your comment that you are speaking to people, do you feel that you have a good response here that you can use and work with?
1613. **Dr Hughes:** I think that the responses come from a sufficient breadth of different respondents. If we had faced responses only from one type of respondent — particularly if it were only one type of respondent and the answers were all the same — then I would have anxiety that the consultation would be quite limited. However, in fact, we got responses from quite a range of respondents, and, in some places, there were very clear differences of opinion. Very tellingly, in others, there was a considerable consensus of opinion on the issue. So, in that way, there is still very definitely value in the consultation responses as a whole because of that difference.
1614. **Mrs McCullough:** That is a quantitative look at it. I do not think that there was anything there in the responses that surprised us. It is things that you hear people saying, like how long it is, the names of the things, and what “satisfactory” means. A lot of it was about needing to clarify the position, because people thought that a satisfactory rating meant that you were automatically out of formal intervention. It just provided clarity around that. There was nothing there that was unexpected.
1615. **Mr Lunn:** You have probably answered any question that I might have. I am glad that we are having a discussion about the use of words and perception, because I think that it is far more important than people realise. Frankly, only the Department of Education, perhaps aided and abetted by the inspectorate, could produce a situation where “satisfactory” and “unsatisfactory” mean the same thing, effectively. They produce the same result: formal intervention. Try explaining that to a parent who is looking at a school with a view to sending their child there, and try to explain to them why this school that has a satisfactory rating from the inspectorate, is the nearest good school to where they live and is where they would like to send their children, is in formal intervention. It just does not make sense.
1616. You mentioned that improvement is required. You could toss words about all day, but “intervention” is a loaded word. If the school is unsatisfactory, intervention is fair enough, but not if it is satisfactory or good. Even a good school can require improvement. I know that

- the strapline is Every School a Good School, but, in fact, we are aiming for every school to be an excellent school.
1617. As usual, I cannot quite form a question here.
1618. **Mr Newton:** Find one there somewhere.
1619. **Mr Lunn:** The word “assistance” comes to mind, rather than “intervention”. If a school is satisfactory but requires a bit of work, it requires assistance but not, perhaps, formal assistance. “Formal” is a loaded word too. “Formal” means inescapable or compulsory. There are all sorts of connotations to all of these words. David, I think that you said that it is the inspectorate that is charged with producing these descriptions, but perhaps the Department could lean on it a bit to come up with something that would mean something to prospective parents.
1620. **Dr Hughes:** The inspectorate will look at the categories. It is very interesting that the question of what “satisfactory” means is a considerable distraction from the impact of what we are aiming for, What “satisfactory” is not, in the inspectorate’s current categorisations, is “good”.
1621. **Mr Lunn:** It is not good enough.
1622. **Dr Hughes:** It is not “good”. There is a “good” category, and, therefore, “satisfactory” is not good enough. Exactly. We probably need to remind ourselves that we are aiming for every school to be a good school, because that is possible. I think that you are right that the formal intervention process has a slightly threatening connotation. There is a point about this idea of intervention that is worth picking up on. It may not be the right word, but it has an important idea behind it, which is that schools have a great deal of autonomy and the ideal is that schools are fundamentally relying on self-evaluation and self-improvement. So, if there is to be intervention, meaning another authority or organisation coming to the school to provide support, that is significant. That is not necessarily a defence of the word “intervention”, but it explains why it is there.
1623. **Mr Lunn:** You could use the word “support”. Indeed, you just used it. “Assistance”, “support”, “advice” — there are a load of words out there that are far better than “intervention”. However, if the school is in a bad enough state, “intervention” is the right word.
1624. **Mrs McCullough:** There are a couple of points in that. A good school has to have an action plan, because there are areas for improvement, as you said. The other thing is that, depending on the circumstances, formal intervention, as it is called, looks different for different schools. I think that the point was very well made when the CASS people from the board were here. I think that it was Mr Gilbert from the North Eastern Education and Library Board who made the point very well that how the package of support looks for that school depends on where you are and on the issues that are being addressed. So, the intervention differs, depending on the situation, and it is bespoke to the school’s circumstances.
1625. **Mr Lunn:** I do not disagree with that at all, but I still wonder how you explain this to parents, who mostly, like me, would take a fairly simplistic view of things. If a school is in formal intervention, that is a red light flashing for any parent, whether they already have a pupil at the school or are about to enrol them. However, it may be that the school also got a “satisfactory” rating. It needs to be tidied up.
1626. **The Chairperson:** To conclude, David, on the numbers that you gave us, it has been intimated to us that 10 schools had two consecutive “satisfactory” evaluations.
1627. **Mrs McCullough:** Over the time that we have had this, 13 schools have fallen into the category of going from “satisfactory” to “satisfactory”. Ten primary went from “satisfactory” to “satisfactory”, and one went from “inadequate” to “satisfactory” to

- “satisfactory”. Eight post-primaries have gone from “satisfactory” to “satisfactory”, and two have had three “satisfactory” ratings in a row. At the moment, there are two primaries and five post-primaries in that position. So, it is quite a small number.
1628. **The Chairperson:** What is your assessment of the implication if these proposals were adopted? Would it lead to a further 11 schools entering the formal intervention process?
1629. **Mrs McCullough:** They would be targeted for some additional support, whatever it is called.
1630. **The Chairperson:** Do we have a number of those?
1631. **Mrs McCullough:** Yes; there are seven at the moment.
1632. **The Chairperson:** Seven?
1633. **Mrs McCullough:** Yes.
1634. **The Chairperson:** Are they all in the controlled sector?
1635. **Mrs McCullough:** Sorry, I do not know that. I could check it for you.
1636. **The Chairperson:** That would be useful.
1637. **Mrs McCullough:** As David said, with CASS, the first group of schools that it targets support for is the ones in formal intervention. It then has a group of schools — I think that it is a second tier of schools — that it will support. One of the criteria that it would look at is whether schools are sitting on a “satisfactory” rating, and, if so, they may need some additional support. However, I do not know the level; that is down to the boards and CCMS.
1638. **The Chairperson:** Finally, who ultimately makes the final decision about a school coming out of intervention?
1639. **Dr Hughes:** The decision is taken in the Department.
1640. **The Chairperson:** So, it is the Department that ultimately makes the decision? Is it not ETI?
1641. **Dr Hughes:** No.
1642. **Mrs McCullough:** The inspection report is just one piece of information that feeds into it.
1643. **The Chairperson:** So, it is almost like a development proposal process. Information is gathered, and, ultimately, a recommendation comes from the Department.
1644. **Dr Hughes:** It would be done at official level.
1645. **The Chairperson:** It would be done at official level. I am aware of one school in my constituency that waited six months for a reply from the Department about taking it out of formal intervention, yet the board said that it saw no reason why it could not be progressed. For those six months, that school was in the very position that Trevor referred to. People were saying, “What is going on here?”, and it just so happened that area planning was going on and that there was a proposal to change significantly the nature of that school. I saw the comment in one of the responses, and that said that what feeds the fear is that this is not what it is intended to be. I trust, David, that you will take that on board as a serious issue that people have. The policy direction and those things may be well intended, but it seems as though, when it comes to being practically implemented, it causes undue concern that may or may not be necessary.
1646. Trevor, you wanted to make a final point.
1647. **Mr Lunn:** I want to make a positive comment, Chairman. We should not lose sight of the fact that there are 1,200 schools. How many of them are in the process? Is it about 13?
1648. **Mrs McCullough:** It is seven at the moment. When you look at first inspections — I looked at that over that time — you see that, of 559 inspections, 74% were “good” or better.
1649. **Mr Lunn:** I did not know that figure, but that is the point that I was trying to make. Despite all the pressures that we

have been talking about on the boards, schools, principals, teachers and pupils, the overall requirement to put schools into some form of assistance programme is very low. The rate is less than 1%. So, fair dos.

1650. **The Chairperson:** David and Karen, thank you very much for your time and your papers.

19 February 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Ms Maeve McLaughlin
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Seán Rogers
 Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Mr Dale Heaney	<i>Department of</i>
Dr David Hughes	<i>Education</i>
Dr Gayle Kennedy	
Mrs Karen McCullough	

1651. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I welcome David Hughes, the director of curriculum, qualifications and standards, Dale Heaney, the head of the assessment and qualifications team, Gayle Kennedy, the head of statistics and research, and Karen McCullough, the head of the standards and improvement team. I am sorry that you were kept waiting for so long: there was a passion for the previous subject. We are running 40 minutes behind, so I ask everyone to be concise in their questioning. You have 10 minutes, and I look forward to hearing you.

1652. **Dr David Hughes (Department of Education):** Thank you very much. With your permission, we will address both the programme for international student assessment (PISA) report and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) review of evaluations and assessment.

1653. I will keep my opening remarks at quite a high level. There is clearly a value in opening our education system to external scrutiny. It enables international comparison. These exercises, therefore, are invaluable in allowing for internal reflection. Both works are highly respected studies of international

interest and are considered in countries across the world. They allow us to raise our sights and give us an opportunity to challenge our internal perspective on our education system.

1654. I remind the Committee of the two exercises that we are considering. First, the OECD embarked on a review and published its report, 'Synergies for Better Learning', which reviews evaluation and assessment frameworks in different education systems. Through that, the OECD is gathering different types of evaluation and assessment, including system evaluation of the education system as a whole, school evaluation, pupil assessment and teacher and leader appraisal. The review is looking at how those different types of evaluation and assessment operate within, to a greater or lesser degree, a single coherent framework.

1655. The OECD report ultimately included work gleaned from 14 separate country reviews as well as 15 further participant countries where the work was done on a data basis. Our education system was included among those country reviews.

1656. The second exercise, the PISA report, is a three-yearly assessment conducted by the OECD that tests reading, maths and science among 15-year-olds and includes a survey of principals, teachers and students. In each three-year cycle, the PISA report will look at one of those three elements — reading, maths and science — in detail, and, in this round, maths was the subject of focus. At the risk of terrible oversimplification, I am happy to flag up the headlines from those two exercises.

1657. From the OECD report — this can be confirmed by those who heard Claire Shewbridge from the OECD giving an overview at a presentation last month — the organisation was happy to give a positive account of the evaluation and assessment framework, which

- demonstrates the degree to which there are real synergies between the different areas of evaluation and assessment. It also highlights areas in which attention is due. There needs to be a continued emphasis on areas that are already being addressed. The message that most of us would have taken from the dissemination event is that, fundamental to taking forward our evaluation and assessment framework is the enhancement of confidence across the system in the evaluation and assessment framework and the different elements of it.
1658. The headline message in PISA is that, although the average scores remain broadly similar to those the last time around — three years ago — our education system has dropped in its ranking against other education systems, some of which have improved considerably. Nevertheless, the qualitative evidence in the chapter that deals with the survey of principals, teachers and students demonstrated some very positive messages about the attitude of our young people towards learning mathematics and the importance they place on it.
1659. “What next?” is the question that arises following the publication of these two important studies. In both cases, there is an enormous amount of information in the reports. That data is enormously valuable. It not only provides a source but feeds into general policymaking. The PISA report can be said to confirm the evidence of previous PISA results, particularly in the context of the trends in international mathematics and science study (TIMSS) and the progress in international reading literacy study (PIRLS) results 12 months previously, which looked at the performance of primary-school children. There will be one or two new points to draw out from the PISA report. One of the most striking is probably looking at the levels of performance at the highest level as opposed to the averages.
1660. The OECD report is not a policy review with an action plan or implementation plan. It is a report that enables us to use it as a basis for policy development. The message from the OECD is that the report contains what it has seen but that it is over to local experts and participants as to what to do with it. From the Department's perspective, we would say that we need wide engagement with stakeholders to address the issues that the OECD has raised. There will be some areas in the evaluation assessment framework in which that engagement is going on and in which there is already policy development and finessing, so evidence from the OECD report feeds into that engagement. In particular, I mention the work on pupil assessment, some early work on system evaluation and work on teacher and leadership appraisal.
1661. That engagement with wider stakeholder partners began with the dissemination event on 17 January. On that occasion, it was said that the Department must not go into a huddle and emerge with a list of things that must be done, which would be completely contrary to the message from the OECD. The positive development of what is probably a very strong basis needs to be taken forward in partnership with all stakeholders.
1662. I am conscious that the Committee has also asked us to comment on a report produced and provided to the Committee by the General Teaching Council on rising to the challenge. I think that it is worth mentioning —
1663. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I do not think that we have that in our papers today. We are not ready for that, so I think that we will leave it for another day.
1664. **Dr Hughes:** That is fine; no problem. In that case, I draw my comments to a conclusion. I hope that we have not disappointed the Committee by not having a point-by-point response to every policy recommendation in the OECD report or to every table of data in the PISA report. As I said, to do that would run against the clear message from the OECD that progress needs to be made on the basis of collaboration within the wider education sector. To secure general confidence, we need

- to act in concert, hence our plan to manage a wider engagement process with stakeholders, to look at each of the themes in the OECD report and to take those forward in a measured way in order to inform progress.
1665. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Very good. Wider engagement is definitely the way forward, so we welcome that wholeheartedly. When we met at Stranmillis, we were told that we have all the right mechanisms but were not using them to the best advantage. On the back of that, what worried me was the fact that teachers are always saying how over-consulted and overworked they are. However, it is very important that we listen to them and make sure that we find a way to get it to fit in so that we can learn from it.
1666. I will pick out one or two major points. It concerned me that we were hearing stories that we were not really comparing countries that are like with like, or that some countries are preparing their students so that they give a better set of results. Are we comparing like with like when you are looking at places such as Shanghai and Macau? Should we be taking it seriously?
1667. **Dr Hughes:** It is important that we do not pull out PISA results and look at them in isolation in a table with different education systems in rank order without considering the numerous factors that informed that. At the same time, I think that there is value in what PISA is doing. It is saying that, in all education systems, there are skills that are fundamental to a child's education, and here is a way of examining and testing them, here is a test that can be applied universally, and here are the results of those tests.
1668. With that kind of data, it is enormously interesting to see it presented in as many ways as possible in order to inform the countries that are being tested. It also informs us about other countries and stimulates a discussion along the lines of looking at how those countries are doing it and what they are doing differently, in the same way that other countries are doing precisely the same thing. It is certainly not the be-all and end-all of educational policy to improve one's PISA ranking, because that does not tell you anything as valuable as other ways of measuring one's own education.
1669. **The Deputy Chairperson:** There are two points that I think are vital, which are based on what principals think. First, with buildings and computers, principals thought that, compared with the rest of the United Kingdom, we did not have the right facilities or that we needed to improve them. The second issue emerging from the report is morale, which is much more important.
1670. **Dr Hughes:** Surveys of principals, teachers and students are enormously interesting, but they need to be read very carefully to understand precisely what the question is and why the answer might be the way that it is. In an objective sense, access to computers can be very good, but principals might still say that they could do with more. PIRLS looked at access to school libraries, and the proportion of schools in which children had access to a school library was strikingly low, but that was because they had access to a class library that had even better resources. When one is looking at an international context, one needs to be very careful about what the question is precisely and how we understand the answer.
1671. The PISA survey results are very interesting and deserve careful consideration, particularly when Northern Ireland stands out, and the results are striking in some areas.
1672. **The Deputy Chairperson:** That means that we will need to hear more from you about what you have taken from the reports.
1673. The report states that classroom observation and weekly evaluation of staff was different from England, in that there was a much smaller proportion —

1674. **Dr Hughes:** Are you referring to the proportion of time that head teachers are giving to particular functions?
1675. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Yes, that is right.
1676. **Dr Hughes:** I am not sure that we have any additional commentary on that.
1677. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Will you come back to us when you have analysed things in more depth?
1678. **Dr Hughes:** If there are questions that the Committee wants to raise about specific elements of the data, I am very happy to consider those.
1679. **Mrs Dobson:** The OECD report effectively rubbishes last year's fiasco with computer-based assessment (CBA). It highlights the failure to pilot adequately over a proper timescale and also the list of changes following the pilot. Do you recognise your failure last year? Will you accept the recommendation to undertake any future pilots over a longer timescale?
1680. **Dr Hughes:** The OECD report draws attention to the very real difficulties that everyone experienced when the computer-based assessment was in place. The OECD does not rubbish the whole exercise. It very clearly recognises the value of the diagnostic assessments in the autumn term. The OECD comments are along the lines — I paraphrase, but I think that it is fair — that this is worth doing and persisting with in some form, but that we must make sure that it is done properly.
1681. **Mrs Dobson:** Why was such a short timescale adopted for the pilot? Were you overconfident of your ability? Danny touched on this. Surely the Department could learn from best practice in other countries that operate CBA successfully. Why was there such a short timescale?
1682. **Mr Dale Heaney (Department of Education):** The timescale was approximately 18 months. We worked with the CCEA in weighing up the risks of that timescale, given that we had to work through all the requirements that schools feel that they need. Schools were involved in that process. Following a series of pilots, the Northern Ireland numeracy assessment (NINA) and Northern Ireland literacy assessment (NILA) were made live in 2012. With the benefit of hindsight, we recognise that working more closely and over a longer period of time with schools on the fine detail of the questions that were being asked would have paid dividends. We accept that. Having learned from the experience, we would want to take longer over the detail of the assessments and what they provide, not just the questions but the reports and the use to which those reports could be put in a school and how closely aligned those can be to other assessments that schools are perhaps more familiar with.
1683. **Mrs Dobson:** The OECD report also highlighted a lack of any official means of communication with parents, unlike in other OECD countries. Does the Department plan to take up the recommendation to establish a consultation platform for parents? How soon could you have an official channel of communication in place? That is vital. It was so lacking. Do you plan to do that?
1684. **Dr Hughes:** We are not in a position to say that the Department is taking a particular position on any individual recommendation. We need to engage with stakeholders on all the recommendations. The point about engagement with parents is valuable and important, and it has certainly registered in the Department. It is not the first time that it has been observed. We are aware of other education systems in which a stakeholder group or stakeholder representation of the parental voice has been demonstrably valuable.
1685. **Mrs Dobson:** How can you ensure that all parents who want to make a contribution can do so? How would you establish that?
1686. **Mr Heaney:** We have endeavoured to do that. As you will know from our update on GCSEs and A levels last week, we used Parenting NI as a means of engaging with parents that otherwise

would perhaps not have been there. We saw that as an important part of building in the parental voice and taking on board their views, for example, of the assessment and qualifications offered at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. That work is done at various levels across the Department but I accept —

1687. **Mrs Dobson:** That it needs to happen a lot more.
1688. **Mr Heaney:** — that we need to do it across a range of policy areas. I am happy to take that on board as to how CBA and other parts of assessment might be taken forward.
1689. **Mr Rogers:** You are welcome. Thank you. The purpose of education is to equip young people for the world of work, and so on. Given my background, I tend to look at tables. Some of the tables tell us that, generally, we are not doing as well as the Republic, Scotland or England. Our young people are at a disadvantage in competing for jobs compared with young people from those regions. We also hear a significant tale about maths, science and reading. How are you going to address this? Compare education here with education in the Republic of Ireland: teachers here will say that they have been on a roundabout of change for the past 20 or 30 years. There has not been so much change in the Republic. What lessons will you take from that report for a curriculum review, particularly a primary curriculum review?
1690. **Dr Hughes:** There a couple of points worth making. I raise these not as excuses but as analysis. If you recall from the evidence session on TIMSS and PIRLS, the evidence is that, at primary level, Northern Ireland children are performing very well indeed. However, the PISA results show that, at the age of 15, their performance is relatively average on an international scale.
1691. There are a number of reasons why that might be. One significant element is that the children who sat the TIMSS and PIRLS tests were the first cohort to go through entirely under the revised curriculum. Only part of the school career of the 15-year-olds who sat the PISA tests was within that revised curriculum. It is worth making the point that the revised curriculum is very strong on the skills that PISA tests. What PISA tells us next time, when the young people sitting the tests will have had more of their school career within the revised curriculum, will be very interesting indeed.
1692. I have heard commentators from the OECD pointing at our curriculum as a good example of a curriculum that is very strong on skills and that balances knowledge, skills and understanding very carefully. That is exactly the kind of educational reform that takes quite a long time to play out. I would expect it to take some time to play out.
1693. It is enormously valuable to compare with nearby jurisdictions and education systems. We will take up some very significant challenges from looking at the figures in that way. Contact with officials from the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in Dublin shows that they are as interested in our TIMSS and PIRLS results in primary schools as we are in their PISA results. There is valuable engagement to be had for us to understand their analysis of their success this time in comparison with quite a modest performance last time and the relative stability of our performance this time as compared with last time.
1694. There will be commentary on England's performance, which is relatively strong — we have heard political and media comment on that — and whether that has anything to do with recent reform in the English system or the long-term experience of the education sector there. These are all elements in the mix. It is important for us to look at the figures and understand more about what they tell us so that that informs what goes on here.
1695. **Mr Rogers:** You know that I am coming to this, but I am thinking particularly of science. The 15-year-olds and PISA — when those children were in primary school, the curriculum was different.

- There was probably a stronger emphasis on science than the next time this happens, when science is within The World About Us. When you talk to many primary-school teachers, you hear that they are particularly concerned about science being buried in The World About Us. Is that something that is on your antennae as well?
1696. **Dr Hughes:** We are getting a couple of messages about science. One of them is, in a way, the positive message coming out of the same situation. In actual fact, the experience of science education in post-primary schools is positive, and it is not necessary to have the same degree of emphasis on science in primary schools for science education in post-primary schools to be engaging, enjoyable, challenging, stimulating and inspirational to children in attainment in science. We are getting that message as well. So, we need to hear both messages about the place of science.
1697. **Mr Rogers:** Do you share the concerns of the likes of the Association for Science Education?
1698. **Dr Hughes:** Specifically?
1699. **Mr Rogers:** To do with primary science.
1700. **Dr Hughes:** I have not seen the specific points that it is making. As I said, if it is making the point that there is not enough primary science, but we are also hearing that there is quite enough primary science, and it does not necessarily impact upon the long-term outcomes in science education, we need to take both of those on board.
1701. **Mr Rogers:** Thank you. My other point is on self-evaluation. The OECD report talks about self-evaluation not being well enough embedded. It also talks about the demise of CASS and the effect that that has had. The last point that I want you to comment on is the inspectorate role and support role of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Those things are flagged up by the OECD.
1702. **Dr Hughes:** I do not want to set out a departmental position arising from the points made by the OECD. I think the OECD's observations around the role of an inspection and the inspectorate in its wider role have got to inform the way in which inspection is taken forward. There are the observations about the need for support to the teaching profession. With regard to CASS, I do not think that anyone is going to deny that it is not ideal to have a service that is wound down to such a degree. However, we are conscious that there needs to be a support function. There are support functions already in existence that need to be operating in concert with one another so that there is an understanding of the relative and respective roles. It is not an area that has finally come to rest in its final form. I think that that is a fair point to make.
1703. **Mrs Karen McCullough (Department of Education):** There are examples of where the ETI is providing support like that. Take its themed studies, which can feed back into the system. The principals' conferences are very popular amongst principals. Attached to those, they run workshops where they showcase best practice. There was also the recent best practice in literacy and numeracy. It fed back into the system and brought —
1704. **Mr Rogers:** Yes, I hear very positive comments about the special education conferences as well.
1705. **Mrs McCullough:** Yes, there is good feedback.
1706. **Mr Sheehan:** I want to touch on some of the points that Seán made on comparative analysis with other jurisdictions. Does the OECD provide any information on that? Does anything glaring jump out between the systems here, for example, and China, or between here and the South?
1707. **Dr Hughes:** I make the distinction between what PISA is telling us and what the OECD study of the evaluation assessment framework is saying. PISA is based on the same tests being used across the world, so comparison is possible, to a degree. I caveat that

very carefully by saying that there are reasons why different education systems perform differently in different ways at different times. The PISA report contains a lot of data, and there is a lot more data that can always be accessed, right down to a great degree of granularity, and that will always repay study. With regard to the OECD report on evaluation assessment, there is a big report looking at all the countries and education systems that were visited or reviewed on paper. OECD is generalising from such a huge range of different ways of doing things that there is not very much of, “Look at what this system is doing; you should be looking at doing something like it.” Rather, it is saying, “We look at a lot of systems, and we recognise at a very high level some general patterns of good practice. Now look at that good practice and look at what you are actually doing. Don’t worry about all the other countries and education systems; look at yourselves and these patterns of good practice.”

1708. That is what the report on our own evaluation assessment framework is doing. It is not comparing us to other countries; it is taking some very high-level good-practice messages that we need to compare ourselves to. That said, there was an international conference to launch the big ‘Synergies for Better Learning’ report, at which different education systems were invited to give a short presentation of what they are doing in certain areas, and they chose those presentations from education systems that have shown a particular strength or have a particular reform programme in progress where they are saying, “The rest of the world can listen to what is being done in these areas in those other education systems, not to replicate it, but just to understand what is possible.” It is to the credit of the Northern Ireland education system that we were invited to present, at that international conference, “This is how it is done in this system — in particular, the fact that so many elements of evaluation and assessment combine and are pulled together in a framework that actually fits together.”

OECD said that other countries need to see what is possible to ensure that system evaluation, school evaluation, pupil appraisal, teacher appraisal and leadership appraisal all fit together in some way.

1709. We are actually being held up by OECD in some ways as an instance of an education system that is taking that good practice model and coming quite close to it in many ways. Of course, there are lots of things that need to be developed, but that is where it started.
1710. **Mrs McCullough:** The real strength of PISA is that it takes, in a way that other studies do not, outcomes from something that is a test of the children and attaches them to other information about those children and the environment that they are in. It has that attitudinal information, it has got the way that they are taught, and it has the views and activities in the school that takes it across a lot of factors. Then, looking across everything, OECD can see what kind of behaviours and activities get the highest performance. That is a particular strength of that study that we do not have from other things. If we look at somebody’s GCSE results, we have very factual stuff, but we do not have more detailed analysis of how they have been taught or what their views are.
1711. **The Deputy Chairperson:** We had the two briefings down as separate, just in case anyone got lost during that. We were having a departmental briefing on PISA, and that was to be followed by the inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and school improvement process and OECD. We have somehow linked the two together, which may have lost some members. We had suggested questions on page 86 for the departmental briefing and on page 154 for the inspectorate. Given that that is our inquiry and, therefore, almost the more important focus, I suggest that we send those questions to the Department for answers. Also, if anyone else has got any extra ones — Seán, you raised the issue of primary science — we should add that in to get more thorough answers.

1712. I am still concerned. You were talking then about all the things that we are doing well, and that is great. However, of the first two questions that we were furnished with, one was on the rundown of CASS, which Seán touched on, and the challenge to the ETI to get proper support to do it properly. The other question was whether the Department will instruct the ETI to better exploit the evidence resource. There is so much in there, and I think that we should also focus on the things that we are not doing well. I go back to your point at the beginning: I am glad that you are going to talk more widely, but what recommendations will come out of some of what you have said today?
1713. **Dr Hughes:** The critical point from the conclusions of the OECD report is that, by taking the different themes — the system evaluation, school evaluation, pupil assessment and leader and teacher appraisal — we are posed a challenge to look a lot of streams of work that are already going on, in a way that makes the connection between them and does not weaken the bonds of a framework of evaluation and assessment. There are already some streams of work, and the Committee will be aware of the assessment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1, 2 and 3. That pupil assessment engagement, with the unions in particular, about how those arrangements can be progressed will necessarily be informed by the fact that the Department, the unions, CCEA and others will have read the OECD report and seen what an outsider has said about the assessment arrangements. That is very important. That is one that is already ongoing. There is some work that is beginning, particularly around system evaluation, that is informed by the OECD report.
1714. All Departments will acknowledge that work will be needed as we head towards the next Programme for Government, which is where the system evaluation for education will be apparent at its highest profile. There are streams of work that will necessarily be going on that will have to be informed by the OECD's assessment and analysis of our system.
1715. What I do not think we can do is try to take forward individual decisions that make immediate changes outside the context of looking at the strategic aims of the evaluation assessment framework. Many of the points that the OECD made are medium- to long-term points and require that kind of engagement to progress them. The most likely outcome that I can imagine is a programme of work that is carried forward in parallel with those different themes, so that the connections are not lost and we are not swamped by the sheer volume of detail, information and consideration that has to be given to those individually very important subjects.
1716. **The Deputy Chairperson:** We are in the middle of a rather important inquiry and it is the end of February. We really need to see recommendations that come out of the report that can help us with the inquiry. We also need something solid in the answers to the questions that we will send to you today. We cannot just let it work slowly towards the next Programme for Government.
1717. **Dr Hughes:** It may be that the questions you raise admit of immediate answers. If that is the case, those can be given.
1718. **Mrs Dobson:** I want to ask a couple of questions on PISA. It is disappointing to note that principals are increasingly reporting teacher shortages in subjects other than maths, science and English. What do you put that down to? How do you plan to tackle that issue in the future? We certainly do not want to end up with staffing gaps, especially as teachers begin to retire and need to be replaced.
1719. **Dr Hughes:** I am afraid that I am not in a position to answer questions about the levels of available teachers.
1720. **Mrs Dobson:** No, but the PISA report obviously highlighted that principals are reporting shortages. What do you plan to do? Do you have any inkling? Do you plan to do anything?

1721. **Dr Hughes:** I cannot speak for business areas that are looking at the number of teachers.
1722. **Mrs Dobson:** Can we maybe ask, then, through the Committee, for an answer to that?
1723. **The Deputy Chairperson:** OK. I think that we can do that.
1724. **Mrs Dobson:** I hope that you can answer my other question. Why did the questionnaire conclude that more principals here than in the rest of the UK reported inadequate buildings, school grounds, computers and Internet connections? The Deputy Chair touched on that earlier.
1725. **Mrs McCullough:** That was actually quite different to what happened in PIRLS and TIMSS with the primary schools. They were being quite positive about those things whereas, when it came to post-primary resources, they were less positive. It may be a fact of the buildings. I do not know about that.
1726. In relation to computing, the point that David earlier made about context is important because, relative to other countries, our schools have very good facilities for Internet access and computers. However, it could be that it is where they are coming from. Maybe they want access to a different kind of technology, such as iPads or something else. It is about where your starting point is and what you have in mind that you would like to have. We would need to look at that more.
1727. **Dr Hughes:** I am not sure whether the evidence from the PISA review will necessarily give us the detail of why they answered in the way they answered. We can apply some good sense to those figures. As Karen said, compared with other education systems, we have remarkably good computer system provision and an expectation that it is used. Of course, if you provide a good computer system, and an expectation that it is used, the schools will continually want more because it is valuable. Obviously if it is demonstrably valuable, schools will want more. Therefore, an expectation that there could be more, and a degree of dissatisfaction, is in many ways a positive thing: schools want to have more access and use it more because they have already discovered and established the value of it. Simply on an anecdotal level, I have also heard from principals who say that C2k is fine, but that they need it to do this, this and this. Elsewhere in the world, they look at C2k and say that it is an extraordinarily impressive system.
1728. **Mrs Dobson:** I was particularly concerned about inadequate buildings. Recently, I raised a constituency issue regarding inadequate facilities at Craigavon Senior High School with the Southern Education and Library Board. I was told that it did not view that as having a major impact on academic attainment. I am interested to hear whether the Department shares that view. Surely, better facilities can only improve the pupils' experience.
1729. **Mrs McCullough:** Anecdotally, I once read a report that said that the highest outcomes were in the most crowded schools with the poorest — *[Inaudible.]* It was related to the nature of the schools. The schools were selective schools, which had older buildings and — *[Inaudible.]* So, there was something else behind those outcomes. I appreciate your point, however.
1730. **The Deputy Chairperson:** There is a danger here that we are going away thinking everything is great and fine.
1731. **Mrs McCullough:** No.
1732. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Good. Thank you.
1733. **Dr Hughes:** Your questions are coming out of the survey of principals and their experience and the surveys of pupils and teachers. They are enormously interesting surveys. They are telling us a lot about what schools' experience actually is. They are telling us, in particular, how very different some elements of our education system can be, compared with others — compared with the average, for example — or

- that, in line with outcomes, we may be very like the average in some areas. The results from the surveys will always merit reference back to those figures in order to inform us more.
1734. **Mrs Dobson:** Finally, I think that Karen's comment about the highest achievement in crowded schools will be cold comfort for Craigavon Senior High School, who are long past waiting on a newbuild.
1735. **Mrs McCullough:** That was in a paper that I read. It seemed at odds with what you would expect, as you say.
1736. **The Deputy Chairperson:** We could all draw out lots of schools in our own areas.
1737. **Mr Rogers:** My question relates to the point that I made earlier. I was thinking back to the ETI report. In the past, it talked about issues of satisfactory school leadership. I also saw, somewhere in all that paper, that the percentage of actual classroom visits by the principal was much lower in Northern Ireland than in England. To go back to schools' self-evaluation, does the Department agree with OECD's recommendation for a common reference for school leadership appraisal? Having been in the role of school principal in the past, I know that it is a very lonely position. Are there any plans for a root-and-branch look at the support that head teachers get, beyond the professional qualification for headship?
1738. **Dr Hughes:** Given the cast you have in front of you from the Department, there may be others who are better able to answer particular questions about school leadership and professional development for school leaders. The Department is very conscious of the importance of this area. It is fair to say that it has been demonstrated to be almost impossible for a school to perform at the highest level if it does not have fine leadership. I know that the strategic forum, which is made up of unions and employers, as well as other stakeholders, has had a work stream looking at leadership specifically.
- That is being taken forward. It is part of the Department's focus. I cannot comment on any specific issues, but I would also go back — again, I may be drawing from this well of anecdote for a long time — to visiting the area learning communities, where we would meet the principals' group. The views coming out of those meetings were that there is, very clearly, value in the formal structures that RTU is providing, and so on, but there is clearly value in the, relatively speaking, informal structures of meeting on an area basis and seeing the practice of other schools, even to the point of just sharing the trials and tribulations that head teachers face at any given time. Whether there is more mileage in developing the formal structures of leadership development, but also in seeing the value of, and what can be done with regard to, those less formal structures in which leadership can develop, both of those areas need to be considered.
1739. **Mr Rogers:** With reference to the point that I was making, does the Department agree with the one common reference for school leadership appraisal that OECD talks about?
1740. **Dr Hughes:** I am sorry; you have caught me on a point of detail on which I am unable to give an absolute answer. I am sure that there is an answer. I apologise.
1741. **The Deputy Chairperson:** We will add that to the questions that we will put through.
1742. Thanks very much. I am concerned that we are looking too much at the things that we are doing well. We should do that, but there is a whole mass of things that are arising as part of the inquiry that need tackling and recommendations. It may be that we need to ask you to come back in line with the questions that we will put to you after this meeting. Thank you very much.

26 February 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Pat Sheehan

Witnesses:

Mr John Anderson	<i>Education</i>
Mrs Noelle Buick	<i>and Training</i>
Mrs Faustina Graham	<i>Inspectorate</i>
Mrs Heather Jackson	

1743. **The Chairperson:** I welcome to the meeting Noelle Buick, chief inspector of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), Faustina Graham, assistant chief inspector, Heather Jackson, managing inspector, and John Anderson, managing inspector. We are pleased that you have all taken the time to come and be with us this morning. Thank you for doing that. We are in different surroundings today, but we are glad to be out of Parliament Buildings and in the partnership offices.
1744. Noelle, I want to express appreciation and thanks for all of the information that you have supplied to the Committee to date on the inquiry. It might be useful, Peter, for members — I am sure that I speak on their behalf — to collate all of that information into one document, if that is at all possible.
1745. **The Committee Clerk:** We will send members the link to all of the information that we have received in the inquiry. It is all available through members' paper packs.
1746. **The Chairperson:** If you can navigate your tablets, members, you will be able to access all of the information. Noelle, thanks for coming with your staff. I ask you to present, and then members will have questions.
1747. **Mrs Noelle Buick (Education and Training Inspectorate):** Thank you. A formal "Good morning" to everyone, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on 'Together Towards Improvement', self-evaluation and the process of inspection in primary and post-primary schools. I will begin by briefly talking about 'Together Towards Improvement', and I will refer to it as TTI, which is our terminology. I will also talk about self-evaluation, and then I will hand over to John and Heather, who will talk about primary and post-primary inspections.
1748. TTI is an ETI publication that was developed in 2002-03. It may be used by schools to support self-evaluation. It is not prescriptive that they use it, but it is also the framework for ETI inspections. So TTI gives transparency to the inspection framework and promotes a common language for school evaluation and inspection, as well as a shared understanding of the factors related to school quality. That is a strength that was identified by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
1749. Using TTI, inspection assesses the quality of education under three broad headings, five key questions and a range of quality indicators. Those are the same broad headings, key questions and quality indicators that can be used by schools for self-evaluation. The three broad headings are leadership and management; quality of provision for learning; and achievement and standards.
1750. Under leadership and management, inspectors ask key question 1: how effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners? To do that, they look at seven quality indicators: strategic leadership; action to promote improvement; staffing; accommodation and physical resources; links and partnerships; equality of

- opportunity, diversity and good relations; and public value.
1751. To assess the quality of provision for learning, inspectors ask three key questions. Key questions 2 to 4 are as follows: how effective are teaching, learning and assessment; how well do learning experiences, programmes and activities meet the needs of learners and the wider community; and how well are learners cared for, guided and supported? Each question has its own quality indicators.
1752. The third and final area is the quality of achievement and standards. Inspectors ask key question 5: how well do learners develop and achieve? The quality indicators are achievement, standards, progression and fulfilling potential. Note that, as well as achievement and standards, we assess progression and fulfilling potential as part of that judgement on all inspections.
1753. As the Chair said, members have a copy of TTI for post-primary schools. Pages 12 and 13 outline the structure that I have just described, and, from page 14 onwards, you have the detail of the quality indicators to each of the key questions. We are very happy to take any questions on those later.
1754. In consultation with our stakeholders, TTI was revised in 2010 and is now more phase-specific. We have a separate TTI for each of our phases, so there is one for primary, one for post-primary etc, and they use the language related to that phase, but the structure is as I outlined. TTI is well used and respected as a self-evaluation tool, as well as being our framework for inspection. In a survey of schools that were inspected in 2011-12, 90% reported that they found TTI quite useful or very useful, a statistic reported in the OECD report. TTI complements and supports the Every School a Good School (ESAGS) policy; 'The Reflective Teacher', which was revised in 2012 to align with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) competencies; and the school development planning process. The school development planning circular was revised in 2010, which made self-evaluation more explicit as part of the school development planning process.
1755. Self-evaluation is a process through which an individual teacher, groups of staff, the staff as a whole and senior management can reflect on their current practice to identify good practice and areas for improvement. It should be a systematic process that also includes governors and, where necessary, members of the school community, such as parents and pupils. The purpose of self-evaluation is to improve the experience of pupils, improve the quality of learning and teaching, raise the standards that pupils achieve and promote school effectiveness.
1756. There is no statutory requirement for schools to carry out self-evaluation, but the school development plan regulations, which are statutory requirements, state that the identification of areas for improvement should be informed by schools' self-evaluation. We evaluated school development planning as good or better in 75% of the primary schools that we inspected and 67% of the post-primary schools that we inspected. We found self-evaluation to promote improvement good or better in 75% of the primary and 55% of the post-primary schools inspected.
1757. As part of our mission to promote improvement in the interests of all learners, ETI works constantly to promote a culture of self-evaluation across the education, youth and training sectors. However, we know that there is more work to be done on promoting self-evaluation, particularly in post-primary schools, as I have described. As well as TTI, the self-evaluation process is supported by 'The Reflective Teacher', which helps teachers to evaluate their own teaching and learning; the "better" publications that you will have seen, such as 'Better English' and 'Better Mathematics'; the ETI inspection reports and thematic surveys; and our dissemination conferences as well as the district inspector work. Self-evaluation and inspection are

complementary, and the relationship between the two is central to stimulating improvement. We are members of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI). It states, and I agree, that self-evaluation needs to operate in a framework of accountability, which encourages rigour and validates its authenticity. So internal self-evaluation complemented by external evaluation ensures objectivity.

1758. To schools assessed as having an effective self-assessment process, a lighter touch of inspection can be applied: for example, the sustaining improvement inspection in very good and outstanding schools that we are piloting. This proportionate, risk-based approach ensures that resources are targeted where they are most needed and that good practice from good and outstanding schools is shared.
1759. That is all that I have to say about TTI and self-evaluation. I will now hand over to John, if that is OK with you, Chair, to talk about post-primary inspection. Heather will then talk about primary inspection.
1760. **Mr John Anderson (Education and Training Inspectorate):** Thank you, Chairman. I will not go into too much detail on the way in which post-primary inspection operates, just sufficient detail, I hope, to allow you to hear how reflective practice and self-evaluation for improvement are part of that process. I am happy to answer further questions.
1761. Although people tend to focus on the inspection visit as an event in isolation, it is not; it sits within a long-term relationship between district inspectors and their schools. District inspectors are already engaged with schools in supporting and providing a challenge to their school development planning and self-evaluation processes. Therefore, they have long-term knowledge of their schools and insight into their local circumstances and the community with which they work. Often, district inspectors see the annual revision of a school's development plan. That plan is written for a three-year cycle but

revised annually. It is underpinned by action plans, monitoring, evaluation and reports on how well the action plans are progressing to achieve the school's current priorities. More recently, they also have access to school data packs, which the Department's statistics team provides to the governors and principals of all schools annually. The packs are updated throughout the year and the district inspectors have access to them as well. So there is already a long-term engagement.

1762. For a post-primary inspection visit, three days are spent gathering evidence in the school. In advance of that visit, we ask the school to undertake a number of specific tasks to prepare for the inspection. We reduced the extent of those tasks for the year just past. Two years ago, we found that, typically, schools tended to write self-evaluation reports specifically for the purpose of the inspection and found that an onerous task. That was an unintended outcome of giving schools advice that they had asked for. Two or three years ago, self-evaluation was less common. We gave them advice based on the headlines from 'Together Towards Improvement', which the chief inspector has just explained. Schools tended to take those headlines and write a report for the purpose of inspection, which, in itself, was not useful for us. Now, we simply ask them to map or signpost for us their existing action plans and self-evaluation documents. We request that they tell us who is responsible for these — whether there is an individual post of responsibility or a group or committee responsible — so that we know whom to talk to, what to read and what to follow up. They do that in advance of the inspection. That has reduced the perceived burden of preparing documentation.
1763. Secondly, we ask the school to provide us with a subset of the data that it already holds in its school administration systems about the pupils, the curriculum and their progress. It has been said during the inquiry that that is an onerous task. People have mentioned

- large numbers of pages. In fact, these are spreadsheets that are downloaded on to laptops and are not printed off. I checked the amount of data that we extract from a school administration system, and it is less than 0.5% of the total data that is held by the school in any case. It is a matter of downloading a very small proportion of that total, and it is done automatically through macros, so it is not a very difficult task.
1764. Thirdly, we ask the school to benchmark and evaluate its own performance data on examination standards using the Department's circulars, which are published every year and provide benchmarking data for groups of schools. We also ask the school to evaluate the wider skills and capabilities of pupils as they progress, develop and achieve their potential through the school. You heard the chief inspector stress that that broader evidence on achievement of standards complements the specific look at the exam standards in the school. When we ask the school to evaluate the standards of skills and dispositions, we are asking them to evaluate the extent to which pupils who have additional support with their learning are progressing and how pupils progress through their career in the post-primary school. Data collection is a joint effort. It is not a question of the inspectorate's gathering evidence on a school. Together with a school, we can look at the evidence. They evaluate it. We go through a preparation day. The reporting inspector who leads the team goes through a preparation day with the school a week in advance to go through the evidence and collectively confirm that it is an accurate reflection of the school's progress and performance. So we jointly appraise and agree the picture of the school that emerges through that inspection visit.
1765. I mentioned that the inspection visit is over three days. I will not go into great detail on how it is organised. The important point is that we take the school's priorities in its school development plan as central to the inspection. That is how we organise the inspection. We are focused on, first, what priorities the school has identified for itself and, secondly, what its processes are to ensure that it achieves those priorities and can then move on to the next most important thing in the eyes of the school. In doing that, we observe lessons. We talk to pupils during and outside lessons. We talk to teachers after lessons. We look at the work of the pupils. We examine the planning of the teachers individually and collectively as subject departments. We look at their monitoring and self-evaluation processes, documents and reports. We meet a whole range of post holders across the school and discuss their roles and responsibilities. We meet the boards of governors. Throughout all of that, we engage in professional dialogue with the school that is designed to achieve two things, the first of which is to evaluate the effectiveness of their own self-evaluation. Also, we conduct that dialogue in a way that aims to contribute to building the capacity of the school to be even more effective in conducting its self-evaluation and development planning.
1766. Self-evaluation, in the context of post-primary schools, flows from reflective practice, as set out in the competences by the General Teaching Council for an effective teacher. I can recite those later if you wish, Chair. Effectively, reflective practice is the day-to-day teaching and learning. That is the work of improvement. It is not an additional task. In 'The Reflective Teacher', page 17 of appendix 1 gives a sense of the flow of thinking that teachers undertake when thinking about their practice. As they teach a lesson, they constantly ask themselves whether they are communicating effectively with their pupils and whether the learning from that lesson is as they intended. What I am saying, Chairman, is that much of what a teacher does to reflect on their practice is about their professional judgement. There are instances when they will use test assessment data to confirm that judgement, but, by and large, it is the professional skill of a teacher to be a reflective practitioner.

- Teachers ask themselves the following questions: am I helping or hindering the learning; at the end of the lesson, have I made a difference; do they know something that they did not know before; can they do something that they could not do before and, if so, how do I know that? That is at the heart of reflective practice.
1767. Self-evaluation is simply the aggregation of an individual teacher's reflective practice. All those who teach the same subject will come together and discuss their reflection on their practice, and that comprises the subject department's self-evaluation. When that is aggregated at the school level, you are then looking at self-evaluation for improvement at a whole-school level. It is that kind of discussion that helps a school to set its priorities for the current year of its school development plan, which it then discusses with the wider community through the board of governors and in consultation with parents. Schools vary in how they go about doing that. It helps the school not only to identify those priorities but to turn them into the action plans that I mentioned earlier.
1768. The most effective action plans have a small number of priorities associated with success measures that are, from the teachers' perspective, measurable, as well as any internal and external assessment or test results that they might have. The reports that they produce are clear about the evaluation of the improvements that lead to the next cycle of improvement.
1769. Action plans that are less successful simply describe the tasks to be completed and monitor the tasks being done. Any report produced tends to be descriptive rather than evaluative and is often lengthy, because it tells you all the things that they did but not whether they improved something as a result. I can tell you all day what I do, but, if you ask me how effective I have been, that is a much harder question to answer. Although this is not a very complex process, it requires intellectual thought to decide whether you are making a difference in what you do.
1770. In summary, Chair — I am happy to take further questions as you wish — we evaluate the appropriateness of the priorities that schools set in their school development plan and the effectiveness of their improvement processes in such a way that we intend will help to build the capacity of the school and its teachers and leaders to sustain improvement over the longer term.
1771. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, John.
1772. **Mrs Buick:** Chair, Heather will tell you a little about the primary process.
1773. **The Chairperson:** OK. Thank you.
1774. **Mrs Heather Jackson (Education and Training Inspectorate):** Thank you, Chair. As John outlined, common principles are applied across from post-primary to primary. We are in the schools directorate, so there has to be a unity of purpose in school development, planning and self-evaluation. So forgive me if I repeat certain concepts that John has already explored.
1775. I wish to talk to you about the primary-school inspection model and how we involve staff and the community in self-evaluation processes throughout the inspection.
1776. Common to all inspection processes are the three principles of inclusiveness, transparency and accountability. Inclusiveness is provided by seeking the views of the school through questionnaires for parents and staff and meetings with children, principals, coordinators and governors. Throughout that process, we examine how well the children are developing their emotional and academic well-being.
1777. For transparency, all the documentation on our procedures is provided on our website for principals and governors prior to an inspection. There is a 'Together Towards Improvement' document specifically for primary principals to access.
1778. Accountability is provided by sharing the findings in discussions with governors, children and coordinators,

- and comparing their evaluation with our evaluation and how that is mediated to the employing authorities. We also involve associate assessors, who are practising principals, in our inspection process so that we have a current practitioner involved.
1779. The models that I want to talk to you about are the two- and three-day inspections. The two-day inspection is aligned with smaller schools and lower-risk schools. As John mentioned, this is about district information and a range of information from the Department. We have a range of data to determine the risk-based approach. We also have a three-day model. Regardless of which model is used, it is rigorous and robust, and similar and common procedures are used throughout.
1780. Common to all primary inspections is two weeks' prior notification of an inspection. For the three-day model, there is a pre-inspection visit by the reporting inspector. For the two-day model, there is a phone call to the school to set up the arrangements for the inspection. The key objective of the phone call or the pre-inspection visit is to give the staff ownership of the inspection and to set out a framework and timetable for the various meetings but not the class visits, which are not predetermined. It is about encouraging the school to organise its existing documentation. For primary inspections, we do not expect any additional documentation to be generated.
1781. John talked about the school development plan required under the Department's 2010 regulations. In primary-school inspections, that is the linchpin for the quality of evaluation, the priorities identified by the school, how well the school is delivering on those priorities, how successful the priorities are and how effective the action plans are in promoting improvement in children's learning.
1782. Similar to the post-primary model, during the two- or three-day model of inspection, we observe at first hand the quality of learning and teaching in the classroom. We regard each teacher as a leader in their profession and expect them to use their professional judgement. As John said, they need to know how well the children are learning at the end of one lesson, a series of lessons and each term, so that is incremental.
1783. We discuss with children the quality of their maths, literacy and pastoral care. We talk to groups of children and explore the extent of their knowledge of the statutory primary curriculum. We examine the planning, monitoring and evaluation processes in the school's documents.
1784. We then meet a range of coordinators, and that is when we really get to the heart of where self-evaluation, both the process and the end product, takes place. How did a school arrive at the priorities in its school development plan, what staff development has been worked on, and what has been the effectiveness of that improvement? That is the core issue in self-evaluation: how much difference do you make to the children and their learning? Again, like John, we evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the priorities.
1785. After an inspection, we report under the headings in 'Together Towards Improvement': standards and achievements; quality of provision; and leadership and management. On day two, we report back on the two-day inspection, and, on day five, we come back with a report to the school to discuss our findings with the employing authorities and school staff.
1786. In collecting evidence, we examine only what the school has, which could be a range of data. The board of governors has a self-evaluation pro forma and receives the Department of Education's data pack, which we also have access to. We discuss the findings and how well the staff know and understand the standards in the school. If the school has internal standardised testing and that is made available, we review how well the children are achieving. We use the internal data belonging to the

school in our evaluation as well. We also observe at first hand classroom teaching and learning.

1787. **The Chairperson:** Before we proceed, someone's phone is interfering with the sound recording. I am not guilty; mine is switched off.
1788. Thanks, Heather and John. Faustina, you got off lightly, but we will come back to you in a minute or two.
1789. The recent OECD report stated:
1790. "the setting of strategic or development planning requirements may not be adequate to stimulate an effective self-evaluation culture in all schools".
1791. How has ETI helped schools to embed self-evaluation in light of that comment from OECD?
1792. **Mrs Buick:** I will start off and then hand over to John if he wishes to add anything further. If a school carries out self-evaluation without there being any external checks and balances, there is a danger that it may not be robust enough. A school may have its own view of what is an appropriate standard, but you need that external benchmarking to determine the quality of self-evaluation, and I think that the inspectorate can provide that. We provide, as John described in some detail, checks and balances on the robustness and rigour of the self-evaluation process. Does it really identify what the key priorities are for the school? Is the action planning that is put in place as a result of that appropriate and is it effecting improvement? At the point of inspection, we give detailed feedback on the robustness of the self-evaluation process.
1793. You also met our district inspectors, who play a key role in engaging professionally outside the formal inspection process. If a school feels that it needs some support in undertaking the self-evaluation process, district inspectors provide that support. The ETI's approach is a two-pronged one, through the district inspector work and the feedback at the time of the inspection. Moreover, it devised the whole TTI as a framework

to undertake self-evaluation. It is not compulsory for schools to use the framework, but most schools do.

1794. **The Chairperson:** Is that not more setting out the mechanics of it as opposed to determining that the methodology is right in the first place? We all have varying views on OECD's wide range, but I think that the OECD document is going to be with us for a long time. It is a very strategic piece of work, and we intend to do more work on some of the issues that emanate from it. If you put strategic or development plans in place as a requirement — that ties into the point that John made earlier — the inspector will come along in conjunction with a school development plan, intrinsic to which are achievement, targets, goals and all those things. However, if I have read the OECD document right, what it is saying is that that requirement in the framework:

"may not be adequate to stimulate an effective self-evaluation culture in all schools".

1795. Are we at the point in the process at which there is a culture of self-evaluation embedded in our schools, and not because of the modalities and the way in which it works? Is the methodology right in the first place?
1796. **Mrs Buick:** The statistics that I quoted show that self-evaluation is better developed in primary schools than in post-primary schools. We said that in 55% of post-primary schools self-evaluation was good or better. One of the key points that we must make is that self-evaluation has to be owned by the school. John described it as being bottom-up as well as top-down. We cannot come in and say, "This is how you must do it. These are your priorities". Self-evaluation absolutely has to be owned by the school. John, do you want to add to that?
1797. **Mr J Anderson:** Chair, I completely understand the question that you are asking. We come across it all the time in our discussions with principals about how effectively we can bring external evaluation alongside internal evaluation. There is a Department regulation

- requiring a school development plan. It has been in place since 2010 and has written throughout it the need to evaluate. Schools can be tempted to regard that as something to comply with. It requires them to have copious documentation about all sorts of policies, and quite rightly so. Those are policies that they must have, such as a policy on child protection, to mention just one. However, that ends up with a filing cabinet full of documentation. Schools comply with the requirement, but that in itself does not ensure a process of self-evaluation.
1798. To be effective, self-evaluation at any time can focus only on a small number of priorities. If you have more than two or three priorities, you do not really have any. Therefore, the school at any one time has to consider what its most important priority is, what evidence tells it that that is the most important priority, and what the most effective actions are that it needs to undertake.
1799. How do we support that? That was the second part of your question. For years, we have provided Together Towards Improvement, which is a framework for a process of self-evaluation. We revised it in 2010 to have a version for each phase, as, prior to that, it was a single version. When we relaunched TTI, we ran a summer school on the relaunch. At any opportunity and if we can fit it into our schedules, which is difficult enough to do, we contribute to the staff development offered by organisations on self-evaluation leading to improvement.
1800. I go back to my original point: it is the continued dialogue between the district inspector and the school, not just during the inspection event but over time, that is the most effective contribution that we can make to helping schools think about how good their process of self-evaluation is. Principals will say that they can produce plenty of documentation to comply with the Department's regulation, but that what they notice when we write reports about schools is that we report on how effective their process is, and the two are not the same thing. We place our emphasis on the process.
1801. **The Chairperson:** Is that still the case? The OECD has said that the approach is not adequate and has questioned what else is not adequate.
1802. Let me give you one example. You rightly referred to 'Together Towards Improvement'. The document identifies access to advice on STEM careers as being a quality indicator. Why would it not identify access to the STEM curriculum in primary schools as being a quality indicator? Would that not be more in keeping with giving validity and value to what we are about, rather than giving the perception that it applies to the circular? It then becomes a very process-driven operation rather than something of value and worth to schools and the system.
1803. **Mr J Anderson:** I will say two things on that. I will come to the STEM question in a moment, but I will first address the point about how recently effective self-evaluation has been introduced in schools. It has been the case only since the 2010 circular, which made it very explicit that evaluation has to be an important part of school development planning. It was in previous circulars — I do not want to suggest that it was not — but it was made very explicit in 2010.
1804. School development planning is a three-year cycle, so some schools were still working on school development plans that were developed under the previous regulations. However, to be fair, in the past two years, we have seen the difference between the previous situation, in which not all schools were engaged in proper school development planning, action planning and self-evaluation, to the situation now, in which all schools do it. Our evaluations are about how well schools do it, and that is often what you will find in our reports. That is a fairly recent change, as far as my perception of planning in the post-primary sector is concerned. Heather may have a view on the primary sector.
1805. On the STEM issue, some of our Together Towards Improvement indicators concern curriculum provision.

That is a significant element. One of our quality of provision questions is this:

“How well do the learning experiences, programmes and activities meet the needs of the learners and the wider community?”

1806. One of the questions that we and schools explicitly address through self-evaluation is:

“Does the curriculum offer coherent broadly balanced programmes of learning which provide learners with clear progression opportunities?”

1807. That is broken down into a range of indicators, and, of course, access to the STEM curriculum is part of the observation that we make of schools as well as the effectiveness of careers education in STEM subjects.
1808. It is interesting that you mentioned that issue. Not many years ago, we conducted a survey of the support for careers education in STEM particularly. Over a three-year period, our evaluation of careers education has moved from being effective in around 30% of schools to over 80%. That is because of the existence of the Preparing for Success policy, which is a joint DE and DEL policy; because of the intervention of the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS), which ran a specific project on promoting effective careers education in STEM; and because we inspected it and reported on it in every report of every school. That is an example of leveraging a significant improvement when you bring together an effective policy, effective support and effective inspection.
1809. **The Chairperson:** I am trying to stay within the parameters that I set myself and the Committee earlier by staying on the issue of self-evaluation. That is crucial if we are to get a perspective on the issue. The question that that poses is why there is a huge issue with science in our classrooms, particularly in primary schools. Perhaps Heather can try to give us some indication as to why that is, but, that is certainly the sense that the Committee has following our visit to the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition and based

on recent correspondence from the Department.

1810. This may be a very strong way in which to put it, but it was very regrettable that, at the this year's exhibition, there was not one school from Northern Ireland represented in the primary section. Why was that the case? When we started to make enquiries, we discovered it is because the area of learning known as the World Around Us is very generic, and science as a subject is no longer being progressed and developed. Is that not the sort of thing that should be picked up so that there is a continuum from primary to post-primary? On the very specific issue of teaching science in our classrooms, if the self-evaluation process is the robust mechanism that we are told it is, it should have been picked up as a problem. We have to identify how we can address it in conjunction with the schools and through the curriculum in order not to have a situation in which science is picked up in the post-primary sector, at which stage its interest, value and worth will have been lost to a certain number of our young people.
1811. **Mrs Buick:** Heather will come in with some of the detail about the World Around Us in primary schools, but we are —
1812. **The Chairperson:** Not that we are cynics, but we are glad that we raise these issues, because we know that the ETI has undertaken an evaluation of the World Around Us. We are glad that that we may have prompted that review.
1813. **Mrs Buick:** Chairman, that is one of the very points that I wanted to make. We plan our schedule of work very well in advance, and our study of the World Around Us, specifically in primary schools, was well in place before this inquiry even started. I hate to disappoint you.
1814. **The Chairperson:** Noelle, you have just disappointed our importance. That is a bubble burst.
1815. **Mrs Buick:** At least we are on the same page in absolutely accepting that it is an area that needs further scrutiny.

- As you know, the World Around Us is part of a wider range of subjects that includes history, geography and science. I suppose that I would say that the Department has invested quite a lot of money in training teachers to enable them to deliver STEM subjects and in providing resources to enable the delivery of STEM. I think that there is a strong focus on the STEM agenda.
1816. We are not yet in a position to be able to report on the findings of the review of the World Around Us, as the survey is being undertaken at the moment. However, I am sure that Heather can give you an outline of some of the things that we see in primary schools around the delivery of science.
1817. **Mrs Jackson:** I endorse everything that Noelle has said. The survey is ongoing, and it would be premature to reveal any findings, as we have not got all our evidence together as yet.
1818. With the change in the Northern Ireland curriculum in 2007, science, technology, history and geography were put under the one heading of “the World Around Us”. There is no differentiation in the quality or extent. They are three contributory subjects.
1819. Schools are addressing the issue of entitlement to the curriculum, and, in the survey, we are finding that there is variation in practice. Some of it tends to relate back to staff confidence and development and to access to CASS training in science and technology specifically. Teachers can and do access scholarships and bursaries to the National Science Learning Centre in York, and a STEM officer linked with the Belfast board facilitates a range of courses throughout Northern Ireland to train teachers, as do certain board officers.
1820. **The Chairperson:** I have one final point to raise before I hand over to members.
1821. John, in your post-primary domain, 45% of schools have an evaluation that is not satisfactory. The ETI is saying that self-evaluation is embedded as a process and part of the overall machinery of schools. From your experience, where do you think that our teachers, who are the key drivers in our education delivery, are at personally with the concept of self-evaluation?
1822. **Mr J Anderson:** As you pointed out, we have evaluated that there are more schools that are less than effective at post-primary level than there are at primary level. You are asking whether that is down to teachers’ individual effectiveness in their own reflective practice, and that has to build on how well the GTCNI competences form part of their working day, as they teach lessons and have conversations with their colleagues who teach the same subjects. Therefore, the question has to be this: how well do the GTCNI teaching competences pervade the ongoing staff development processes, including performance review and staff development (PRSD), in schools? I believe that that is an open question. We need to know how much that is the case, and, obviously, we are asking that question because we are not convinced that the staff development processes can inform ongoing PRSD effectively enough.
1823. **The Chairperson:** Should it be mandatory?
1824. **Mr J Anderson:** Should what be mandatory?
1825. **The Chairperson:** Self-evaluation. Although it is in regulation, it is not a statutory requirement.
1826. **Mr J Anderson:** It is there as part of the Department’s regulations. It is also there because it is part of the competences of being a teacher. How well does staff development operate in schools to build that capacity? We have told you how we contribute to it, but we need to ask how effectively it is working in schools through all the staff development operations, including PRSD. Of course, there are limits to our access, because it is related to promotion, and so on.
1827. **Mr Lunn:** Thank you for your presentation. I do not know how I will

- ever stay within the parameters that the Chairman set out.
1828. **The Chairperson:** I did reasonably well.
1829. **Mr Lunn:** Forgive me and pull me up.
1830. It seems like a well-structured system. As an outsider looking in, it certainly appears to be well structured. You can see a pathway through it, and so on. How does it compare with what happens in the rest of the UK? Is the procedure much the same there?
1831. **Mrs Buick:** Do you mean the inspection process or self-evaluation?
1832. **Mr Lunn:** Self-evaluation.
1833. **Mrs Buick:** It is very similar. Self-evaluation has been around in the English system, with which I am familiar, for quite a long time, going back to the 1980s. The process is identical. It is about a school or a provider owning, as John described, the reflective practice in its organisation and determining what the strengths of its work are and what areas it needs to improve. There are certain barriers to self-evaluation. There needs to be a culture of openness, and there has to be a willingness to be absolutely rigorous in your self-assessment of what you do well and what you can improve. You need to be absolutely honest in how you compare yourself against other schools and providers that are providing a similar service in similar circumstances with similar groups of pupils. You have to have good consultation with and ownership by members of your staff. It is not something that is done in an isolated room by one person. You have to have the groups of people that we talked about involved, and you also have to have a really wide evidence base of all the work that you undertake. Unless you have those things in place, you will have a self-evaluation process that is not as effective as it could be, but the process and the impact are very similar.
1834. **Mr Lunn:** Is it a stressful process for teachers and principals?
1835. **Mrs Buick:** Reflecting on how well you are meeting the needs of children and learners in your care and for whom you are providing the best education that you can should be part and parcel of your everyday work as a teacher and principal. I do not think that it is stressful. It is part and parcel of the work that schools do.
1836. **Mr Lunn:** I understand that self-evaluation has to be rigorous in order to have any meaning and to encourage or almost force people to be realistic and revealing about themselves. However, you would not believe how much difference there is between what you have just said and what we hear from teachers, who seem to regard it as extremely stressful in some circumstances.
1837. **Mrs Buick:** The self-evaluation process?
1838. **Mr Lunn:** Yes.
1839. **Mrs Buick:** I am not sure that that is the feedback that we get about self-evaluation.
1840. **Mr J Anderson:** “Stressful” is not the word that I would use. Teachers will say that it is burdensome or time-consuming, because self-evaluation can be made more complicated than it needs to be. We see that occurring, but it is not stressful, because it is not outside teachers’ control. It is their own process. It is not like an inspection, where a visitor gives you an objective, external view, which they may find creates anxiety for a while until they get used to it. However, it is not stressful in that sense.
1841. The point about effective self-evaluation is that, if it is made too complicated, it is less effective. I go right back to the definition of “reflective practice”, which is that the day-to-day work of learning is the business of self-evaluation. You are thinking all the time as a teacher, “How well is my teaching going? Am I achieving what I intended to achieve?”
1842. You then need to take time to talk to your colleagues and be given proper staff development time in school to work

- with them in your subject area or, in the case of primary education, your Key Stage. You then have the opportunity to bring that up at school development level, which is an important task that needs to be done as efficiently and effectively as possible. That is when self-evaluation works well, instead of it becoming a bureaucratic process in the school. However, I would not have recognised it as being stressful.
1843. **Mr Lunn:** You place great stress — sorry, there is that word again — on the starting point of the school development plan. It may have been you, John, who said that three or four priorities would probably be enough in most circumstances. Do you not find that school development plans are broadly similar and that the main priorities would normally be the same, or do you get the odd one where there is a clear difference?
1844. **Mrs Buick:** It should reflect the priorities of the school, and every school is different. They are at different stages on the improvement journey. Their intake of pupils may be different, so it should be owned by and be reflective of the school.
1845. **Mr J Anderson:** I think that the chief has put her finger on it. Schools are at different stages of improvement, so, yes, the priorities do differ. You tend to get themes that are reflective of government priorities, so it not surprising to find aspects of literacy and numeracy occurring, but the aspect will depend on the pupils, teachers and the nature of the practice of teaching and learning in that school. The issue for the school is in identifying the aspect of it.
1846. If teachers agree that they feel that the pupils in their school are less confident verbally and orally in discussion than the teachers think they should be, that may become a priority for one or two years in the school development plan, whereby teachers act in an organised and coherent way through all their subject teaching to try to improve pupils' confidence to speak out in answering questions, to make presentations to one another and to engage in group discussion. When it is done effectively, they will monitor and track their efforts and evaluate at the end of the period whether those efforts to bring about an improvement have made a difference. If it has made a sufficient difference, they may move on to the next issue, which is to extend pupils' writing or their ability to use numbers more effectively outside mathematics, science and technology.
1847. You do tend to get themes, but they will differ according to the school. If the school knows itself well, it will be precise in identifying what it needs to be doing over the next year or two years.
1848. **The Chairperson:** It will be different the next year and the following year.
1849. **Mr J Anderson:** It could be.
1850. **The Chairperson:** Your cohort of pupils passes through your school on a cycle, so the challenges that teachers meet will vary and be different.
1851. **Mr J Anderson:** Yes.
1852. **The Chairperson:** I suppose that the issue is how teachers respond to that, and how the management of the school addresses that, which is perhaps the more important issue.
1853. **Mr Lunn:** You mentioned associate assessors. In simple terms, what is their role in the process?
1854. **Mrs Buick:** In the inspection process?
1855. **Mr Lunn:** In whatever part of the process you care to identify. I just wonder what they do and how seriously their input is regarded in the process.
1856. **Mrs Buick:** I will come to Heather in a moment, but I think that you met the associate assessors. I have not yet heard how that went, but there is no doubt that associate assessors bring the current experience of the sector to inspection. In fact, they are in a very good place to look at self-evaluation because they have been involved in the internal self-evaluation of their own school. When they join the inspection they are also involved in the evaluation

- of the effectiveness of self-evaluation in the school that we are inspecting. They bring great currency to the inspection process and complement the skills of the full-time inspectors who are experienced professional evaluators. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recognised the value of the associate assessors in our inspections complementing the experience of our experienced inspectors, so much so that they put it in the good practice report and in 'Synergies for Better Learning'. They bring a positive contribution to inspection.
1857. **Mrs Jackson:** The associate assessors are in primary schools with us on inspection teams. They go through a rigorous training session of observing lessons, how we conduct an inspection and the quality indicators that we are looking for. They are trained how to evaluate before they go into schools. That is essential. They also have specialisms that we use on inspection. While observing in classes, they will do evaluations and be with us in literacy coordinator interviews. They will be aware of current initiatives, be able to explore aspects with us during a joint interview with a coordinator or a senior leadership team, and they will bring a current view on education to us. We have the overall benchmarking, but they have specific specialisms that they bring to the team.
1858. **Mr Lunn:** I had not heard of associate assessors until a few weeks ago. That is my starting point. I am a complete ignoramus on this matter, but it sounds like a very good system. It is like a lay assessor. It compares with other situations, as long as their input is valued and they have some control or responsibility in the overall outcome. As you said, Noelle, you have not seen the results of last week's discussions yet. You might want to reflect on those when you see them because I do not think that they feel as valued as you seem to value them. I wonder what happens when they disagree with the outcome.
1859. **Mrs Buick:** I will ask Faustina to speak in a moment because she might want to contribute to this. I find that astonishing. As an organisation, I feel that we absolutely value associate assessors. We have 197 of them. We recruited a new tranche in the summer and had more than 200 applications for 80 to 90 places. If we need to reinforce the message to associate assessors that they are highly valued, we will do that. We are meeting them over the next couple of weeks for training with them. I am really surprised by that comment. Faustina, would you like to come in?
1860. **Mrs Faustina Graham (Education and Training Inspectorate):** If that comment has been made, we have to accept it and address it. It is unfortunate if that is the case because it is absolutely not our intention in working with our associate assessors. We stress to associate assessors that they are full members of the inspection team, and they contribute to all the discussions. There are absolutely no discussions that I can think of from which they would be absent. I have to say that internally in our organisation we disagree too. In an inspection team, there will be perspectives around the evidence that you have seen across the three days that you have been there. The purpose of our moderation meeting on a Thursday, in most instances in the schools, is for all the evidence to be collated. In that situation, we each perform a challenge function for one another with regard to the evidence that we have collected. Some discussions can be quite robust, and people will have certain perspectives. However, all that is geared towards reaching, as we see it, an agreed conclusion at the end of an inspection. Certainly, perhaps, people who have been on only a small number of inspections are still growing and developing discipline. When we present evidence, what we have to think about are the arguments and issues that we are dealing with, and there is nothing personal in any of that. That is something that we all develop over time; we appreciate that we are debating issues, not personalities.

- However, we are willing to take on board any comments from the associate assessors that suggest otherwise, and we will do something about them.
1861. **Mr Lunn:** I am nearly finished. We are not talking about an exact science. You will never get unanimity in evaluation and judgement but, hopefully, you can achieve an agreed verdict. All I said was that when you see the responses of the associate assessors you may want to reflect on them. You can take it that I would not have said that had I thought that it was totally in agreement with what you have said. I will leave it at that. Thank you very much.
1862. **The Chairperson:** On that point, Noelle, after this meeting we will forward to you a copy of the informal briefing that was held with the associate assessors, as we have done previously with inspectors. None of the comments is attributable, but they give a sense of what came out of the event.
1863. **Mr Newton:** I thank the delegation for coming along. It is obvious that there is a passion in the group, and that is particularly reflected by some of the comments that John made on self-evaluation. Is it not all a bit woolly at the end of the day when you go into a school and come out with a self-evaluation report that is not set against a common or national standard of self-evaluation?
1864. **Mrs Buick:** I will start off and John can join in. I would never describe inspection as woolly. 'Together Towards Improvement' is the framework that we use for inspection. As it says in the OECD report, it is open and transparent. Everybody can see how we make our evaluations. It promotes a common language so that we are all speaking to it. We have a framework for inspection within which there is a clear structure that John and Heather outlined as to how we undertake inspection activity. We look at data benchmarked against similar schools; we look at a school's internal data; we use first-hand evidence of the teaching and learning and the work in pupils' books; and we talk to co-ordinators, governors and pupils.
- We collect a wide range of evidence. All inspectors are professional evaluators; that is what they do. They are in classrooms every day that a school is open, so they have a clear picture of what are acceptable standards — good as well as above and below good — for making that decision where it is needed. We have a clear framework, a clear structure for how we undertake our inspections, and good, professional inspectors to undertake that work. That gives it a clarity of purpose and understanding. Faustina explained the moderation and quality-assurance processes. The judgement that we come out with at the end of an inspection is a robust one based on solid first-hand evidence.
1865. **Mr J Anderson:** I have nothing to add to that. Sorry; other than, perhaps, exactly as the chief says, on this particular aspect: when a school looks at its performance in public exams against benchmarking, "woolly" is the last word to describe that process. That is only one part of the evidence base; the rest is, as the chief said, part of a professional dialogue with schools by people experienced in schools and in inspection.
1866. **Mr Newton:** The words "inclusiveness", "transparency", "accountability", "rigorous", "robust", "common language" and "systematic" are used, but nobody talks about measurable.
1867. **Mr J Anderson:** Absolutely, we are talking about measurable; effective self-evaluation has measurable success indicators. Where there is a lack of such measurable success indicators, that is where you get self-evaluation that is simply a catalogue of tasks that have to be done and monitoring that simply checks whether those tasks have been done. The reports are long descriptions of what people did without any attempt to evaluate, in a measurable way, what the learning gains were as a result.
1868. What often compounds the weakness of a less effective self-evaluation is that no one is ever clear from the outset what the intended learning

- improvements would be. Let me give you a well-known example: schools will invest thousands of pounds; it used to be on interactive whiteboards and now it is on iPads, and the objective is to purchase iPads. The first question is where the objective is that clarifies what learning improvements would result from using a particular technology tool and the measurable indicators to show how teachers and pupils used that technology tool to raise standards. That would be an effective evaluation; without such measurable indicators it would be ineffective. That is the kind of evaluation that we undertake when we look at whether self-evaluation in a school is good.
1869. **Mr Newton:** The quality indicators in those areas are management and leadership, which has four or five subdivisions; quality of provision of learning, which also has subdivisions; learning experiences and care and guidance, which are all subdivided; and achievements and standards. What is the scoring system?
1870. **Mrs Buick:** I think that you submitted that question to us. There is no scoring system; we do not attach weights and measures to each key question. We assess a school in the round using the five key questions and take into account the context of a school, but we do not attribute a score to each key question and come up with an aggregated average, which was, I think, how some people implied we carried out an inspection.
1871. **Mr Newton:** How would you specifically measure any of those areas?
1872. **Mrs Buick:** Through an evaluative process. I will ask John and Heather to come in on that, as they do that all day, every day. We know that the key factor in young people's success in school is the quality of teaching and learning. We spend a great deal of time on inspection looking at the quality of teaching and learning, and we would expect it to be good or better in order to give pupils the best possible life chances.
1873. We also know that you find the most effective teaching and learning where you have good leadership and management. We focus on the strengths of leadership and management, certainly around self-evaluation and determining priorities for the school, and you would expect that to be reflected in the outcomes for the learners. You would expect those to be good or better if you had good or better teaching and learning and good or better leadership and management. There is an evaluative process: it is a whole school evaluation using the whole of the Together Towards Improvement framework, not just specific aspects of it.
1874. **Mr J Anderson:** There are seven questions that we ask under the heading of leadership and management. I recently gave you an example of how we would evaluate action to promote improvement; that is clear-cut. You can see whether it is effective because a school can tell you that it knows how it has made a difference. That will give you great conviction that it has the capacity to improve through its own internal ability to self-evaluate, plan for and bring about improvement. Another key indicator under that heading is the effectiveness of the strategic leadership. How do we evaluate that? By using questionnaires to get staff views on communication in a school and the effectiveness of its leadership. During the three days, we conduct interviews with post holders, with the principal and the senior leadership team as a group and as individuals, with those in middle management who co-ordinate aspects of the school's provision, and with heads of departments. We ask questions about whether there is a common and understood moral purpose in the school and how well that is articulated by everyone we talk to.
1875. When I talk to a principal and hear that there is a clear understanding of the vision and mission of the school and when I talk to someone who has just recently been appointed as the literacy coordinator and I hear the same messages and the same language, and

- when that is repeated over three days when the members of my team conduct those interviews, that provides a solid evidence base that a school has effective strategic leadership. If those characteristics are missing, that is significant evidence that the school is poorly led with a lack of common purpose or understanding of what it is doing, and with people engaged in the administration of tasks rather than understanding how they can raise standards.
1876. It is in the conversations during inspections, which Faustina mentioned earlier, and on the final day, on the Thursday, when we conduct the final moderation meeting in which the associate assessors are fully engaged as members of the team, that we hammer out our individual views about everything that we have heard and read. That gives us a sound evidence base that we can stand over when we come to report on the Friday, which is the final day.
1877. If a school does not recognise itself in the messages that we are giving it, we have to be clear that we have an evidence base. It may not recognise itself because it has a distorted view of how successful it is and sometimes the messages are not welcome. More often than not, however, a school will agree that it is a recognisable evaluation of the school as one that it knows. Where there are challenges, a school will act on them even if it is not happy, and, over time, it adjusts to the fact that we were giving it an accurate story and that it needs to move forward.
1878. **Mr Newton:** Do you move outside the direct teaching staff to talk to administrative and support staff?
1879. **Mr J Anderson:** We look at how classroom assistants work, and we take account of how, for example, ancillary staff who support teachers, such as science technicians, play a role if it is important or significant, but not the administrative staff or the catering staff.
1880. **Mrs Buick:** Those staff can feed their views in through the staff questionnaire, so we take their views on board.
1881. **Mr J Anderson:** They do, but we do not interview them.
1882. **Mr Newton:** I cannot remember who used the word “culture”, but the culture of a school is very important. If you want the culture of a school to be learning-driven, how can you achieve that if you do not involve all the school staff in the exercise?
1883. **Mrs Buick:** We involve most of the school staff — those who are involved in teaching and learning and who are directly involved in ensuring the best educational outcomes for the young people. We take the views of the support staff through the questionnaires, so they make a valuable contribution to the running of a school. We do not in any way leave them out, but our focus is on the quality of the educational experience for young people.
1884. **Mr J Anderson:** We do not interview office or cleaning staff, for example, but we look to get a sense of how a school saw itself as a whole community.
1885. **Mr Newton:** That is what I am trying to get at.
1886. **Mr J Anderson:** Exactly. For example, when a school undertakes staff development, does it limit that to teaching staff only, or does it involve the science and ICT technicians, the art assistants and the learning support staff who work with children with special needs? When a school sets up its school development plans and identifies its priorities, does it consult only the teaching staff, or does it consult the whole school community and the parents beyond that? Those are questions that we ask to get a sense of a school as a community.
1887. **Mr Newton:** Someone asked earlier about the training and qualifications of those who carry out self-evaluation in a school. Is there a continuous professional development (CPD) programme for those involved in it?
1888. **Mr J Anderson:** It is not uncommon now to find that part of a school's

- development plan contains a staff development plan as well. You asked whether it was similar in every school. One of the things that is quite similar is that many schools now provide staff development to help staff to understand how to make use of exam and assessment data.
1889. **Mr Newton:** Is it measurable? What you mean by “it is not uncommon”?
1890. **Mr J Anderson:** By that I mean, “I am finding more commonly now.” Yes? *[Laughter.]* Let me finish the point; I hope that I can make it clear. Because teachers now realise that there is assessment data available to them on the school’s computer administration systems, staff development priorities in the schools are often — perhaps my colleagues can help me here — focused on helping teachers to understand how they can use assessment data themselves as part of the evidence that they use to decide whether they are being effective in their teaching in a way that will adjust their teaching to be more suitable to the needs of individuals in the class. You asked earlier whether there are common themes, and yes, that would be a common theme.
1891. **Mrs Buick:** If you want to quantify it, 78% of the primary schools that we inspected in the last chief inspector’s report were “good or better”, and so were 65% of post-primaries. That is the kind of activity that we would expect to find in “good or better” schools.
1892. **Mr J Anderson:** The schools heard that through the chief inspector’s report; they read the reports and respond to them.
1893. **Mr Newton:** Would you ever think about benchmarking your process against a system such as Investors in People?
1894. **Mrs Buick:** The Department undertakes an Investors in People assessment, of which we are part, in which our staff development came out incredibly strong. However, we have our own benchmarking activity in that we undertake Customer Service Excellence (CSE), and we have just been through the reassessment of it. That is not unlike Investors in People in format, except that it focuses on our customers. We also have the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) independent survey of those that we inspect, and that enables us to determine the quality of our inspection process. As I said, we are members of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI), which benchmarks our performance. The OECD compared our performance with 32 other countries, and we came out very positively from that. So I think that we do —
1895. **Mr Newton:** I am interested in self-evaluation in a school and whether it is benchmarked against a national standard.
1896. **Mrs Buick:** Do we self-assess? We undertook a self-assessment exercise as part of our corporate plan in March 2013, and we looked at the things that we do well and at those that we need to improve. The things that we need to improve are in our corporate plan; therefore we do undertake self-assessment.
1897. **Mr Sheehan:** John, you said that sometimes reports from schools are descriptive rather than evaluative. Let me labour Robin’s point about training. Are teachers trained to self-evaluate? Who trains them? If they are giving descriptive reports, is something lacking in their training?
1898. **Mr J Anderson:** Yes. I will not repeat what I have said already about our contribution. However, the main source of training for improving schools’ self-evaluation comes from two places: one is the advisory service in each board; the other is the regional training unit, which has officers who work in that area as well. They run courses and provide support, particularly, for example, for those in middle management in school. Part of that process is dealing with improving self-evaluation.
1899. **Mr Sheehan:** Is there correlation between the reports that are lacking in evaluation and poor inspection outcomes?

1900. **Mr J Anderson:** Yes. If a school is not effective in its self-evaluation, that is a reflection on the school. Therefore in an inspection outcome we try to evaluate accurately and reflect on where a school is. We often use the language of an “improvement journey”. Where is a school in its improvement journey? Is it fairly immature, working descriptively and not very evaluatively and not having success measures? Has it become effective, and has it considerable capacity in that area to the point where it can sustain its own improvement without external help? There are schools all along that scale, and those that are less effective need the input from CASS and from the regional training unit. In fact, those that are evaluated as “less than satisfactory” get support through formal intervention in a structured and organised manner.
1901. **Mr Sheehan:** I want to explore the connection between self-evaluation and the external inspection and the sequencing of that. For example, is the district inspector in any way involved in the self-evaluation process? When the external inspectors go in to begin the inspection, is the self-evaluation report the first port of call? Do they look at that first and then carry out their inspection after that?
1902. **Mrs Buick:** I will maybe ask Heather to come in in a moment. If a school feels that it needs some challenge, support and advice around the self-evaluation process, it is part of the role of the district inspector to help it with that. Also, the school development plan, which includes self-evaluation, is absolutely at the centre of the inspection process. As John described, in post-primary schools, the inspection is tailored around the priorities that are identified in the school development plan, so it is a really important part of the inspection process. Heather, is there anything that you want to add?
1903. **Mrs Jackson:** The school development plan is very important in a primary school because it is about pacing development and baselining what the school knows. For example, it could be looking at improvement in reading scores and reading standards. It is about it baselining its staff development. Do they have the capability within the school or do they need to get external support to develop the teachers in teaching reading? Have they tracked the journey of the children? When they do make an amendment or an innovation, is there an incremental development to see whether it is making a difference? Is every member of staff on board?
1904. It is about providing support for those who need additional support, so it is really the step-by-step journey of making improvements in a school, for example, in the teaching of reading. Do they know at the end of term, with two terms a year over three years, that they have made a significant difference to the quality of the learning of those individual children? We have that very important challenge function to say, “This is what you identified as a whole school and agreed in primary school”. It has to be a process of agreement. Then we need to look at whether the terms and conditions as regards a timescale of implementation have been agreed and whether there has been an immediate impact on the learners out of that.
1905. The external evaluation is through a district visit. The district inspector will visit the school by request or they will request a meeting with the school. In that case, there is usually a comparison of the quality of learning and teaching in the classroom. In some cases — it is a more recent innovation — we are doing paired visits with the principal by agreement with the teachers and teachers’ union. They observe and we quality-assure the internal evaluation, be it with the principal or with the coordinator — the literacy coordinator, for example — to see the journey that the school is on and to give indicators regarding further progress.
1906. The school development plan and the use of the district inspector is an organic process. On inspection, we do look at that. That is what the principal talks about at the very beginning of

- an inspection, by saying, for example, “These are our areas for development. We have arrived at these. This is where we are”. We encourage the school, through the school development plan, to benchmark where it is in its journey. We evaluate the quality of learning and teaching throughout the school. We then come back, as John referred to.
1907. **Mr Lunn**, you mentioned stress. Sometimes, a badly planned or badly paced school development plan causes stress internally. It is not caused by the inspectorate doing an inspection. That is where the inspectorate team or the district inspector can intervene to say, “You have too many priorities. The initiative is not being embedded well enough and you need to stop, re-evaluate where you are and address the issue in a more coherent fashion”.
1908. **Mr Sheehan**: Finally, on the issue of principals undertaking classroom observation, TTI suggests that classroom observation should be one of the quality indicators, but PISA 2012 tells us that only 12% of principals were undertaking classroom observation. Do we know why that is?
1909. **Mrs Buick**: I think it is a landscape that needs clarification with the teaching unions. I know that we have some representatives here today. In many schools, we now see staff undertaking lesson observations within the school. Certainly, in a considerable number of schools, we see a lot of peer observation, with staff observing each other and picking up on good practice. However, I think that there is no better way of sharing good practice in a school than to have an open-door policy and enabling all staff — senior staff and teaching staff — to observe each other. That is definitely the way forward in improving the quality of teaching and learning, but there are some landscape issues to be ironed out before that is the case in all schools. We are certainly moving in the right direction.
1910. **Mr Sheehan**: “Landscape” is a euphemism for reluctance to allow that to happen. Is that what you are saying?
1911. **Mrs Buick**: There are some difficulties in some schools around that process, which I think need ironing out.
1912. **Mrs Graham**: With regard to the whole issue — we used the word “culture” earlier — of classroom observation, it is quite a confused landscape in the sense that classroom observation can be used for all sorts of purposes. If you are not completely clear about why you are embarking on classroom observation, it can seem to be only for accountability purposes as opposed to effecting improvement in the work that is happening in the classroom. Some of the work that we are exploring at the moment with the associate assessors is around the whole concept of how to evaluate learning effectively as opposed to seeing teaching as being about a performance or the individual and how someone does particular things.
1913. In conjunction with our associate assessors, what we are trying to explore, and we will be working on this further next week, is how all of us can place the emphasis on evaluation of what is happening in a classroom on the impact on what children actually learn at that point in time. So, it is not about the individual and being good, bad or indifferent; it is about the actions and pedagogy that are used in the classroom and how that impacts on children's learning.
1914. We have been honest enough with our associate assessors to say that we do not have all the answers to those questions. For all of us, it is a joint piece of work to try to remove the idea that, particularly for people in the teaching profession, if you are not perfect, you are awful. That is a culture that we need to change. I can say that having experienced it myself as a teacher. If someone says something that appears to be critical, you can take it personally as opposed to thinking about how it impacts on the quality of learning. As a profession, that is something that we need to move ahead on so that all of us work collaboratively on how we improve children's learning as opposed to focusing on ourselves and whether it

- is some reflection on us that a particular lesson went well or did not go well in that situation.
1915. Our mission statement comes back to being about promoting improvement in the interests of all learners, not promoting self-evaluation. Self-evaluation without improvement is just an action that does not result in anything. I think that the same is true of all of the work that we do. It is more about trying to ensure that there is improvement, first and foremost, than just the evaluation at that particular point in time of where a school is at. So, what we really seek to do is try to point the way forward for schools, rather than simply saying that it is an overall summation or a measurable outcome of where they are at that moment. We absolutely try to do that, but, first and foremost, we want to help schools to improve their provision for young people.
1916. **The Chairperson:** Obviously, this is a key issue. There is 60% of teaching observation in England and 12% in Northern Ireland. Whatever way we try to describe it as “landscape”, the reality for us is that there is a problem and a difference of opinion between staff and the system about how that should all be put in place.
1917. In our packs, members have a copy of an inspection report with the school’s name deleted. I accept that it is from October 2009, so things may have changed. If you sit down and read that report, you see comments, like the one on page 63, under the heading, “Quality of Learning and Teaching”, which state:
- “In the best practice observed there were opportunities for the pupils to engage actively in their learning.”*
- It then stated:
- “However, in almost half of the teaching observed, there was less effective practice. This was characterised by lack of pace and challenge, reflecting the teachers’ low expectations of the pupils, with insufficient focus on the intended outcomes.”*
1918. How do you square that circle with the comment that was then made about
- the questionnaires? There was a whole debate about the questionnaires. Some teachers believe that they just set the teachers up for unfair criticism. The report states:
- “Five support staff completed a confidential questionnaire. A majority of the staff who responded raised concerns relating to aspects of leadership and management and communication within the school.”*
1919. So, where did the problem lie? Did the problem lie with the individual teacher who had, according to the report, low expectations of their pupils and whose teaching was characterised by lack of pace and challenge or did the problem lie with the senior management team of the school, which did not have a process of staff evaluation and communication, leading to the poor outcomes in the classroom? Does that not all go back to the problem of the landscape of the classroom or whatever way you want to describe it? How do we square that circle?
1920. **Mrs Buick:** That report was from 2009.
1921. **The Chairperson:** Yes, it was from 2009; I appreciate that.
1922. **Mrs Buick:** Those were given to you as case studies to show the improvement journey that those schools went on. It is worth looking at. The 2013 report showed that the school absolutely addressed those issues and had improved the quality of provision significantly by the time we had completed at least one follow-up inspection. We identified issues around the quality of teaching and learning, but there were also issues around the direction given by leaders and management on teaching and learning. It shows that the two are not mutually exclusive. To have good teaching and learning, you need to have good leadership from the top, and if you read all the way through to the end, you will see that we ended up with much better education for those young people as a result of the catalyst of the inspection process.
1923. **Mr J Anderson:** The principal changed there, too.

1924. What you are reading in the evaluation of the quality of learning is inconsistency across a school. In other words, there is some very effective teaching but it is not commonplace. There is more ineffective teaching. The question is this: does the leadership know that? It did not, actually, but, if it did, how was it effectively addressing it to raise it through staff development, sharing of practice and showing and telling each other how to teach more effectively? The leadership knew where the effective teaching was, but how was it reducing the inconsistency across the school to raise standards? Another principal came in there and made a significant difference in a very short time because the person who was appointed had insight into the school and was able to have a running start, not a cold start.
1925. **The Chairperson:** Did restructured management arrangements include self-evaluation?
1926. **Mr J Anderson:** Yes. In fact, one of the three areas for improvement identified in that report was to:
- “develop a rigorous school development planning process”*
- We found that it was not rigorous.
- “involving all the staff”*
1927. It was clearly not involving all the staff; it was written by somebody in a corner.
- “which focuses strongly on effective learning and teaching”*
1928. Clearly, people did not know that there was inconsistency in learning and teaching.
- “and incorporates a robust process of self-evaluation and review.”*
1929. In other words, nobody was monitoring and evaluating effectively the inconsistencies of the learning experience as those pupils moved from classroom to classroom and got a good lesson one period and a poor lesson the next. That was the story.
1930. **The Chairperson:** The link surely was that there was an observation in the classroom. That all came about as a result of that process. If that is happening in only 12% of schools, why is this still an ongoing issue?
1931. **Mrs Buick:** We see it —
1932. **The Chairperson:** Not according to PISA in 2012.
1933. **Mrs Buick:** That is just the schools that were part of that PISA survey.
1934. **The Chairperson:** I accept that. It was a sample.
1935. **Mrs Buick:** We need to accept that that was a sample of specific schools.
1936. **The Chairperson:** Have we any idea, Noelle, about the current percentage? I assume — maybe I am wrong — that every inspection has an element of classroom observation.
1937. **Mrs Buick:** Totally, yes.
1938. **The Chairperson:** There is not one that does not have it.
1939. **Mrs Buick:** No. We always observe teaching and learning on inspection. It is one of the key pieces of first-hand evidence. I think that the PISA survey talked about observation in the school, not external observation.
1940. **The Chairperson:** Surely observation within the school, as part of the self-evaluation, is desirable.
1941. **Mrs Buick:** Absolutely. We would expect that.
1942. **The Chairperson:** But that is where there is a problem with the landscape.
1943. **Mrs Buick:** We see it in more than 12% of the schools that have been part of the PISA survey.
1944. **Mr Moutray:** This has probably been covered, but I still do not understand it. At the end of the day, Together Towards Improvement indicates that evidence for the quality indicators should include classroom observation. Whether the figure is 12%, 15% or whatever, it still falls far short of what happens in England, where it is 60%. From your

- response, I am still not clear what the issue is.
1945. **Mrs Buick:** As far as I know, we do not have a quantifiable figure for how often it happens, but we would say that it is definitely a factor of good practice to have observation within the school to carry out self-evaluation.
1946. **Mr J Anderson:** The answer to your question goes back to what Faustina said a short while ago. It is about being clear about the purpose of that observation. Observation occurs for every teacher twice a year through PRSD. The question is about whether that observation is effectively helping to share practice in a way that will improve the consistency that we just described or whether it is done in a rather more mechanistic way that does not.
1947. Beyond PRSD, schools that are effective have built a culture where there is an open door. In those schools, there is an openness to teachers to see each others' practice. There is an openness to show it as well as to tell it to teach other so that they can spread the expertise that exists within the school further and more consistently across the school. That is the area in which further development is required.
1948. In circumstances in which we have worked with schools where improvement has been effective, when the senior teachers have undertaken observation and we have undertaken observation and we have then shared our view of what "good" looks like, we have often found that there is a discrepancy in that the school regards a practice that it has seen as better than we might. By giving an objective view of teaching, we help to lever upwards their expectation of what good teaching looks like. We have seen that in some trails of schools that we have worked with over the last few years that have come out of a formal intervention and become "satisfactory" or even "good".
1949. **Mr Kinahan:** I am very sorry that I was late. One or two other things came up. I have two questions. One of the points brought up with the associate assessors who we had in was that, after an inspection, the most valuable thing is their work with other schools, with another teacher coming to talk to them and helping them learn the ways that they did things. Are we going to put more resources into that so that it is not just self-evaluation at one school by the schools themselves but schools helping each other?
1950. **Mrs Buick:** That is part of the work of the school development service, the setting up of which is in train. As I am sure that you heard from district inspectors, they know where the good practice is because they are also the inspectors who carry out the inspection process. They will often signpost principals and schools to where they have seen good practice.
1951. **Mr Kinahan:** It just seemed an excellent way of doing it. They were concerned that it was being cut back on because of resource issues and yet they found it to be the most valuable.
1952. **Mrs Buick:** We have dissemination events. We have just undertaken one for best practice in literacy and numeracy in post-primary schools, and we have another one coming up shortly. Those events are about practitioners demonstrating their best practice to other practitioners, and they are very well received indeed.
1953. **Mr Kinahan:** My other question follows up on what Stephen was saying. How do you know that all this is going on in schools? I did my little bit of maths at the beginning and found that, if you were to inspect every school, each school would be inspected every 16 years. I got that from the number of school inspections being done in relation to the number of schools that exist.
1954. How do you know that the self-evaluation and training is happening and is fully understood? The TTI document is wonderful, but it is long. Do you know that every school understands everything in it? At the same time, how

do you encourage everyone to take part in it?

1955. **Mrs Buick:** Earlier, I quoted the statistic, based on NISRA feedback that is collected after an inspection, that 90% of schools found TTI to be very useful when carrying out their self-evaluation process. The statistic that you quote is, I think, inaccurate. Through our calculations, we determined that we will have inspected 90% of primary schools and 97% of post-primary schools within seven years. So, we will have been round most of the schools within seven years. Of course, we also have the district inspector activity, which is on top of all that.
1956. **The Chairperson:** Noelle, there are many other things that we would like to stray into, but we will resist, because you will be back with us later in March. In the meantime, thank you for the information that you have provided. John, Heather and Faustina, thank you for your contributions. Faustina got off reasonably lightly.
1957. **Mrs Graham:** I am sure that you will make up for it.
1958. **The Chairperson:** We will make up for it.
1959. We look forward to further engagement on the issue. We will endeavour to bring our report to a conclusion reasonably quickly, because we feel that it is important to give some breathing space to everybody who thinks that, at the minute, we are prying into everything that is going on. However, that is the duty and the role of the Committee. We look forward to working with you in the future.
1960. **Mrs Buick:** Thank you.

5 March 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Chris Hazzard
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Seán Rogers

Witnesses:

Professor John Gardner *University of Stirling*

1961. **The Deputy Chairperson:** You are very welcome to our meeting. We look forward to hearing what you have to say. We are also very grateful for your submission. You have 10 minutes in which to brief the Committee.
1962. **Professor John Gardner (University of Stirling):** Thank you very much for inviting me. It has been a while since I did any direct research on school inspections, but I keep my hand in as far as reading and the general aspects of the field are concerned. I hope that I can contribute something to the deliberations of the Committee, but I leave that to you to decide.
1963. If I may, I will structure my presentation on the terms of reference of the inquiry. I will do that during the 10 minutes and will refer to the terms of reference directly.
1964. The first point of the terms of reference is about the effectiveness of the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) approach to creating or contributing to improvement, and what value is added to schools that are possibly at the lower end of their student attainment profiles. The second point is about identifying key issues that impact on schools like that and any gaps in the kind of provision for them, either through an ETI review process perspective or from the perspective of the Department

and the education and library boards (ELB). The third point relates to the models of good practice elsewhere, and the fourth is about the priorities and actions to improve the ETI and its approach.

1965. I want to start off by saying that, from my perspective, which is more academic and related to the research end and the knowledge of what happens — if you like, the evidence — it is not possible to draw any direct relationship between the inspection process and any improvement in schools. That is a step too far. That is because the improvement and, indeed, the decline of schools are subject to so many influences that picking out one is not appropriate or sensible.
1966. It is clear from what we know and from common sense that, generally speaking, if somebody talks to us about our performance in something, it has the effect of making us reflect on what we are doing. It is then up to us whether we improve or even accept the advice. As far as schools are concerned, I think it is pretty clear that, without this kind of independent, objective and external input, they would have to rely, more or less, on their own devices or on the devices of other provisions that might come from, for example, the education and library boards or some other arm of the Department. That is the first thing.
1967. The other thing is that this particular term of reference relates to low attainment in schools or lower-attaining schools. I want to point out that attainment is not the only objective that should be considered for a school. There is a wider range of objectives. When an inspection team goes into high-performing schools, I would suggest that they will always find room for improvement in other dimensions of what those schools provide. Sometimes the very best attaining schools are very

- limited in other areas of preparing young people for life after school.
1968. On the second issue of schools of lower attainment and the kinds of issues that impact on them, I would suggest that the literature and the experience — perhaps even for us here, and it is certainly my experience and it is more of a public experience and not one that is just in the research literature — show that leadership is a key factor in schools. A school could be attaining at low levels for its pupils or its pupils could be attaining low levels, and sometimes you find that the school up the road with broadly the same kind of catchment is doing much better. That kind of thing makes you question the reasons for one being better than the other. It sometimes comes down to the organisational aspects of the school, the quality of teaching and, very often, the quality of leadership.
1969. Resources is the most bandied of the issues that impact on schools. Very often, the cry that comes directly from principals is that they do not have the resources to deal with the problems that they have. It is very easy to say that, and it may well be true in many cases; we are always constrained by the levels of resources that we have for anything that we do. However, I would suggest that that is less of an issue than being more positive and approaching the problems and challenges by making the best of the resources that are available. Well-endowed schools will often complain about the levels of resources that are available to schools that have lower attainment outputs. That creates a little bit of tension in the system as, obviously, they are managing with a lower unit of resource. Having said that, I do not think that there is any doubt that the unit of resource for schools in low attainment situations is clearly linked to a level of resource. I am not saying that it is not; I am just saying that we can use them better.
1970. One of the resources that I think needs to be looked at — I am a bit of a broken record on this one — is the level of staffing in schools. There is not the space in schools that have those kind of challenges to allow staff to really get together to try to sort out problems internally. The pressure of 9.00 am to 3.30 pm is such that there is no time for reflection, and it is very difficult in the longer term of the year to develop strategic or even tactical responses to the challenges that they have.
1971. The other area in which schools need to improve is community engagement. There are lots of examples of schools doing that really well, but I suggest that it needs to be done on a much more comprehensive basis. When you look at successful schools around the world, you will find that they are well integrated into their communities. Of course, if somebody tries to close a school here for whatever reason, usually because of the number of students it is taking in, you will suddenly get the kind of community reaction that is not there in the more developmental or challenging aspects of the school. It is there only in a crisis. I think that a lot more has to be done to develop that community pressure and community engagement in the day-to-day running of a school.
1972. I think that there is a weakness in some aspects of the inspection process. Certainly, schools perceive that the ETI spends too much time looking at the data on attainment and, somehow or other, making judgements on that. I know from my dealings with the inspectorate that it is much more complex than that, but, very often, the perception is that the inspectorate does not take into account the type of catchment, the level of intake or the performance of pupils at the school. I think that the inspectorate needs to spend a great deal of time convincing schools that it takes a broad view of the attainment profiles. That said, there is the move, and it continues, to use value-added measures, which are seriously flawed and can be seen to be flawed all over the world, particularly in the United States. In the United States, the behaviours that are created in schools by the value-added motif mean that all kinds of students are

dislocated from the main enterprise of the school, which changes to focusing on how we can maintain our resource base from the Government. In the United States, of course, money is withdrawn from schools if they are not performing at a particular level. So, there is a much greater pressure to create that value added and to evidence it. There is a bit of the tail wagging the dog here, in the English context, of value added. If we introduce value added in a significant way, we will have a reaction in respect of school behaviours, which I do not believe would be to the benefit of Northern Ireland. It has to be considered, of course, but it is not a measure that I would place sanctions on a school for, unless it was handled very, very carefully.

1973. The next one is the international perspective. I would like to argue that our inspection process is more or less in tune with what you would expect in the European context. In my paper, I quoted some aspects of it for the Netherlands, Sweden, Scotland, England, Ireland, Austria and the Czech Republic. We do the same thing, more or less. We do it on a cyclical basis, and we visit all schools. We look at whether value for money is being received. The Government are spending this kind of money; are we getting value for it? Primarily, though, we look at whether the schools are doing a good job. All those inspectorates do the same thing. They define what a good school is, and that is a collective thing; it not just the inspectorate saying that. It is society issue. The inspectorates also define the statutory requirements. That is a government issue. Then, the inspection team goes in to see whether, in fact, that is what the schools are doing. They do that through a cycle of visits, some of which are thematic and some of which are to the whole school. Some of them are based on risk. In other words, if a school has been identified as having problems, they will choose that school within the cycle to do those things.

1974. The key issue is the distinction between that kind of audit role and a

developmental role. In Northern Ireland, we have a reputation for emphasising the latter. Sometimes, that swings backwards and forwards with people complaining that the inspectorate is too audit-related, and sometimes you might even get complaints that it is not doing enough auditing and that it is too developmental. My view is that the best thing about an inspection is the kind of feedback it gives, the areas of weakness and strength that it identifies and the notion that expert input from outside helps a school to generate its own process.

1975. With regard to improving the ETI approach, there is no alternative to the ETI concentrating unlimited resources on making sure that its inspectors are sensitive to schools. You can give the best advice in the world, but if you give it in a manner that schools find too authoritative, nasty or whatever it may be, that just kills that benefit. Most of the inspectors who I worked with do not do that, but there are horror stories all the time, so they have to keep working at that.

1976. I do not believe that the whole notion of an announced inspection is of any worth whatsoever. If you were running a cafe at the bottom of the street and the health inspectors told you that they were going to inspect you in three weeks, what does that tell us? Inspections need to be unannounced. That will benefit schools by reducing the stress of preparing for one. It will also give an authentic picture of the experience of students in that school.

1977. Work needs to be done on how feedback is given to parents and pupils. A lot can be done using the social media techniques that are around. That feedback has to be published in plain English and without the codes that have grown up within the institutions, particularly the inspectorate, where words are a little bit devious in what they are trying to convey instead of saying directly that there is a weakness. I mean that there should be more direct, plain English.

1978. When a school is being inspected, the community should know who that inspection team is, what its competence is and what its experience is, and that should be built into the fabric of the process so that the public are confident that there are people going in there who know what they are doing and can give good advice.
1979. Sorry, I probably went over 10 minutes.
1980. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you very much; you were very thorough. I have numerous questions, and I am sure that others have, too. You started with the rather depressing point that there is insufficient evidence to show improvement. You talked about the situation internationally and countries such as the Netherlands and others. Is there anything different that they are doing that shows improvement? There must be different ways of getting a general idea.
1981. **Professor J Gardner:** That was a technical research point that I was making, in that you cannot get the causal relationship. You can get the associations and even the common-sense dimensions, which is that, if somebody goes in and questions a particular activity, that causes people to reflect and, hopefully, improve on it. However, I would rule out the causal relationship between this inspection and this level of improvement. It would be ruled out in any of those countries and it is certainly ruled out here because the teaching could improve, the leadership could change or improve or the parental engagement could improve. There is a myriad of factors that would contribute to improvement, and the inspection could be associated with only the stimulation of that, not doing it. So, it is a technical point.
1982. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you. There is also the issue of resources, which is always raised with us. On the levels of staffing, you talked about the need for space and more time. The one thing we see all the way through all schools is the constant pressure. Part of it is the resources of money. They are very limited regarding whether they can employ new teachers, classroom assistants and others. I get the impression when we go into schools that they are all being squeezed so tightly that resources become the absolute key issue, and it is about trying to get more into them. I am getting mixed messages from you. One is that resources are not key, just pure money, but, at the same time, they do give the flexibility that allows a school —
1983. **Professor J Gardner:** I have to say that Northern Ireland is particular in some of its problems, in the sense that we are doubling up in the school system in many ways. We have two different school systems serving the same population.
1984. I have been a resource manager in my role for a long time. It is never as simple as needing more or better resources. It is about how you use them.
1985. A particular flaw in schooling in the UK is that we do not really have the models that have grown up elsewhere. I am thinking of China or the United States, where the management of a school — its resources, administration and so on — is by one particular type of person and the academic activities are handled by someone from the teaching side of things. There are various names for them, but I have stood in schools in Cuba, where someone from the Communist Party was running the school and the head of the school on the academic side was a teacher, who never saw anything to do with resources. I am not suggesting that that is a good way to do it or a good model, but, around the world, there is a distinction between how the resources are used and brought into a school versus the academic endeavour. If head teachers in Northern Ireland were concentrating solely on the academic improvement of pupils, that would make a considerable difference to the way that some schools are able to perform. There is no magic bullet. I do not think that we could introduce school managers tomorrow. However, I have seen the effect on the university sector, where an academic is the department or school head. Rarely have they any

- competence whatsoever in how to manage resources or budgets. They can learn to do that, but it diverts them from their more obvious activity.
1986. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Wherever we go, the principals and many others seem to be working all the hours of the day, past 3.30 pm, just to manage the scant resources they have so that they can give leadership.
1987. **Professor J Gardner:** Leadership gets squeezed into the weekends somewhere.
1988. **Mrs Dobson:** Thank you for your briefing. You raised the question of whether the process of inspection causes improvement in schools. We certainly know on this Committee that that is a wide topic.
1989. The Deputy Chair touched on my first question, and you went into it in a bit of detail. I was going to ask whether you were aware of the work that has been done in the UK and abroad and of how inspections can directly cause improvements. However, you covered that fairly well.
1990. You said later in your briefing that it is reasonable to argue that inspections can promote reflection and change in teaching approaches and the organisation and management of the school. How, then, in your view, should change be effected following an inspection? What approach should the inspectorate take?
1991. **Professor J Gardner:** Inspectors should follow up on any advice that they give a school through the follow-on inspections that would be normal in most countries. They are risk-based. There is a scale of issues that they have given advice on, some of which will require a fairly immediate return to the school and others will require something that is given more time. The improvement of schools is squarely a school issue. It is the teachers and managers of schools who can do the improving. Nobody else can do the improving. What is needed is some kind of support structure to do that. In bygone days, the education and library boards would have done that in a significant way. I am not entirely clear what resources are open to education and library boards at the moment, but, in bygone days, they would have sent in a team to help with a particular aspect of the curriculum; for example, boys' reading or health and safety. They would have had experts who spanned the community of schools that they oversaw, but I do not think that it is for the inspectorate to do that. The inspectorate has more of a role in being that independent expert voice in advising what needs to be done or mandating it if it is an issue of legislative compliance. How it does it is all about leadership. You take the report, you sit down with your team in a school and you say, "We are the only ones who can fix this. We have got to get on with it".
1992. **Mrs Dobson:** Towards the end of your briefing, you brought up the "What do they know anyway?" attitude of some of the teaching profession towards inspection reports. I was interested when you spoke about the community knowing who the inspectors are. That might alleviate that fear and dread of the inspectorate. What steps do you feel need to be taken to ensure that teachers and parents can understand the recommendations of inspectors? It would take away that fear if they fully understood the recommendations and knew how to take them forward. What do you think can be done from that aspect?
1993. **Professor J Gardner:** It depends on the recommendation. If it is something complex such as poor engagement between different subject areas in a secondary school, that can be quite complex for a parent to understand because it is almost structural or organisational. However, if the laboratories in a secondary school are not up to scratch in respect of resources, upkeep or modernisation, that is something that a parent can understand easily. So, there is a range of things. The inspections rarely get down to that sort of detail. They tend to talk in the generality of where improvements can be made. I

- would argue that it is the plain English dimensions of that, such as, what does it mean when they say something like, "This school has a good familial approach to the treatment of students but is weak on curricular breadth."? Parents are just going to look at that and say, "What does familial mean?" and "What does curricular breadth mean?" It needs to be unpicked much more in plain English so that parents will know that they look after the kids really well, but they are not giving them a good education. I believe that it has to be much more in plain English.
1994. **Mrs Dobson:** Finally, you suggest that the reputation of the inspections is key to how the public interpret reports, and you have gone into quite a lot of detail about that. How do we convey the expertise from inspectors to the public? What is the best way to do that? Is it school-led? The uncertainty is out there. If the public were better informed, and you said that the community know the inspectors, how do we get that detail out there?
1995. **Professor J Gardner:** If I had my way, I would have unannounced inspections, so you could not tell the public beforehand. Afterwards, the report would detail the competence, and I do not mean in great detail but just sufficient to give people the confidence that their school was visited by experts, and they are experts. It is undeniable. The whole process of creating an inspectorate of 60 people, by virtue of that, is bringing in people with expertise and a great deal of experience.
1996. The reporting of the inspection can be improved. It has to go through the schools; I do not think that the inspectors would have the resource, and it would not be wise for them to directly communicate to parents, so it has to go through the schools. It has to be through whatever medium the schools use to communicate with parents, and it should be well set out so that you know who has done the inspection, the competence they have and what they said about you. That is the sort of thing that I would recommend.
1997. **Mr Lunn:** Thank you very much for your presentation. You come from here, so, if I say that you did not miss and hit the wall, you will know what I mean. It was very frank and rightly so. I am interested in your preference for unannounced inspections. Do you mean in all cases?
1998. **Professor J Gardner:** No, not in all cases. You can do a whole-school inspection on a cycle. I was going to say that I would do it differently. It depends on what country you are in and where it is being done, but schools are becoming good at whole-school self-evaluation. In the sector that I am working in all the time, we would prepare a self-evaluation of an area of work in the university, and we would send it out to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The QAA would come along with a team that would look to see if we were actually doing what we said that we were doing in the evaluation. That is an audit-type approach that is about saying, "OK, you say that you are doing this. We will just have a look to see if you are".
1999. In the QAA context, it is very collegial and positive. It is about people from other universities and with other expertise in the sector doing that. Similarly, with schools, I believe that if you have schools providing a report of what they do, you could go along and see how well they are doing it. However, I would keep a cycle of unannounced inspections that is relatively random and risk-based. You would have a random selection of schools to be visited, along with a risk list of those that have to be visited. There is then this third group, which is whole-school or thematic. If we want to know how sport is being done in schools, we will want to dip in, in a systematic way, to how it is going on.
2000. **Mr Lunn:** Is it fair to say that, if a school had not performed particularly well on a pre-planned inspection, the next inspection should perhaps be unannounced?
2001. **Professor J Gardner:** Yes. Definitely.
2002. **Mr Lunn:** We had this in the Public Accounts Committee with nursing

- home inspections, where the cycle had to be announced then unannounced, and that could not be varied. So, any nursing home that had an unannounced inspection knew that the next one was going to be announced. I think that that has changed because it was not regarded as being a good system.
2003. **Professor J Gardner:** Definitely not, yes. The unannounced visit is about getting an authentic picture of the ordinary, day-to-day experience of pupils. It has all the features of an inspection, such as talking to pupils, looking at their work, and talking to teachers, to the principal and, sometimes, to parents in the schoolyard at the end of the day; that kind of thing. However, it has to be unannounced, in my view, if you are going to get a proper picture of it.
2004. I gave a relatively tongue-in-cheek version of one that came out of a London school, but there are always dimensions of that in Northern Ireland schools. I have been in many Northern Ireland schools, and, unlike the inspectors, because I was visiting students, I was not announced. So, it was relatively unannounced, if you know what I mean. The students and people with them would have known. I saw all sorts of things. If Danny decided to go to a local school and just look at the toilets, without mentioning that he was coming, he may find that, in that school as in some other schools — I do not know where you are from, Danny — they do not put any toilet rolls there. That is because the kids push them down the thing and block them. However, toilet rolls would be there if there was an announced inspection. That is the distinction. I know that that is a tongue-in-cheek one, but it makes the point about preparation and getting everything absolutely right — putting the posters up, painting the walls, getting toilet rolls in the toilets and that kind of thing. I know of parents — some of you may have had parents write to you — who said, “Look, I have to get my child to come home at lunchtime to go to the toilet”.
2005. **Mr Lunn:** I remember that, when I was at primary school, some parents would not allow their children to go to the toilets, because the toilets were so gross. I will be in trouble for saying that. *[Laughter.]* A headmaster told us yesterday that he ran his self-evaluation and assessment programme as if the school was to be inspected the next day. Surely, that is a good approach to take.
2006. **Professor J Gardner:** It is an interesting issue, Trevor, because the work that I did back in 1999 had the concept of Trojan Horse, which was about the head teachers and senior management of the school using the prospect of an inspection or, indeed, the announced date of the inspection as the big stick and saying, “We have to change this because look who is coming”, instead of taking an actual leadership role, which would be, “I think that we should change this; let’s all talk about it and do it”. That kind of thing is not unusual. It is not entirely negative, of course, but it is a little bit of a cheat in the way that a school changes its processes.
2007. **Mr Lunn:** We have the associate assessors here, as you will know. What do you think of their role, their input and their value to the process?
2008. **Professor J Gardner:** I think that they are valuable. It is a mechanism for extending the size of the team. I am not entirely sure how well it extends the expertise of the team. That needs to be looked at. Ofsted has used the process for a very long time, and it is part of the deep unhappiness of schools in the Ofsted process that they consider that some people who have come in either have baggage of some kind or another — some kind of vested interest — or do not have the competence that they would have expected HMI, when it existed, to have. As I say, we expect our inspectors to have the competence, the professional expertise and the experience. I am not necessarily sure that the public are confident in associate inspectors, even though most of them are head teachers and things like that. I do not think that the public really understand that role.

2009. **Mr Lunn:** It is fair to say that the associate assessors do not feel sufficiently valued in the process, yet the inspectorate says that it values them very highly, their input is taken on board, and so on. Somebody is wrong. It sounds to me like a good augmentation of the system, if for no other reason than it gives those head teachers — it is normally head teachers — the experience of an inspection, which will be valuable to them when they come back to their own schools.
2010. **Professor J Gardner:** There are lots of positive dimensions to it, but how valuably it is perceived needs to be looked at, because, I think, people see it as just a way to extend the team and not to extend the competence. It is that kind of humbug thing of, “Oh aye, you cannot get enough inspectors so you just get somebody else from somewhere else”.
2011. **Mr Lunn:** You have been fairly direct in your opinions about the inspectorate.
2012. **Professor J Gardner:** I am a fan of inspection.
2013. **Mr Lunn:** The scale that is used for summing up in the inspector’s report goes from excellent to good to satisfactory and adequate and to unsatisfactory and whatever is below that — firing squad maybe. Where would you place the inspectorate if you had to assess it?
2014. **Professor J Gardner:** Personally, I think that it is more than satisfactory. It does not handle its outside perspective well. That may be about resource or about a kind of institutional arrogance through which it thinks that it is top of the tree and does not need to explain who it is. However, in the context in which it works, it does need to explain that. It needs to establish just how important its work is and how expert it is. I would say that applies to all of them in that I do not know of any weaknesses in the inspectorate team. However, it possibly needs to work at its public image. I would say that it is more than satisfactory.
2015. **Mr Lunn:** You would give it a “satisfactory” and a repeat inspection.
2016. **Professor J Gardner:** There are things that it cannot control even if it did want to improve them.
2017. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I am intrigued. Do we focus too much on maths and English in schools in our inspections? Should we be looking at them in a broader way? One or two district inspectors said that we do not seem to inspect on other subjects enough.
2018. **Professor J Gardner:** There are two ways to answer that, Danny. One is that we must focus on maths and English, and the other is the extent to which that kind of focus might preclude other important issues. I think that you are asking whether we do too much of it. In some circumstances, maybe we do, but there is no question in my mind that basic literacy and numeracy are the keystone to any kind of progress in future learning and in engaging in society properly.
2019. I think that the way in which it is engaged with is also problematic. We have had diagnostic tests in Northern Ireland for some time. I have looked in some depth at and reported on them, and they are not good. There has been a change in the past couple of years, which I have not looked at, but the previous types that we had did not do much good. They looked at mathematical and English literacy. I think that they caused confusion in schools. The inspectorate saw that confusion, reported it and, to some extent, used the results to determine the advice that was to be given to schools. That was perhaps done a little bit too much for maths and English in comparison with other aspects in schools.
2020. **Mr Rogers:** You are very welcome. I have enjoyed listening to your comments so far. Going back to your opening comments about the link between school inspections and school improvement, you talked about it being a step too far to link the two. If you had a free hand, what would you do to ensure that there was a positive correlation

- between school inspections by ETI and school improvement?
2021. **Professor J Gardner:** I have to say, Seán, that it is really complex. If a school is inspected and advised that there are serious weaknesses in its mathematics provision and the school then remedies that by providing extra training for teachers, recruiting new teachers or whatever, the extent to which the inspection did that is limited. Inspectors can only say, “Mathematics education is weak for x, y and z reasons, and we think that you need to improve that, so here are some suggestions for how to do it”. If there were a direct correlation between the suggestions that the inspection made, the action taken by the school and an improvement a year or two on, you could start to draw very strong associations between the inspection and the improved outcome. It is all about evidence-gathering.
2022. To some extent, one of my points is that there needs to be much more evidence of the change initiated subsequent to an inspection, so that a more forensic approach can be taken in looking at how the dimensions of the inspection worked their way through to the dimensions of the improved outcome. I think that it is very complex. It is not well done anywhere, because there are so many variables in that. If the way in which, for example, mathematics education was developed was, for very precise reasons, wrong, not appropriate or not successful and a very specific recommendation were made to change certain aspects, and if the school, not the inspectors, then changed those aspects and a follow-up inspection determined that they had been improved, you would have your link. However, it is complex.
2023. **Mr Rogers:** It is complex. You understand the situation here, given that there are just 60 inspectors in Northern Ireland. Taking the maths example further, do you believe that a stronger link between the inspection team and the providers of staff development would help to improve the link between inspection and improvement?
2024. **Professor J Gardner:** There should be a collegial link, with the sharing of experience and issues. A more formal link would, I think, begin to disturb the independence of the inspection and the inspectorate. The factories inspectorate no doubt goes along to gatherings of support associations for factory health and safety and shares its experience, but I suspect that it has to maintain its independence from being part of it or directing any aspect of it. I think that there is an independence issue.
2025. **Mr Rogers:** You mentioned value added in America and said that you would not like to see value added here go the way it has gone in America. Will you elaborate a wee bit on that?
2026. **Professor J Gardner:** The sorts of value-added systems that are around start with a baseline. That baseline could be either the school baseline or some kind of external baseline. In the United States, it might be a state baseline, a federal baseline, or whatever. In England, there are baselines that are related to the school's previous performance, so it is about moving from there to there, and that is the value added. It is difficult, but I will try to explain the complexity of the big problem with that. If you are at one level and want the school to get to another level, there is a lot of opportunity for improvement. If you are at a higher level, there is very little room for improvement, comparatively speaking. Actually, with the amount of improvement that you make, if the value added is in any way related so that the little bit in one school is considered not as good as the big bit in another school, you have a wrong analysis, in my view. You have a situation where one school can improve a lot and the other school cannot improve a lot.
2027. It is a bit like examination marks. If I am already scoring 90, it is very hard to get to 95; but if I am scoring 60, I have a lot of opportunity to get to 90. The value added in that kind of difference is, in essence, still good, but the problem is where the comparisons come in. The value-added systems in the United States, and, to some extent, in England,

- are such that, if you have not improved much, your resources will be limited, but if you have improved a lot, your resource base will be improved. It is that kind of notion of rewarding performance on a rather simplistic basis that is problematic.
2028. **Mr Rogers:** It is probably value added for the school rather than value added for the students.
2029. **Professor J Gardner:** It is the school profile that is generally used. In the United States and in England, there is lots of published work on the games that schools will play to keep particular groups of students out of the value-added calculations. They will be ill or will be sent somewhere. I am not saying that all schools do that by any means — I do not want to impugn schools — but there are games to be played when there are high stakes in relation to resources, and, I am afraid, the nature of those things is that some schools and some leaders in schools will play those games. I would not be able to say what proportion, but there is published work on it.
2030. If you apply that kind of process, it creates a different kind of behaviour, which loses sight of the actual activities of the school, which are to improve learning and to enable every student to reach their full potential. There are actually lots of students who are kept out of that, for whatever reason. Some of them are exempted by lobbying, such as in a school that has a particular proportion of transient students, for example, who might be part of a local army base, or here in Northern Ireland, it might be a Travellers' community. There might be an argument that they cannot count the whole basis of their group for the value added because they are in and out. There are lots of reasons why it is not a particularly good system.
2031. **Mr Lunn:** I want to come in on the discussion of value added. You talked about the 60 level versus the 90. One of the main complaints about the inspectorate here is that, if a school begins an inspection with a baseline of 60 and, the next time that it is inspected, it gets that score up to, say, 70 — which is a big improvement — the school is not acknowledged in the inspection report for having made that improvement because it has not got the score up to 90. That is it put in simple terms. Recently, we heard evidence from a headmaster who was absolutely distraught at those circumstances. The improvement that his school had made over a three-year period had not been acknowledged and the school received an unsatisfactory report. He said that he would have complained had the school been given a satisfactory report, on the basis of what was said to him during the inspection. He was outraged.
2032. **Professor J Gardner:** I understand that. Let me emphasise what I said earlier. This process is all about sensitivity. It is just too easy to dismiss something that is, within the context in which it happens, a very significant thing. That happens because the inspectors might have a view of where it should go to, and — as in the example that you talked about — they do not acknowledge what has been achieved. To me, that is a lack of sensitivity, common sense and a developmental approach to the process.
2033. **Mr Lunn:** Do you see that as a commonplace occurrence?
2034. **Professor J Gardner:** No, I do not. When you read inspection reports, you see a whole balance of things. To some extent, the reports are a little bit too marshmallowy. Instead of going to the issues straight — and, indeed, going to the positive issues straight — the report is all couched in coded language. I think that a principal might say, "You have not said clearly that we have done brilliantly in bringing up the mathematics, the reading of boys" or whatever it might be. Because of that, it is about presentation rather than intent.
2035. **Mr Rogers:** Do you believe that the role of the district inspector is important?
2036. **Professor J Gardner:** I have to say, Seán, that I am not terribly au fait with the present structures. I have been out of

- the system for a few years. The district inspector would, presumably, have charge of a district —
2037. **Mr Rogers:** Yes, a particular area. They would maybe visit schools in that area frequently. They probably have more of a pastoral role. They know the context of the schools.
2038. **Professor J Gardner:** I see. OK. They would call in, have a chat and say, “I will be here next week”. That kind of thing is excellent. It is a way of being more collegial, more advisory and more developmental. It takes out the audit dimension. However, that said, there would, very rarely, be instances of inappropriateness. I am aware of that happening. An inspector might say, “I am here to have a chat about such and such. Do you mind if I just walk over to the football pitches and have a look at the classes?”. That might be because there was a problem with sport facilities in a previous inspection. That kind of thing has created some really incendiary situations with head teachers in the past. A visit is supposed to be a call-in and a chat, but then the inspector might say, “I am just going to pop over. Would you mind?” How could a head teacher say no?
2039. **Mr Hazzard:** John, thank you very much. That was a very thought-provoking presentation. We visited Scotland and were much impressed with Education Scotland. I felt that we were maybe concentrating on trying to marry inspection with improvement. We were trying to change the focus, and we even thought of renaming the inspectorate to reflect that it is more about an improvement process than inspection. I do not want to put words into your mouth, but I get the feeling that you are saying that the two are distinct: there is a need for a competent, professional body of experts to inspect and that is what it is for; an improvement process is something that is linked but different; and we should be careful about trying to marry the two. Am I right in taking you up that way?
2040. **Professor J Gardner:** Broadly, Chris. There are two dimensions: audit and development. Northern Ireland has had a reputation for many years of being on the balance of development. Over the years that I have been involved, when schools have gone into “special measures”, it has always been as a last resort, because processes were trying to address things up to that point.
2041. You need to be careful. You need the independent expert voice, and you need the improvement. That improvement has to be from within the school, and it has to be supported in some way. There are dimensions of that support, some of which include the feedback and developmental advice of the inspectorate, which has come in to look at what is happening and wants to make suggestions about what should happen.
2042. **Mr Hazzard:** Should that body be statutorily independent of the Department?
2043. **Professor J Gardner:** Yes. Maintaining that independence can be tricky. We have seen, over time, the HMI in England basically destroyed by the intervention of Government and a very polarised school inspection process led by Ofsted. That is not to denigrate Ofsted, which does lots of good work, but the fundamental relationship is too close to political whim.
2044. **Mr Hazzard:** That is interesting. Recently, we held Ofsted up in here for being independent, and later that week, the head of Ofsted was sacked by the Secretary of State for Education. That was quite funny.
2045. On community engagement, you made the very important point that too often we see a school being marked for closure and the community then becoming involved. By that stage, it is too late. You mentioned the better use of social media in the inspection process and how the community can be tied in. Are there examples, perhaps internationally, that we could be looking at to see how community engagement works and what types of characteristics

- and dynamics we should be looking to foster in a school?
2046. **Professor J Gardner:** I would not like to pick one out, because fundamentally I would not know them well enough. I am a reader about, rather than a visitor to, those places. We are not all that different. In fact, we have much that could be considered as better: we are smaller, more in tune with our schools and able to develop a programme of inspection that, despite its strains due to what you can manage with a small team, is integral. The inspection process in France is much more robust and distant. The inspection process in Sweden is probably a bit more arm-in-arm, although there is an issue in Sweden about statutory compliance: some things have to be done first and foremost. So, there is that sort of audit inspection to mention there too.
2047. I would not look to anywhere in particular. I would look to the places that do not have inspection: it is worth looking to them. The one exception might be Finland, where schooling is considered to be very good. However, there are many differences in Finnish society that contribute to that. So, my answer is, "I'm not sure."
2048. **Mr Hazzard:** No problem. Thank you very much.
2049. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thanks very much for your masses of points, which are food for thought.
2050. We were touching on diagnostics. Are there any tests in particular that you felt were too diagnostic?
2051. **Professor J Gardner:** I am the wrong person to ask, Danny, as I have no particular faith in the way that diagnostic testing has been done or in the kinds of systems that are available. They have too many commercial interests in them and are based on very dodgy educational principles. Nobody knows a student better than the teacher who has taught them. The more we rely on professional judgement, the better. You reach a ceiling with the objectivity in relation to high stakes, and that is where you have to draw in the objective examination.
2052. On that spectrum, we probably should spend a bit more time trying to augment the professional judgement of teachers, which is very good. If you go into any teacher's class, ask them to rank their students from one to 30, and give the students any test you like, it is most likely that their scores will rank in a similar order to that given by the teacher. So, they do know their children.
2053. They may not be able to articulate it, and you certainly do not want them taking part in the silliness that I have seen over the last number of years where they are sitting down with a parent and saying, "Here's the graph of your child's performance". Awful stuff. You want to create a culture where the professional judgement of a teacher is considered to be good and appropriate for a parent to hear, without all the graphs and numbers.
2054. **The Deputy Chairperson:** John, you have given us a mass of good points to think about. I have learnt more today than I have from many of the other presentations. Thank you very much.
2055. **Professor J Gardner:** Thank you. Some of the things I say are unpopular in schools. There is no magic bullet; it is all about a society improving all the time, never mind schools.
2056. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I understand that. Thank you very much.
2057. **Professor J Gardner:** Thanks very much.

11 March 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Chris Hazzard
 Ms Maeve McLaughlin
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Seán Rogers

Witnesses:

Mr Colm Davis	<i>General Teaching</i>
Dr Carmel Gallagher	<i>Council NI</i>
Mr Bryan Jess	

2058. **The Chairperson:** I welcome to the Committee Dr Carmel Gallagher, the registrar for the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI); Colm Davis, principal of Tor Bank Special School; and Bryan Jess, principal of Carrick Primary School in Lurgan. It is lovely to have you here, and thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to be with us. I also thank you for the immense amount of information that you have supplied to us. It is very much appreciated, as is the professionalism with which it is presented.

2059. Carmel, if you are ready to make your presentation, please begin. Members, I ask you to reserve your questions until the presentation is over.

2060. **Dr Carmel Gallagher (General Teaching Council NI):** Thank you very much, Chairman, and thank you for organising this special meeting. We have tried to meet a few times and are really grateful to the Committee for making this extra time. I am glad of the support from my council colleagues, Bryan and Colm.

2061. As you know, we are the professional body for teachers: we represent 27,000 registered teachers and respond to all kinds of educational consultations on behalf of the profession. We endeavour

in our responses to take a research-informed approach. In our submission, 'Striking the Right Balance', we presented a literature review of available research in response to your terms of reference. However, we had only anecdotal evidence reported at a series of face-to-face meetings with principals about the overall views on the issues highlighted in your inquiry. So we felt that it was incumbent on us to provide a channel for the profession to voice its view on each of the terms of reference.

2062. You may have noted in 'The Guardian' yesterday that Michael Cladingbowl, the director of Ofsted, recently surveyed the profession in England. He has written articles in 'The Guardian' indicating how much he welcomes genuine insights into the issues raised by Ofsted from staff rooms around the country.

2063. The Committee Clerk told me that I would have 15 minutes to present, so I will spend five minutes or so talking about the nature of the survey. I will outline its strengths and, in particular, acknowledge its weaknesses. I will then give you a quick overview of the findings and talk about how the key messages resonate with wider research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the EU and changes going on elsewhere, such as those in Scotland and now England.

2064. The survey used a simple online format using free software called SurveyMonkey, which you may know of. That is the kind of open consultation that happens all the time in education. I stress that it is not a technically designed random sample. Rather, it is a total sample approach — a straw poll — to garner the overall perceptions of the profession. Random samples are usually taken because of a very diverse population, whereas we had a "captive" population, all of whom have similar

- characteristics in that they are teachers, so a random sample was not required.
2065. In response to concerns expressed by the chief inspector and NISRA, we were asked by the Department of Education (DE) to engage with NISRA, which we were happy to do. I will briefly highlight the concerns that NISRA raised, outline how we responded to them and leave it up to the Committee to weigh up the evidence and the extent to which the general outcomes merit attention and resonate with other evidence that you have heard.
2066. We asked for at least one response from every school and got 1,677 responses, which, in education, is phenomenal. As you know, schools are not always the best at responding to surveys. As we received more than one response per school, the sample was judged by NISRA not to represent schools as such but to represent teachers as a whole, of which there are 19,000 in service. So the 1,677 represents only a 9% sample. As you know, a 10% sample is the usual benchmark.
2067. NISRA's view was:
- "Findings (both quantitative and qualitative) are not considered a robust measure of teachers' perceptions".*
2068. However, it acknowledged that it was:
- "Unknown whether they are representative of schools".*
2069. NISRA's critique prompted us to consider whether there was another way of determining the representativeness of our returns: for example, by looking at a clearly identifiable subsample with the same characteristics, i.e. principals. Each school has only one principal, and, as we had 450 returns from principals, that represented approximately 38% of the principal cohort. We looked at the breakdown within that: we had a 37% return from nursery principals, 38% from primary principals, 36% from post-primary and 48% from special schools. So it came out almost as a natural random sample. Principals indicated whether they had been inspected in the past five years. We have 50% representation from principals who said that they were inspected in the past year; 40% representation from those inspected in the previous two years; and 55% representation from those inspected in the two years before that. So, overall, we were able to suggest a 48% return of those inspected in the past five years.
2070. I accept that these are approximate figures, and I accept the challenge that these principals are self-selecting and, therefore, may represent the principals who had the greatest concerns. However, even if you were to assume that all the other 52% were positive about the inspection process, you would recognise that there is a considerable challenge being offered by a fairly robust sample of customers, and we suggest that that merits consideration.
2071. I turn now to the questionnaire design. NISRA also raised concerns about the objectivity of the questions and the extent to which they may have influenced the principals' quantitative and qualitative responses. On slide 5, the questions are listed in two columns to show that for each fairly open and positive question asked there was a balanced alternative. That is a typical approach taken in questionnaires. I will give you three examples. We asked whether the inspection process took appropriate account of school context and intake; and whether the process was perceived to have a certain social bias. We asked whether the inspection process took appropriate account of value added; and was it overly data driven. We asked whether it took appropriate account of a school's own evaluation; and should the school evaluation process be replaced? That was the kind of balance in the questionnaire.
2072. The fairly open questions are in the left-hand column. Of those in the right-hand column, question 15, was taken from your inquiry:
- "The inspection process encourages compliance rather than innovation."*

2073. Ofsted has just recognised that in its report today.
2074. The findings are based on the principals' returns only. Overall, the quantitative data appears generally positive, albeit slightly less positive than in the NISRA survey — NISRA carries out an independent post-inspection survey. In answer to whether the inspection process takes account of self-evaluation, 44% "totally agree" and 33% "partially agree", giving a total of 77%, which is a fairly strong endorsement of the inspection process. In answer to whether the process takes account of a range of practice, 38% say that they "totally agree" and a further 29% "partially agree", which is similar to the NISRA finding. Its survey asked schools whether they were content with the quality of service: 42% "strongly agree" and 37% "agree" — is that a partial or strong agreement? What I am suggesting is that the outcomes are fairly similar.
2075. We need to bear in mind the research into response tendencies, which suggests that, in general, a majority of people give socially desirable responses. They respond in a fairly positive way and have what is called a "yaysaying" tendency, whereas a minority tend to have a "naysaying" tendency. The likelihood is that the truth lies somewhere in the middle. The true perceptions are probably among those who "partially agree" or "partially disagree". Within the profession, there seems to be reasonable endorsement that inspection is acceptable, after a fashion.
2076. However, we then looked at the more challenging perceptions that were reported — these questions may be considered leading, but we view them as fairly open. One question was whether schools considered that the inspection process was overly data driven: 45% totally agreed and 39% partially agreed, so a massive 84% felt that data was very much dominant in the process. Second on the list of challenging perceptions came in answer to a question on whether schools feel that they are held account for factors beyond their control. Question 20 asks whether inspection takes appropriate account of intake and value added. In answer to an earlier question, schools felt that inspection did take account of context. However, when asked specifically whether it takes account of value added, 17% "totally disagree" and 35% "disagree". That is the only time that the questionnaire almost tips over into the negative. That is a fairly robust outcome.
2077. On the previous slide, "Positive Perceptions", the only question that tipped over into the negative was whether the inspection process allows any challenge on the basis of evidence. There is a strong feeling among schools that it does not allow sufficient challenge.
2078. Finally, I turn to the qualitative perceptions. Given that this is a self-selecting sample, we have to admit that the qualitative responses are likely to be more negative, assuming that the 52% who did not respond might have had a more positive view. Therefore, to ensure that we are being entirely sensitive and responsible in reporting this, I want to focus for a moment only on the issues raised by principals who said that they had an "outstanding", a "very good" or a "good" inspection. These are issues raised by people who had a good inspection outcome.
2079. I will read out a few responses, which are in my "positive with some reservations" category. One principal highlighted the:
- "inability of the inspection team to clearly identify teachers that underperformed".*
2080. A big issue for principals is getting feedback on individual teachers. Many ask what is the point of inspection if you do not get detailed feedback on what to do in relation to specific members of staff.
2081. Another principal said that, although the good inspection outcome in many ways concurred with their own self-evaluation,

- “the inspection process could be improved through developing the role of the district inspector.”*
2082. That was followed by the comment:
- “all teachers should receive both oral and written feedback.”*
2083. In another example, a primary school was awarded a “very good” outcome, but its nursery unit was awarded only a “satisfactory” outcome. The principal remarked that the inspectors were “very defensive” and would not take into account the evidence that was highlighted.
2084. You can see that, even among those who considered that they had been treated very well, issues are raised about feedback; better emphasis on the role of the district inspector; and the ability to offer challenge. Some principals asked for advice on next steps, more detailed reports, how the competences could form more objective criteria and how more account could be taken of context and value added. The point I want to stress in response to the challenge to our survey is that even principals with “good” outcomes are raising issues, which I have summarised for you. There is a feeling that there is insufficient support in the system, the process is very stressful, the process is data-driven, there is a lack of consistency across the process, there is insufficient feedback and insufficient opportunity to offer challenge and there is insufficient account taken of context and value added. A number of principals offer alternative approaches, mostly to do with areas such as the role of the district inspector, the critical friend mentoring process, the constructive feedback process and all of that.
2085. Before I move on from the qualitative perceptions, I want to draw to your attention one little bit of evidence that I have put at the very top of the slide. It is the time of day or night that the responses were written. It is notable and may be an indicator of the stress that the profession feels that it is under, that 27% of the responses were written between 5.00 am and 8.00 am, 23% were written during the working day and over 50% were written after midnight. I know my working process and that of my colleagues, and I do not think that that is unusual. The previous time that I reported to the Committee, I said that I thought that there might have been a blip in the computer programme, but we went through this very thoroughly and that is what we came up with. It shows that over 50% of principal colleagues were working after midnight.
2086. Some of what we put forward were considered by some to be leading questions, but those were in fact recommendations emerging from the Scottish and European research. You will see that nothing terribly radical is being said. It is line with many other submissions that you have received, and, as we said, the direction of travel in Scotland. Also, it seems, from recent press coverage, that it is similar to the direction of travel for Ofsted. ‘The Guardian’ reports Mike Cladingbowl saying that high-stakes full inspection limits honest dialogue and innovation and that schools are too cautious in innovating because they fear the inspector imminently walking through the door. He says that Ofsted wants proportionate and regular contact between schools and inspectors, such as that which happens under the district inspector model, and that it wants to foster constructive and expert professional dialogue between an inspectorate and schools in order to give impetus to improvement. He says that Ofsted wants more frequent shorter monitoring visits in order to see schools as they are as opposed to putting on a performance. He suggests that visits be reported only briefly to parents by letter and that, like the inspectorate here, current school leaders and excellent serving practitioners be used more at full inspection.
2087. You can see that our recommendations are not at all out of line with others being made that the inspection should allow teachers, principals and leaders from schools to challenge with evidence, take important account of learning goals

and perhaps give a longer unpublished report to schools that gives the detail that principals are requesting. If there is still to be a published report, it should be very short and concise, as is the case in Scotland. I think that, probably most of all, we are asking for more supportive language. This comes from the EU research in particular, which says that, if the feedback is too critical, the person receiving it cannot hear it. In this case, I wonder whether, if our draft report is seen as being very critical of the inspectorate, there might be difficulty hearing the message there, too. That is why we want to put across a constructive message here today that the feedback that we are giving is coming from people who had a good inspection.

2088. Also, there is a real plea to the Assembly, the Minister and the Department that we need better support. I noted that, two weeks ago, in your very detailed discussions with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) what was said about self-evaluation. You asked some very probing questions, and it was admitted that the self-evaluation culture was really only a current one that was introduced in 2010. It is hardly three years old and has barely gone through a full cycle. As you know, the OECD report was very cleverly written, and the danger is that we believe our own rhetoric that we are a great system with everything in place. However, the OECD said about inspection that it wanted us to develop new indicators in key areas of pupil performance. I am delighted that, just before I came in, I heard the Minister announce that, in assessment, there will be wider indicators of pupil performance. The OECD recommends that we build school self-evaluation capacity. You probed the ETI on the extent to which schools have had any real support in doing that. The OECD also recommends that we:

“only move to a more proportionate ...”

2089. and risk-based

“... approach to inspection once the self-evaluation culture is consolidated”.

2090. Is it consolidated? I think that you were suggesting that it is not. The OECD is saying that we should move to that approach only when there is capacity in schools for that and when the data gathering and analysis framework are established, so we have to build that capacity in schools. One of the OECD's messages is, perhaps, slightly hidden, but listen to the wording:

“a consistent approach to reporting on equity”.

2091. It is really suggesting that there we need a better value-added measure to ensure that we are reporting equitably. Most of all, its message is to involve the profession more fully in the design of key elements of education policy in a way that maximises their buy-in. What we were doing through the survey was involving the profession and allowing it to speak. If we cannot hear what it is saying, that is a very sad reflection. The kind of challenge that we faced to this survey focused very much on whether the quantitative evidence was robust, representative and reliable. That is a valid challenge, but the issue is this: are we hiding behind that and not looking at the qualitative issues, those pages and pages and pages of comments from principals and teachers who are crying out for attention?

2092. In summary, Chairman, you know from John Gardner's presentation last week that there is no evidence that school inspection in itself leads to improvement. It is only one element of a complex array of matters that have to be interdependent. Among those are proper student assessment, proper valued-added teacher appraisal, leadership appraisal and, at the centre of it, school self-evaluation. So our overall message is that inspection is only one part of that process, that we should not overrate its input or its output and that we are in danger of believing our own rhetoric sometimes. We really need to be constantly evolving, as we recognise that the ETI is, towards a more supportive approach. Yes, inspection should offer a challenge, and we are all up for that. We hope that, on this occasion, ETI is

- also up for listening to the challenge. Crucially, the EU is saying that, if we are to bring about any improvement, we must design into the process self-esteem and motivation. If the feedback destroys, you cannot hear it. If it is to take account of the professionalism, self-esteem and future motivation of teachers, it needs to be much more respectful.
2093. **The Deputy Chairperson:** That was a very thorough and credible presentation, and I think that you have summed up, with proof, so much that we have heard from all who have given us evidence, and you have done so in a really good and clear way. I thought that you were being particularly nice and positive when talking about all who partially agree. Had that “partially agree” category been more negative, the picture would be even bleaker. You put the message across very nicely and reflected the same concerns, so thank you very much indeed.
2094. **Dr Gallagher:** I just want to reinforce the point that sometimes the message is uncomfortable, but it is a don’t-shoot-the-messenger issue; it is about trying to represent the genuine voice of the profession and to have it listened to. I do not think that anything terribly radical is being said; if anything, it is all reasonably measured and supportive in bringing out issues that need to be addressed — issues of consistency, criteria, language and support.
2095. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you. I think that you have made that very clear. The information at the back of the pack, which contains all the answers, the extra bits of information and the questions coming back from the principals who replied, is well worth everyone having a good look through.
2096. **Mr Rogers:** Thank you very much for your presentation. I would like one thing clarified. Is there a wee mistake in the data for question 15 under “Challenging Perceptions”? Should it not be 52% in total?
- (The Chairperson [Mr Storey] in the Chair)
2097. **Dr Gallagher:** Apologies; yes, it should be.
2098. **Mr Rogers:** My main question relates to recommendation 7:
- “Should be undertaken primarily by practising principals and teachers.”*
2099. Is that due to the underlying question of questioning the expertise or how long it is since inspectors were in the classroom? There is also the idea of an inspector inspecting senior leadership in a school when he or she was never in that role in a school, and inspecting Irish-medium schools without a working knowledge of the language.
2100. **Dr Gallagher:** It is really noticeable that Ofsted is picking up on those issues also. We know that ETI has moved to involve associate inspectors more and more, and that has to be welcomed. I will turn that question over to my colleagues, who are principals.
2101. **Mr Colm Davis (General Teaching Council NI):** Thank you very much.
2102. **Dr Gallagher:** You have the real knowledge.
2103. **Mr Davis:** Yes, that is one of the things that is very difficult. When you are leading a school, sometimes the waters are very muddied, but your focus is very much on raising standards and achievement in the school. You are looking for someone to come in and use the right constructive language to support you, and you are hoping that it is coming from someone who has been there before, maybe led an outstanding school and can make positive suggestions and steer you in the right direction. We acknowledge that members of the GTCNI have done that in some cases, and we welcome their involvement, but there are others who have not. It is a combination of the teams. When an inspection team is put together, it would be very interesting to look at the balance within that team of those who have been serving heads or in a top position leading change in a school and having a high degree of success and also at whether they were actually within that sector. There could be an argument there about whether they need to be more sector-specific.

Are there variations within the sector? How objective or subjective can they be when they are bringing baggage from another sector that may not particularly apply to that sector? It muddies the waters for the school improvement that is going on in that sector if they do not have an understanding of it. There are quite a number of issues there.

2104. Carmel raised the fact that, in the model that has been suggested — it has even been suggested in England — there should be a lot more peer-to-peer mentoring from our colleagues as part of the process. That could be from a significant other or a school improvement partner — I do not like to use that term; I know that they used it in England where it did not go down so well. If you have a school improvement partner — someone who has been there and has a lot to offer the system, who can come in and mentor, tutor and support you through to raise the improvement, who can understand how the school works and have a feel for that — the credibility of that person, backed up by the other people out there with significant expertise from ETI, the regional training unit and the boards — if the boards still exist — means that those people would be a combination. I think that we all need to get ownership of this and bring it forward together.
2105. **Mr Rogers:** I have a question about data driven versus data informed. Back in my early days as a principal, you had a big red book to fill in *[Inaudible.]* the inspection. Whether somebody questions the reliability of your data or not, the message that we have got from others is that it is very much data driven as opposed to data informed.
2106. **Dr Gallagher:** Yes. One of the issues that comes out subtly from the OECD report is that the quality of data analysis needs to improve. One of the issues that we brought up in ‘Striking the Right Balance’, for example, is that you can have one or two underperforming children who absolutely appear to destroy the whole performance of a school. That is inappropriate data analysis. There can be blips in

performance that are not trends and indicators that, as I said, are completely out of proportion. There has to be a much more sophisticated approach to data analysis. The suggestion is that, if DE has NISRA and all that capacity at its disposal, NISRA analysis should assist the ETI data-analysis process and bring into consideration the finer statistical nuances. As we know, there are lies, damn lies and statistics. You have to be terribly careful about statistical analysis, particularly in respect of the value added.

2107. One of the issues that may come to you from another piece of research that is being done by a primary principal from the Shankill is that there is an inordinate comparison between the overall outcome of an inspection as far as pupil performance is concerned and the leadership. They are almost seen as the same thing; if the performance is bad, the leadership is bad. However, there can be instances, which I know about particularly because I worked on the early years project in the Shankill for many years, in which huge contextual issues are not recognised. One of the contextual issues that we found in the Shankill was that, even when we poured all those resources into the early years to improve children’s engagement with school, by the time they came to the age of 8, the community effect was kicking in again. It is highly distressing to see principals in a community such as that — principals who you have worked with for years — who feel that they are being viewed as inadequate, whereas, in fact, they have been putting in a huge effort.
2108. So, it is data but with a huge pinch of salt. It needs to be properly analysed, and we need to look for substantive trends in data and not inordinate little blips that are caused by one or two children.
2109. **Mr Rogers:** When you talk about taking the data with a pinch of salt, are you really talking about the reliability of the data, particularly the end of key stage data?
2110. **Dr Gallagher:** I have particular views about end of key stage data. First, it

- is such a narrow set of numbers that it tells nobody anything, and that is what our assessment survey verified. Secondly, while teacher assessment is hugely important for teaching and learning and for feedback to parents, once you make it the object of accountability, you are in danger of it becoming distorted and schools pushing the levels up. When you rely only on narrow data, you are likely only to get improvement in those areas, or the semblance of improvement in those areas, while the rest of the system could be going to the dogs.
2111. We have to be very careful about data. That is why we, along with the unions, have issued a discussion paper entitled 'Rising to the Challenge'. It is about rising to the challenge of the OECD report. In that paper, we say that— I think that it is a message for the Committee and the Minister — if you want broader system improvement, you need broader data requirements and Government targets that take into consideration all important learning goals, not just literacy and numeracy. Important though those are, in the 21st century, we need information management, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity and all the thinking skills that we have put into the centre of the curriculum, which are in danger of being sidelined because everyone is paranoid about the narrow data.
2112. **Mr Hazzard:** Thanks, Carmel and guys, for that update. It is very useful, particularly coming on the back of some of the correspondence from the inspectorate. I think that its nose must be put out of joint that more than one man and a dog replied to a consultation. I think that that is good.
2113. You spoke, Carmel, if I took it up right, about the bones of a good improvement service being student assessment, teacher appraisal, school leadership, self-evaluation and an appropriate inspection process. You are not calling for fundamental change; it is about developing what you call motivation and self-esteem. How best can that be done?
2114. **Dr Gallagher:** I put in your pack the conceptual framework from the OECD's 28-country analysis. We are talking about building our system on international best practice, and they are saying just what I said, namely let us be clear about the goals for the system. They are not count, read, succeed. They are about improving the performance of all young people in the 21st century.
2115. We have, of course, to take account of our traditional culture and values, but we need educational policies that really believe in those system goals. Then, as you are suggesting Chris, we need all these things that are complementary. So, what we would be wanting — I am sorry that I do not have the diagram here today — builds on our competence framework, which we are going to revise to be really sharp. The OECD suggested that we revise it into a very sharp working document.
2116. That will then inform school development planning, school self-evaluation, teacher appraisal and PRSD, a performance review that John Anderson and John Gardner were talking about. It informs school leadership appraisal. The data from good value-added assessment are informing all of that. Only when you have all that good data analysis in place can you put in a risk-based assessment process that really looks to the centre and schools' own self-evaluation — a strong, central piece of the conceptual diagram. So, all the bits need to be put in place.
2117. I suppose, with regard to beating up the inspectorate, it is not their fault that they have, to some extent, been hauled in to be held to account for things that they have been doing in response to narrow policies. So, it is about opening our eyes to the fact that the policies have to change in order for the inspectorate to change.
2118. **Mr Bryan Jess (General Teaching Council NI):** I think, Chair, in answer to a couple of questions, it all comes into your probing question at the end. The concern about the inspectors not having taught or managed recently is all to do

- with street credibility. If someone is giving you a hard message, do they have the street credibility to give you that message?
2119. The second phase is whether they can advise you how to improve things. That is the important thing. Any one of you could walk into a classroom and get a picture of whether it is a good classroom or not. To define why it is a good classroom or not requires a bit of knowledge. The increasingly complex social situation in a classroom requires someone to have current knowledge of the issues that children are facing. With regard to the question about inspectors being up to date, many of them can make that judgement not having been in a classroom for a while because they are astute, but some are not. That comes across clearly in the responses.
2120. The concerns that schools have about data is that there is an agenda to get literacy and numeracy outcomes in levels and it takes no account of where children start from. If we have a more sophisticated measurement of how children come into schools and how they improve, teachers will feel that is a fair system. "We started here and, boy, we got to there. We will never get to there with other schools, but we have worked very hard to get to there." Having that acknowledged is the concern about good data driving things along, because some schools will never manage to compete with others.
2121. Again, inspectors take that into account when they talk to teachers. Yet, for some reason, it appears to never come across in many of the inspection reports. What is published in inspection reports but key stage outcomes and the overall phrases "outstanding", "very good", "good" or "unsatisfactory"? That relates very much to the numerical outcomes of a school.
2122. So, those all come together, and, if you can get those things right, teachers will value the critical comments that they have had and the suggestions for where to go forward. Teachers want acknowledgement that data to analyse what the school is like and where the children are going is complex and should be used comprehensively to assess a school on a wide range of things. They want the context of children and schools to be recognised. If we can come up with a model for that, treating education as not simply numbers but a broad thing, it would be beneficial for the country. Teachers want recognition of their hard work. It is about pulling all those questions into some sort of model.
2123. **Mr Hazzard:** I have one final point. I agree entirely with what you said. We got a word of warning, I suppose, last week from Professor John Gardner who said that in places such as America, in the value-added context, schools were penalised if they did not grow in certain areas. He said that, unlike certain data, the value-added section could be manipulated by schools. He said that once it becomes a system of reward — a carrot-and-stick approach based on value-added — it distorts the whole importance of value-added.
2124. **Mr Jess:** Again, what is the point of inspection? Is it to improve the child? Is it to improve the building school? Or is it to improve the Northern Ireland system? If you mix up those measures, you get distortion. If you publish what your children are doing to beat the schools' back, we will improve their scores but that does not mean that we improve their education. If you want to genuinely improve the child's opportunities and to make sure that those who do not do so well get better, can you publish those results against other schools that do not have the same context?
2125. I have to America and seen schools where, down the hallway, they had 50 feet of SATs or standardised test outcomes that show, class by class, who is doing what. If you were to inherit a class near the bottom of the pile, what would that do when, every single day, the teachers and parents see that? What you use assessment for is fundamental. What you want the outcomes to be depends on the point of assessment.

2126. When I read the GTC report, before one of our meetings, I was surprised at how positive it was. We need inspection; professional colleagues want it. However, the manner in which it is done and the use to which it is put are not quite right.
2127. **Mrs Dobson:** I apologise for missing your briefing. You may have touched on answers to some of my questions, but bear with me anyway. It is obvious that there is a general suspicion among principals about inspectors and their reports. Your survey bears that out. You may have answered this already, but how do you feel that that suspicion has built up? Is it historical or is it due to specific actions taken by the ETI over the past years? I note that over 80% of principals support the idea of inspections being undertaken by practising and principal teachers. I also noted your comment, Bryan, about street credibility. What is your opinion on that? Would this be a little too close to self-regulation? Would you, perhaps, like to see inspectors being required to have a requisite number of years teaching practice as a basis for inspections? Will you give me a bit more detail on that?
2128. **Mr Jess:** We welcome many inspectors in the system into our schools, and we have a good relationship with them. Some of the most memorable ones smile and tell you nice stories as they really tell you the truth. You realise that and respect that person, because the profession recognises that there must be an outside arbiter of the system. There is no question over that. It cannot all be just practising friends. We went down that route with PRSD years ago. It has to be an outside body, but perhaps the group that comes to your school would have a bigger representation of practising people.
2129. **Mrs Dobson:** So, it is important, and, as you say, teachers value critical comment.
2130. **Mr Jess:** Absolutely. Professionals are professionals, and they think that the system needs to inspect. From school to school, how can you tell how well you are really doing when you are in your own wee environment for such a long time? As the survey shows, professionals welcome the need for inspection, but there is a question mark over the ability of every inspector to assess a school's context because of their current experience.
2131. **Mrs Dobson:** Your survey concluded that the majority of principals felt that inspections held schools accountable for things that they felt were outside their control. Will you expand on your concerns on that issue?
2132. **Mr Jess:** Those are not my concerns. They are the concerns of the principals who responded. I am not sure. Carmel might have —
2133. **Dr Gallagher:** I think that that really goes back to the question of context that we were talking about. Sometimes, the context is not fully taken account of.
2134. To go back to your previous question, Jo-Anne, about whether this is a historical concern or a specific concern, I think that specific concerns have emerged over the past five years not just in Northern Ireland but probably worldwide. With the introduction of PIRLS, TIMSS, PISA etc, everything has become data-driven. Pasi Sahlberg, whom I am sure you will hear from at some stage and who will give the General Teaching Council lecture this October, to which you will all be invited, was the last chief inspector of Finland. External inspection was done away with there and replaced with a critical friend self-evaluation process, which, I think, is the kind of thing that we are looking for. He calls the whole move over the past decade, and certainly over the past five years, the global educational reform movement (GERM), where politicians want data that make it look as if their system is doing brilliantly, but the fact is that such data only give a small insight. The data that probably work best are the data that show that children are happy at school and love reading and that teachers enjoy their job.

2135. I will indulge in a little bit of female anecdotal evidence, from a beautician and from my sister-in-law who sells clothes in Coleraine, to drive this home. The beautician said, “Dear God, every teacher who comes in here is stressed out of their mind”. My sister-in-law in Coleraine said, “Why are teachers so stressed out?”
2136. **Mrs Dobson:** It should not be that way.
2137. **Dr Gallagher:** It should not be that way. I have been asked by the Castlereagh principals to provide input to them on 20 March. They suggested the title, which is, “Does it really have to be like this?”
2138. I find our report very measured. I have heard that inspectorate colleagues consider it to be horrific. I have said that it is not horrific. It is actually so measured, because it is saying, on the one hand, “Yes, let us have inspection” and, on the other hand, “But please just take account of some of these concerns about criteria, consistency, support and professional trust”.
2139. **Mr Davis:** We are back to the whole issue of needing a big discussion about data and what the data will be used for.
2140. Thanks to the British Council, a few years ago, I went to Estonia. I thought, “What are we going to learn in Estonia?”, but, to be honest, we learnt quite a lot. I probably learnt more in Estonia than anywhere else. That was very much down to the pride in their schools, despite coming out of the backdrop of communism and being taken over by that many countries. They took a very local approach to self-evaluation. They had lifted elements straight from the English system and other systems as well. What they did was to connect all the school targets with the local community targets, so everybody — the youth service, the health service — was accountable. They used self-evaluation and self-measurement with school improvement partners, who are the local principals or local directors. It was very much about getting pride back into the local community by all working together rather than in separate departments. There was an element of accountability linked up there. They had hard data, but there was a lot of soft data as well. The thing that was important to them was getting pride back into the local community and encouraging young people to stay there by creating jobs for them. That was linked in with the schools so positively. The harmony was unbelievable. We need to do a bit more of that here in this small community. Trying to get that into —
2141. **Mrs Dobson:** I apologise; I have to go to the Agriculture Committee at 1.30 pm.
2142. **Dr Gallagher:** I will say just one final thing about data. Some of the data shows that fewer parents and members of the community are signing up to board of governors because of the whole issue of a pressurised culture. If we are going to get the community involved again, we need to focus on the kinds of things that the community cares about, as Colm said.
2143. **Mr Davis:** I have a lot of positive things to say about the inspectorate, particularly as I work in special education. We have tried to run with a district model. There is a district inspector who comes in quite a lot on his way up the road, has a cup of coffee and is invited by me to see a good lesson. The teachers have been open to that, and it has been about celebrating the good things that are going on. From that, the inspector finds out what other good ideas will help me develop things further, and, in doing that, we have built up a relationship.
2144. When the inspection team came into Tor Bank a year and a half ago, I think that four of the five people had a special education background and special education experience. They were all past principals, and that made a difference. It made a difference to the quality of their comments. The type of comments that they were making and the references to other colleagues were things that I could learn from. I could ask them whether they minded sharing the good practice with another school so that I could

- link up with it. Therefore, to me, it was fantastic.
2145. Moreover, the data that you collate in a special school is not under the same pressure as that in the mainstream sector. Unfortunately, a lot of the children in the mainstream sector who have special needs are subjected to the same sort of pressure of having to go down the GCSE route, or whatever, and are then seen to be failures. In our way, we collate and evaluate data that shows the holistic needs for improvement and success at all levels. That works very well for our children. Why can that not be done the same, and have the same credibility, in a mainstream school?
2146. **Mrs Dobson:** You are certainly talking a lot of common sense. I am sorry, but I have to go to the Agriculture Committee meeting now. Thank you very much.
2147. **The Chairperson:** I apologise for having had to step out during your presentation. Unfortunately, I had to deal with a couple of other things.
2148. Carmel, if it should not be like this, why is it so? I do not want to go over a lot of questions that have probably already been asked, but I have come to a point in this inquiry at which I am now seriously raising concerns as to the way in which senior management, whether that be in the Department, the ETI or wherever in the system, seem to be intent on creating circumstances that lead to comments being made like those found in the survey. Take the responses from NIPSA or the unions responsible for representing the inspectors. On the complaints procedure, NIPSA states that its members:
- “have reservations about challenges that become time-consuming and protracted as, not only do they cause great stress to all concerned but they can be extremely time-consuming”.*
2149. We then have this comment from NIPSA, which I still cannot get to the bottom of, and should it be the last thing I do before Noelle Buick leaves here tomorrow, I will get to the bottom of
- it. She now knows, because it will be conveyed to her. It states:
- “Inspectors who conduct the inspection need greater assurances about the finality of their decisions and the fact that evaluations may not be over-turned from anywhere outside of the original inspection team.”*
2150. What is going on? When I bring professionals together, as we have done repeatedly in this Committee, they all say the same thing. They all generally want the same outcomes. However, the OECD report seems now to have become the bible of the Department. I am sure, like the Bible, there will end up being 40 different versions of it before very long, and I do not think that it is the King James version that they are going to use. However, the OECD report even said that you are on the right track with policies but that there are so many problems with practice. We have had another fiasco in the House today over computer-based assessments, and all of that. Why is it going so badly wrong? I cannot put my finger on it.
2151. There are other comments in the NIPSA submission. People know that I am not a cheerleader for the unions, and sometimes we have differences of opinion. However, I must be honest and open about this. NIPSA also said that it was worried about the “importation” — that is the very word that it used — of Ofsted working practices. Can somebody put a finger on it and say, “This is the real reason that it is going wrong”. What really annoyed and worried me is NISRA and the inspectorate commenting on your report and the way in which it was analysed by them. We have seen that from emails. I do not mind that happening if it is expressed thus: “Why did you say this?” and “Our view would be this”. However, when the inspectors have commented in the past, they say, “Fear? We do not recognise that there is any fear or concern out there”. Many principals have replied to the inquiry. Are they telling us something that is not the case? Should we just ignore the report? I know that that is a very long statement rather than a question. However, if it

- should not be like this, in your opinion, why is it so?
2152. **Dr Gallagher:** In my opinion, what is wrong with our system is that we are always trying so hard to do everything. The OECD report recognised that Northern Ireland is a really good little place. I think that it was stunned when it came here, because we have all the elements of good practice present as policy. Our problem is implementation. We do things and try to run before we can walk. We say that things are in place when we have not given them any support. When you were out, Mervyn, we had a whole discussion on self-evaluation and the fact that it is really only in its infancy. However, we expect self-evaluation to be all things to all people, without actually giving principals and senior managers the backup to develop the criteria.
2153. Radical it might be, but one of the best things that we could do is suspend inspections; put all inspectors into the schools that they are concerned about; help the schools develop their self-evaluation processes and data analysis; give the schools areas and targets for inspection; support them for a while; and then inspect them.
2154. I listened to part of John Gardner's evidence last week, but on reading the most recent two sets of reports, you would think that we were in the most perfect system and that everyone is doing wonderfully, when, in fact, they are crying out for help. We have spent the past five or seven years, as you know, running down the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS), making people redundant, leaving no one there to support the schools, and then going in in a manner that appears from the feedback from schools to be fairly heavy-handed and critical.
2155. Let me go back to the psychological thing. If I tell you — Mervyn and the rest of you — that you are inadequate, that your Assembly is inadequate, that you are not doing anything for democracy and that we cannot see any measured outcomes —
2156. **Mr Kinahan:** That never happens.
2157. **Mr Newton:** A fairly common opinion. *[Laughter.]*
2158. **The Chairperson:** If the chief inspector called an election, the public would probably pass that judgement very shortly.
2159. **Dr Gallagher:** You can laugh it off because you have one another for support, and you know that there is a process. For example, you are actually really listening and providing a vehicle for policy change.
2160. I cannot believe the word used. In all my working life, I will never use the word "inadequate" to anyone. I think that it is awful when it is used to describe professionals. Furthermore, in what other profession do you have a process where a team arrives and, in a snapshot, decides on your whole status? I go through the audit process — I have said this to Noelle Buick herself — and in that process, it is specified what will be looked at. All the evidence is looked at. Auditors come in, and, yes, they are pretty thorough, but they then tell you what you have to improve. However, this is a case of sitting in judgement and making snap judgements on the basis of a teacher's performance in a classroom for a short period — perhaps half an hour. Please believe me that I have huge respect for many, many of our inspectors. They are very skilled people. Jo-Anne asked whether inspection has changed. There does seem to be a harder edge to it now, and people feel that they cannot cope with it any longer.
2161. **The Chairperson:** On that point, Carmel, the problem is that the practice has changed. One simple example is that district inspectors are no longer permitted to become part of the inspection team. A district inspector is the person who knows the school best. Would that be interpreted, however, as creating too cosy a house? That is not about meeting the needs of the school but about meeting the needs of the system, and that is where the problem lies.

2162. In this job, I have met many people over the years. On the occasion that we met them, we saw that the district inspectors are a very professional group of people with a genuine interest. They are not interested in cover-ups. They are not interested in trying to paint a picture that is not there. They are genuinely interested in saying, "Here is the need. Here is the way that we can address that need. We are here to help".
2163. Colm, you mentioned the district inspector coming in for a cup of coffee. If the inspectorate finds out who he is, it will probably tell him, "Don't ever be doing that again". It is that attitude that has poisoned the process and poisoned relationships. There is now fear. We need very quickly to find a way of drawing inspections back to where they used to be. Let us be honest: nobody likes inspections. I do not like it when my office is audited. However, I will tell you this: it keeps you on your toes and makes sure that you have everything in place, have everything right, and can open any file and say to anybody, "There you are. I will not interfere in what you are doing in any way".
2164. **Mr Kinahan:** I want to explore the more positive side. In the report, there are 15 responses on alternative approaches. Those are all to do with sharing and working together. Have you other ideas on how you reward good practice and make schools feel good so that they go out and share, and everyone is brought together? That is part of it, and it seems to be what is missing. The whole idea is for there to be rewards and for people to be brought together.
2165. **Dr Gallagher:** Ofsted is now asking questions similar to ours. It is asking principals for suggestions on how inspections should change. That is what should happen here. You have been asking everybody to provide evidence. Why not ask the practitioners to put forward a genuine series of proposals? I reiterate the point that some hard things are being said, but they are realistic and offered in the best possible taste, so to speak. People genuinely want to contribute to improvement. It is about partnership, mentoring, coaching and all the things that Colm and Bryan talked about.
2166. **Mr Davis:** It is about more exchange of good staff and good leaders between schools and secondments to other schools to support and help them. It is sometimes a very isolated role when you are up there.
2167. **Mr Kinahan:** To do that, we need to build in more time. I take my hat off to you for being involved in this today.
2168. **Mr Davis:** It will take a lot of time to build the model. It really will.
2169. **Dr Gallagher:** We had an example recently where the ETI went in with some of their best inspectors on the literacy and numeracy agenda. Why not be radical and let us have the ETI in a support role for a few years, before returning to a different model of inspection? If we are so concerned about the system, why continue to inspect when we could be supporting?
2170. **Mr Jess:** What is your picture of an inspector? Is it of one who is bussed in, drives around the countryside, stays a week and drives out again leaving mayhem, like in the famous novel, 'An Inspector Calls'? That is what we still have: a Victorian model.
2171. We have been moving to self-evaluation. Self-evaluation will be worth the paper that it is written on only when we are allowed to be self-evaluative. Yes, have a small external evaluation of our self-evaluation to make sure that we are doing the right thing.
2172. **The Chairperson:** Bryan, are you confident that, when you identify needs and issues, you will have the resource to address them? There is the nonsense around accessing psychology services, where you can get only two referrals, and all of that. Hundreds, or even thousands, of children are in need, and their needs are not being addressed in a way that we think is appropriate. That applies to not only pupils but staff, because, as with us, they would benefit from more training, advice and

help, because that will ultimately have a huge impact on outcomes for young people and children in the system and in schools.

2173. **Mr Jess:** If you want to have genuine improvement over the longer term, dropping in every five years with two weeks' or one month's notice is no good. It should be regular and frequent. If you work in a bank or shop, you have self-evaluation. You have appraisal going on all the time. Teachers have this notion of being in their wee room and locked away with children for years and years. That has gradually broken down. Principals and managers are in checking all the time.
2174. Teachers are still funny people, in that they are fearful of outsiders coming in. As Colm indicated when talking about his district inspector, regular visits break down that barrier. That makes the whole inspection process more frequent, less threatening and, I suggest, less antagonistic than the current regime seems to be, whereby an inspector can visit a room twice and give no feedback whatsoever to the poor teacher. That is wrong. That is not having the interests of children at heart.
2175. **Mr Hazzard:** I want to remark on that. I think that we are trying to paint a picture here that it would be great if we could have a model in schools based on self-evaluation. I hate the term "light touch", but perhaps there should be a lesser touch from outside. However, is the system ready for that now? I do not think that it is. Perhaps you think that it is. If it is not, what do we need to do to get to the point at which it is ready?
2176. **Mr Jess:** I cannot speak for the whole system. I know our own locality. I would say that the vast majority of schools in our locality would be ready. It does not take long for a single inspector to go into a school and get a picture of what is going well or not. That is not difficult. You can see where a school is doing well. What you do afterwards is the important thing. I think that the light touch will achieve a better outcome in the long term. For goodness' sake, how many years of inspection have we had? Forty years. It has not worked so far. We are actually getting more draconian as time goes on, and it will get worse. Stress levels will go up, and that will not achieve the outcomes that we want. I have no doubt that some schools still need to make a fairly significant turnaround. The self-evaluation process is not yet embedded in those schools yet, so self-evaluation is not in place overall, no.
2177. **Mr Davis:** As you know, self-evaluation is non-statutory at present. As such, people are just embarking on the journey. Each one of us is probably going along at a different rate. Special schools have perhaps always been ahead. Owing to the nature of their children, they have always had a culture of self-evaluation. Being a teacher in a special school is like being a detective: you go into the pupils' world and beat yourself up if they are not learning, so you are always evaluating everything over and over again.
2178. For self-evaluation really to get a grip, it has to be given a level of weighting and credibility that will inspire the school leader to take it on board. Being able to hand the document over to another principal, carry out the self-evaluation process and procedures, and moderate what your standards are is something that we need to build up in small clusters. There perhaps needs to be a light touch from the inspectorate outside a cluster, or from another cluster. Compare clusters, yes, to get a realistic benchmark, but you also have to get the staff to believe in the whole culture of self-evaluation and impress on them that it will be used as a fair means to show progress in the school, celebrate achievement, promote a positive culture, and all those things. Yes, you can do a bit of professional development on that side of it. However, that has to come from within. Schools have to believe that, if it is to be part of an inspection process, it will be a very valuable part of it.
2179. I was able to hand over my document as the inspectors walked in through the door. To be honest, I think that they

- used quite a bit of it for checking out or looking for evidence as they went around the school. The evidence was there, and they thought that the process was a bit hard on some areas. All the staff — 100 people — continually scored those areas and provided evidence from within the school. As such, it was an ongoing process. Not everybody would like that. Not everybody would do it. However, because we drove the culture forward in a very simplistic way, self-evaluation has been very effective. I really believe that the inspectors used what we had done.
2180. Many years ago, I was an associate assessor. I did it for around seven years, although not for the past few years. I was very surprised when I went into a school to find that the information was not organised in such a way that inspectors could find it easily. There was some good practice in that school. However, if it is not to be found — I perhaps found it, but I was only an associate assessor — and, as Carmel said, they are going into the right classrooms but the right documentation cannot be found, that is a bit of a problem. I used to sit there thinking that I had to justify that when I had seen good practice.
2181. My advice to school leaders when I talk to them is to make sure that they have everything nicely colour-coded against the sections in the self-evaluation process. It has to be very clear — the evidence is there — and they should produce more than one folder. People would argue differently on that one. However, because there is more than one inspector, if one inspector walks off with it, nobody else can read it, and if you are there for only two and a half or three and a half days, that will be the snapshot that you get. So, clear advice on what to have ready for them could also be very useful.
2182. We talked earlier about procedural elements. That is also a bit of a downfall for schools. They are understated and do not sell themselves as a result. Some school leaders do not have the confidence to sit and challenge inspectors during the inspection process and may wait until afterwards. They really should have an open and frank discussion at the time. Otherwise, as a school leader, you are left having to address with teachers the issues that the inspectors may have found. You end up having to have a word with them. In other words, the inspectors have not had a word with them; you are left to do that. That is when union action sometimes results. The teacher is not mentioned in the report. This is what other schools are telling us. Having to address those issues starts to create a lot of stress for the school leader. It should have been addressed because the school leader was not in the classroom doing the PRSD observation. The teacher was *[Inaudible.]* Therefore, there are lots of issues, as you know.
2183. **The Chairperson:** Carmel, Bryan and Colm, thank you very much. I think that we could talk for a lot longer. I have no doubt that we will come back to this. Obviously, we meet the inspectorate tomorrow. We will then draw up and finalise the report, after which there will be a debate in the Assembly. The inspectorate has picked up on some of the issues even before we have the report out and is carrying out some work as a result of some comments that have been made. That is valuable and helpful. The inspectorate will dispute that it intended to do that work anyway.
2184. Thank you for the evidence that you have presented to us, which can only be described as credible and compelling. We continue to wish you and your colleagues well. We look forward to working with you in the weeks and months ahead.
2185. **Dr Gallagher:** Thank you, Chairman. On behalf of the profession, I thank the Assembly's Education Committee for shining a light on the issue. It is an uncomfortable one. We are respectful and supportive of many of things that the inspectorate does. I hope that it hears that message but also that, if it offers a challenge, it can take the challenge back and improve in the way in which it wants schools to improve.
2186. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much.

12 March 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mervyn Storey (Chairperson)
 Mr Danny Kinahan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
 Mr Chris Hazzard
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Ms Maeve McLaughlin
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Robin Newton
 Mr Seán Rogers

Witnesses:

Mr John Anderson	<i>Education</i>
Mrs Noelle Buick	<i>and Training</i>
Mrs Faustina Graham	<i>Inspectorate</i>
Mrs Heather Jackson	

2187. **The Chairperson:** Good morning. Thank you again for taking the opportunity and time to see us. Let me say at the outset, Noelle, that we appreciate the information that has been supplied to the Committee over the time that we have been conducting our inquiry.
2188. **Mrs Noelle Buick (Education and Training Inspectorate):** You are welcome.
2189. **The Chairperson:** To date, that information has been profitable and useful. It has generated, I trust, more light than heat. Sometimes, these things can create a bit of heat, but that should not be taken personally in any way. None of it is personal. I would be the last person to take any of that; I would close it down very quickly. The inquiry is a genuine attempt by the Committee to delve into an important part of education provision in Northern Ireland. We seek to be a help, not a hindrance. I trust that we will conduct our proceedings this morning in that spirit.
2190. Noelle, if you could make your opening comments, we will then go to questions.
2191. **Mrs Buick:** If it is OK with you, Chair, I will make some opening comments. I will take about 10 minutes. Is that OK?
2192. **The Chairperson:** Yes.
2193. **Mrs Buick:** Thank you very much.
2194. Let me formally say, “Good morning”, Chair and members of the Committee. On behalf of my colleagues in the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), thank you for this further opportunity to present to you our views on the work of the inspectorate and the school improvement process. We look forward to hearing your recommendations, particularly where the Committee feels that it can add value and can help us to be even better at promoting improvement in the interest of learners. As you know, the Committee has already had two evidence sessions with the ETI so far, so I will confine my comments today to some of the points that I wish to clarify from the evidence that you have already received. As agreed with the Clerk, if there are any additional points to make, we will submit them by 20 March.
2195. Every School a Good School recognises that sustained improvement comes from within a school. Although inspection has an accountability and assurance role, it is primarily about promoting improvement. It is a catalyst for improving the quality of education for our young people, through raising expectations and capacity building. As you will know, promoting improvement is one of the Cabinet Office’s 10 key principles of best practice in inspection.
2196. How does ETI promote improvement? The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study, which was published in December during the time of the inquiry, said three important things. First, there are well-established mechanisms for external school evaluation, that is,

- inspection, but inspection is based on quality assurance and emphasises school improvement. The framework for inspection is supported by international effectiveness research and is published and promoted for school use, which ensures transparency in the criteria that are used. That is a very positive endorsement of ETI's inspection process from a review team of educational experts that included an expert from the Dutch inspectorate and compared our performance with 26 other countries.
2197. ETI identifies practice that is good or better so that it can be shared. It identifies provision that is not good enough and which needs to improve and promotes capacity building, for example, by promoting the effective use of self-evaluation, which leads to improvement, and by involving associate assessors in our work.
2198. The professional dialogue that we have with schools during inspection provides them with a focused improvement agenda. ETI, through the follow-up inspection process, monitors the progress of a school in addressing the issues identified, as well as making an evaluation of whether the improvement has been effective for the benefit of learners. As you know, in formal intervention in schools, that improvement work is supported by the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS). Our reports enable schools to compare themselves with schools in similar circumstances and to consider best practice in similar schools while recognising that each school is unique. In addition to the follow-up inspections, inspectors in their district role visit schools to observe practice directly, look at documentation and outcomes for pupils and build a picture of the strengths and areas for improvement.
2199. Surveys and dissemination of good practice events also highlight effective practice. Last week, we held an event that 230 principals and teachers attended. It included sessions delivered by schools identified through inspection as having best practice in English and mathematics. There are schools that we have identified where practice is not good enough for our children. ETI has a moral and professional duty to report that, and I appreciate that that is sometimes difficult for schools to hear.
2200. You have had evidence from schools in that situation, but I ask the Committee, the public and parents if they would want us to ignore provision that is not good enough and which is not serving our children well. We give difficult messages sensitively in order to improve provision for our young people. The inspectors giving those difficult messages are the self-same district inspectors who are, rightly, held in high regard by many, including the Committee.
2201. ETI's inspection leading to improvement tells us that nearly 70% of organisations improve at the follow-up inspection. Some 81% of respondents to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) post-inspection survey state that the inspection process helped the organisation to plan for and effect improvement in outcomes for learners.
2202. We also know that more than 10,000 pupils have been attending schools that are less than satisfactory and are, or were, in the formal intervention process. Due to schools exiting the formal intervention process, nearly 5,000 pupils are now getting a better education. Inspection has been a catalyst for those improvements, and the life chances for those young people are now much better. That matters to those children and their parents.
2203. ETI has recognised that we need to work in even greater partnership with those whom we inspect. We know that we can have the greatest impact on pupils' learning and achievement when we work successfully with schools, particularly school leaders.
2204. ETI has a long history of being a continuously improving organisation, from sharing inspection criteria from Together Towards Improvement in 2003, which was revised in 2010, to the introduction of the proportionate risk-based model of inspection in 2010,

- and now into our current developments. The current developments, which I will outline, have not been as a result of the inquiry, but, rather, have been in train since 2011.
2205. **The Chairperson:** I am glad for that clarification.
2206. **Mrs Buick:** Since September 2013, we have reduced the notice period to two weeks, taking out some of the anxiety for teachers. On all school inspections, we now engage with teachers immediately after observing a lesson. In primary, we used to wait until the end of the inspection. We feed back the findings of the inspection within a week so that schools are not kept waiting over the weekend.
2207. We now hold most of our moderation meetings in the school, with the intention of, from September 2014, involving the organisation leaders more in our team and moderation meetings so that they are clear about why we have come to our conclusions and to help them to be more effective in effecting improvements.
2208. We have a stronger focus on self-evaluation — that is at the heart of the new post-primary model. We no longer ask schools to fill out a self-evaluation pro forma; we use their own self-evaluation. We have the development of the sustaining improvement one-day inspection, which enables very good and outstanding schools to demonstrate their continued capacity for self-improvement. This year, we are piloting the use of the running record, which is broadly the evidence base for the inspection, with a view to sharing that in more detail with a school. We have revised our inspection reports to be sharper and more accessible.
2209. Last week, we completed training for associate assessors, which had been planned more than a year ago. That was on how we hold discussions with teachers after lesson observations to help them to observe and evaluate aspects of an organisation's work. That will further help them in their own schools and enable them to play a fuller role in inspection.
2210. We are beginning to draft an inspection handbook for each phase. It will bring together the guidance for each phase that we already have in place and develop it further, including the criteria against which we make our evaluations.
2211. We are looking at performance levels and have drafted some of the statements, which are statements rather than one word, as we use now. We have shared those in broad terms with the teaching unions and the associate assessors.
2212. The tenth principle of best practice of inspection is that inspectors should continually learn from experience to become increasingly effective. The developments that I have referred to build on the good practice already in place in ETI. Those are outlined in our corporate plan and are monitored through our operational plan.
2213. We have very good links with inspectorates internationally, through the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI), and with inspectorates in other jurisdictions. We are involved with inspector exchanges in the South, Wales and Scotland. In fact, Heather has just come back from an exchange in Scotland and has confirmed what we already know: that our inspection practices are very similar to those in Scotland and other jurisdictions.
2214. Our work is about improving the lives and life chances of our children. I care passionately that every child has the best possible chance of a good education. We have been accused of showing social bias, but, in fact, there are schools in socially deprived areas that are not good enough. However, we also have examples of schools in exactly the same socio-economic circumstances where the inspection outcomes are good or better.
2215. The context of a school is key. Good schools have their context well documented and verified in their school

- development plan, based on robust self-evaluation. The principal, staff and governors outline the context of the school in their interaction with the inspection team. With the information that ETI already has, we are well informed about the context of the schools that we inspect. ETI uses a broad range of information to inform us about a school's context. We use outcomes, attendance data that is benchmarked with schools in similar circumstances, enrolments and the number of pupils who take free school meals or who have special educational needs. We have inspectors' district information and, at post-primary, we have the levels of pupils on entry. However, it is incumbent on a school to make the context clear. Inspection is not a one-dimensional activity: schools have their part to play too.
2216. A further principle of best practice in inspection is a focus on outcomes. I make no apology for focusing on pupils' outcomes. The target of five A* to C grades, including in English and mathematics, is set by the Executive in the Programme for Government. However, more importantly, outcomes reflect young people's life chances: employers want literate and numerate employees.
2217. In Together Towards Improvement, which we discussed a couple of weeks ago, there are 16 quality indicators on achievements and standards. Only one refers to data, and it is about achieving in line with benchmarking data. Inspectors use data to engage in discussions about where a school can demonstrate added value and how it addresses under- and low achievement. The OECD states that ETI takes information and data from a range of stakeholders and through direct observation. It states that it is those multiple perspectives that help to increase objectivity in evaluation results. School inspections are not determined by data. Inspectors make judgements based on all the evidence available and spend time observing learning and teaching in classrooms, looking at children's work and talking to pupils and teachers.
2218. The Committee has had a great deal of feedback on value added and, I am sure, has taken cognisance of the words of caution from educationalists such as Sir Bob Salisbury, Professor Gardner and the OECD, who say that value-added models must be treated with caution. As described by Professor Gardner, for example, mathematical calculation for value added based on questionable principles can lead to the entrenchment of low expectations and skewed views of schools.
2219. Schools have a responsibility to demonstrate to the inspection team that they add value. Good schools can do that. However, if they do not, how can they say that an inspection did not take it into account? Pupils' progress relative to their starting point is the most important driver of a judgement on the achievement of standards. It can override absolute outcomes where a school demonstrates clearly that pupils are making progress and that a school is adding value to a pupil.
2220. Every inspection report is written after full, frank and robust discussion at the moderation conference, which is conducted immediately at the end of evidence-gathering in a school. As you know, on many inspection teams, there is an associate assessor who brings an important external perspective to the challenge process and complements inspectors' experience. The moderation meeting ensures that all evidence picked up by team members is challenged, moderated and discussed and that findings are collective and secure.
2221. A key element of coming to an overall evaluation is the experience of members of the inspection team, who will have visited many schools and worked in a range of contexts. It is that experience, combined with the wide range of evidence presented by a school, that contributes to the overall judgements of an inspection team. ETI is foremost about promoting improvement in the interest of all learners, not only

- children, pupils and young people, but also teachers, leaders and, not least, ourselves in ETI. That concludes what I wish to say. I look forward to hearing your recommendations. Thank you.
2222. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, Noelle. Are associate assessors paid, or do they just receive expenses?
2223. **Mrs Buick:** We provide substitute cover for a school. We do not pay associate assessors directly, but we do provide substitute cover for the school and expenses.
2224. **The Chairperson:** The handbook, which is more general about inspectors and associate inspectors, talks about the “core values” of “honesty coupled with openness”. Openness is key so that everybody involved is aware of what is required of them, what is being asked of them and the process in which they are involved. As regards correspondence, the written submission from the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) representatives was very worrying. I am sure you have seen the comments. One comment that greatly perturbed me, and I think, other Committee members is that:
- “inspectors need greater assurance about the finality of their decisions and that evaluations may not be overturned from anywhere outside of the original inspection team.”*
2225. I have difficulty in understanding clearly where that is coming from. Who would overturn the evaluations of the inspection team other than those who are involved in inspection?
2226. **Mrs Buick:** Everybody in ETI is involved in inspection; that is the first thing that I would say. We, like any good organisation, have a quality-assurance process to help us to ensure and demonstrate consistency in all our work. Therefore, as I have just discussed, we have a moderation meeting as part of the quality-assurance process. However, there are also checks and balances in the system before and after the moderation meeting so that we have challenge at various levels.
2227. The managing inspector may provide challenge if it is not clearly written in the report why a judgment has been arrived at. The challenge might come from the assistant chief inspector or, indeed, myself, but it is all of us in consultation with the reporting inspector. We state clearly in the feedback to a school that inspection performance levels are provisional, subject to moderation through ETI's quality-assurance processes and not final until the report has been published.
2228. Some stakeholders who submitted evidence to the Committee raised consistency as an issue. The quality-assurance process is about ensuring and demonstrating consistency in the inspection process. There is no external interference in our evaluations from the Department or anyone else. However, we have a quality-assurance system and if we need to use it we will.
2229. **The Chairperson:** So, when they use the phrase “anywhere outside of the original inspection team”, are they not aware of the quality-assurance measures, which include everyone in ETI? Is there a misunderstanding on their part of the process that is used? These are members who represent the district inspector. If they are saying that they have a concern about it being overturned “anywhere outside of the original inspection team”, you would have to conclude that they are not aware of the process of quality assurance and the fact that the report is only an interim one because it has to be handed over by the reporting inspector to ETI at a senior management level to go through checks and balances that can be all verified, and everybody knows what they are, before they end up with a final report. Why would they come to a conclusion that there is somehow outside interference — for want of a better word — in their evaluation and assessment of a school?
2230. **Mrs Buick:** I do not know. That was not shared with me beforehand, so I can only surmise what they mean as you are surmising. However, what I am telling you is that we have a quality-assurance

- process. All of you are involved in aspects of business and work where you would expect to have a quality-assurance process that has checks and balances to ensure consistency. We have that too. That is feedback to people who perhaps feel that we do not have consistency in our judgements. In fact, we have a robust quality-assurance process to ensure consistency.
2231. **The Chairperson:** Could it be that the initial feedback to the school before the final report is given is the practice whereby a school has been made aware of the informal feedback — I think that it has been in some cases — but then, when the final report comes to them, it nowhere near resembles what they had been told in the informal feedback and that leads to a concern that the process is not as open as the handbook desires or everybody says it is? Why would that contradiction be there in the first place?
2232. **Mrs Buick:** I am not aware of any circumstances in which that has happened. In my time as chief inspector, no overall effectiveness grades have been changed through the moderation process. However, we have checks and balances in the system, and they are important to ensure and demonstrate consistency.
2233. **Mr Kinahan:** Noelle, you talked about the moderation meeting. You then sit down and go through your quality assurance. Does anybody ever go back to a school for a second moderation meeting? If you change the direction in which the school feels the report is going, does anyone discuss it with —
2234. **Mrs Buick:** As I demonstrated, that has not happened. We have any quality-assurance conversations with the reporting inspector and, ideally, with the deputy reporting inspector. If there was a change, the reporting inspector would go back to the school, yes.
2235. **The Chairperson:** Why has the working practice become more prevalent now that district inspectors are no longer part of the inspection team? What is the rationale?
2236. **Mrs Buick:** That is not factually accurate.
2237. **The Chairperson:** In the discussions that we have had — other members can confirm this so that I am not putting a spin on it — we were told that the practice now — not in the past — is more often that the district inspector is not part of an inspection team. Is that case or not?
2238. **Mrs Buick:** I will clarify the position regarding the district inspector. The district inspector is no longer the reporting inspector, and we had been moving towards that situation over the past year. We did that because best international practice says that we should be able to demonstrate objectivity. It leaves it clear for the district inspector to have those challenging but supportive conversations with the school to provide advice if that is required. Then, when a school is inspected, that person is not the reporting inspector essentially coming back to inspect their own support, advice and challenge. That is the only change. Ideally, I would like the district inspector to be part of an inspection team. That is our rationale. We have had a lot of feedback from inspectors, some of it justified, about the equity of workload. If you insist that the district inspector be the reporting inspector, your workload is dependent on the number of inspections being carried out in your district. We have had to take that into account. Furthermore, if the district inspector is the reporting inspector for all the schools in a district, that means that the inspection outcomes are attributed to one individual and not to the corporate ETI. Those are the reasons for the changes. The district inspector will be a member of the inspection team where that is possible, but it is not always possible if we are to balance that with equity of workload and other priorities in the inspection schedule.
2239. **The Chairperson:** There is a difference, Noelle, between being the reporting inspector and being part of the inspection team.

2240. **Mrs Buick:** There is no issue with the district inspector being part of an inspection team. In fact, my preference is that they are. It is not always feasible when you balance all the competing priorities.
2241. **The Chairperson:** What is the main reason for that change over the past year? Is it objectivity or equity of workload?
2242. **Mrs Buick:** It is a combination of both.
2243. **The Chairperson:** If it is a combination, are you then saying that district inspectors have not been objective and are not capable of being objective? I have met a large number of district inspectors, and I find them to be people of the highest integrity who have a genuine interest in ensuring that there is no whitewash, cover-up or cosy relationship between them and their school. They are there to do a professional job. I feel that we have done a disservice to the system by creating a distance between the district inspector, the inspection process and the schools for which they have, for want of a better term, a pastoral care responsibility.
2244. **Mrs Buick:** I am sure that you will agree that we need to be able to demonstrate objectivity, and even the perception that we go back to inspect our own challenge, support and advice would not stand up to scrutiny in other aspects of the scrutiny of our work. It is important that we demonstrate objectivity. That is fundamental. However, I absolutely agree that having the district inspector on the team is the best practice principle that we could subscribe to, but there are issues around equity of workload. We said that we would review the position at the end of this year, and inspectors will probably have to make a decision on what is more important: the district inspector being the reporting inspector or the equity of workload. For me, there is a corporate responsibility for ensuring that the inspection outcomes in a particular district are not attached to one individual but to the corporate
- ETI. I feel that that fundamental issue is important.
2245. **Mr Rogers:** I have to agree with the comments about the district inspector. Noelle, you said that you will have to make a decision at the end of this year. You talked about the context, which is so important with documentation. We spoke to district inspectors, and surely a district inspector is the best source of context. You said that inspectors will make the decision, but will it not be senior management in the inspectorate who will make the decision? We are told that they have only three or four days in each term for district inspector work and that they physically cannot do it. If we are to take a holistic picture of a school, should it not be a priority that school inspectors have time to do their district inspectorate role as well?
2246. **Mrs Buick:** As with all organisations, we have competing priorities. On the one hand, we have parents' groups saying that we do not carry out enough inspections, and, on the other hand, we have to manage the amount of time that we can give to our district inspector work. It is always about balancing reducing resources. The review of the role of the district inspector will be a joint conversation, but, ultimately, senior managers and I, as chief inspector, will make that decision. I come back to the point that it is important that we are able to demonstrate objectivity.
2247. We have also worked very hard to ensure equity of the time allocated to district inspector work, and I think that we gave a submission to you about how the work is allocated to the district inspector role. On balance, about 14% of our inspection days are allocated to district work. In previous years, interim follow-up inspections and follow-up inspections were part of the district inspector's work. We have taken those out now and put them into the centrally scheduled programme of activity. If you were to take that into account, the work that district inspectors are involved in, including interim follow-up inspections and follow-up inspections, is about 21% of our inspection days. That is quite

- considerable. Ideally, we would like to give more time to that, but that is the reality of the budget envelope that we are dealing with.
2248. On making provision for district inspectors not being the reporting inspectors, we now have pre-inspection days allocated so that they have an opportunity to understand the context of a school and to visit it, if that is possible, to find out more about the school before the inspection starts. We also have a robust internal management system so that, when a district inspector visits a school, he or she completes a management and recording information system (MARS) report. You will have heard of our management information system, and MARS reports and the details of those visits are available to the reporting inspector. We have opportunities in place for reporting inspectors to familiarise themselves with the context of the schools. Also, Northern Ireland is not a very big place, and we are not a very big organisation. We have a lot of conversations internally about the schools, so a lot of intelligence is available to the reporting inspector.
2249. **Mr Rogers:** I want to clarify one point. Do district inspectors have the equivalent of three or four days a term to carry out their district inspector role? I absolutely do not question at all what you say about the district inspector not being the reporting inspector.
2250. **Mrs Buick:** That is probably about right. Our submission states that 10 days a year are allocated for each district for which a district inspector is responsible, but it may be that he or she is a district inspector for a number of different types of schools. He or she might be a district inspector for special schools and post-primary schools, and, in that case, he or she would get 20 days. If district inspectors are involved in leading a subject area, as the principal inspectors of maths and English are, they get 10 days to carry out that work. Specialist inspectors get five days to carry out that work, which is also incorporated into the district inspector time, because that is where they carry out that activity. That is how we allocate the time. Our submission will give you chapter and verse on that.
2251. **Mr Hazzard:** Thank you, Noelle, for your presentation. You have probably read in various Hansard reports of our meetings that we have had some interesting discussions around the role of the ETI — the foresight, the plans, whether an inspection is an audit or about school improvement. No doubt you have read Professor Gardner's words from last week about marrying the two ideas. What do you think the balance should be? We have looked at various models that not so much about an individual school setting but the wider education system. In your opinion, where is the balance, and what would be the best use of your resources? We are very heavy here on inspecting local schools in individual school settings but not so much the wider system as a whole.
2252. **Mrs Buick:** Our mission is promoting improvement in the interests of learners. Therefore, we absolutely see our role as doing exactly that: promoting improvement. However, there is no doubt that we also have an accountability role. The chief inspector's report gives a state-of-the-nation view about how the education system is performing, and we are due to have another report this October. We also have an assurance role, demonstrating to parents that their children are getting a good education. Therefore, we have accountability and an assurance role, but I see our prime role as promoting improvement through the inspection process. As I described, we identify where there are strengths and good practice so that that can be shared. We identify areas for improvement so that improvements can be made. In addition, through what I think is a highly regarded process, we have our follow-up process whereby inspectors carry out interim follow-up inspection visits to check that progress is being made on those improvements, and we have a follow-up inspection to confirm whether those improvements have been effected. That

sequence of events — from identifying the areas for improvement through to checking that they have been effected — demonstrates that promoting improvement is fundamentally what we are all about.

2253. **Mrs Faustina Graham (Education and Training Inspectorate):** That raises a very interesting question that is worth considering. You visited Scotland, and Heather has been to Scotland. Obviously, it has a very different approach to sampling the education system. Everything is of its time. In 2010, we agreed, with the approval of the DE board, that we would introduce proportionate risk-based inspection, which was designed to address the inspection of each individual institution and ensure that that was done over a significant time.
2254. We are commissioned by the three Departments: DE, DCAL and DEL. DE commissions 70% of our time, and that commissioning process has asked us to look at and to spend a significant amount of time on individual institution inspection. About 10% to 15% of the time is flexible for us to use and allocate as we see fit, and that is where we would undertake our thematic inspections. In the past, we also looked at area-based inspections. There was a point at which we were doing so much thematic work that we were not getting the same concentration on schools, which was why we introduced the proportionate risk-based strategy. That does not mean that there is not always a better way of balancing the two. As we become more sophisticated in our processes and planning, we would like to think that we would continue to achieve that better balance. There are arguments for both, and we are in a situation in which the requirement on us is to carry out individual organisation inspections. That is not to say that we are not trialling other approaches to see their benefits. However, it is difficult to change that focus entirely unless it is a system-wide decision, in the sense that that would come from the Department and the Minister. We are open to any

of those options. However, at the same time, we are right in the middle of a particular strategy. Therefore, it would be difficult to change it without losing as much as you would gain at this time.

2255. We are covering individual organisations this year; Noelle referred to that. We are going back to schools that were inspected during the past three years in which the provision was outstanding or very good. We trialled that last year with a small number of primary schools, and it was highly successful to look at how our schools are sustaining that improvement and giving them that endorsement so they do not have to wait seven years for someone to tell them that they are still doing an outstanding job. We are going to involve our associate assessors in that process so that they can go back to schools that they visited previously to see how things have changed in the interim or how outstanding practice continues to get even better.
2256. **Mr Hazzard:** I think that it is probably fair to say that you seem confident and assured about the balance. However, from our discussions, I think that I am right in saying that, at various levels in your organisation, in the system as a whole and in the wider education community, there is not the same confidence in and shared vision of the balance. Is that fair to say? If so, what can be done?
2257. **Mrs Buick:** What do you mean? Sorry, Faustina. You go ahead.
2258. **Mrs Graham:** I think that it is fair to say that. One of the most significant learning points for me during the inquiry, aside from the recommendations that you will make, is what Professor Gardner said last week about our communication with the system and how that needs to be more effective than it has been. We can say to you — we will say to you — that we need more resources at any point in time, but Professor Gardner said that we also have to make better use of the resources that we have at any given point.

2259. After last week's evidence session, John, Heather and I were working with the associate assessors on Friday, and during the meeting — we were not talking about this; we were talking about school leadership — the group that I was chairing made a comment that made me think again about what Professor Gardner said. A principal pointed out that, when you become a principal, you have to go through an inspection process whereby you support all your staff, particularly if it is a big school, and yet, as part of your training to be a principal, you are not given any kind of direction — I do not mean from us, but as part of the whole training — on how the inspection process actually works. Therefore, you are coming to it almost cold.
2260. As Noelle said, our reporting inspectors, obviously, visit a school, spend a day there and brief the staff. However, I suppose that what that principal was saying was that it is almost too late at that point for a principal, particularly a first-time principal, to really get up to speed on an understanding of the inspection process. So I think that it is fair to say, as Professor Gardner did, that we need to look at our communication.
2261. As Noelle pointed out, you could say that we have a huge amount of documentation. Truth be told, that is probably overwhelming for people, and we should not expect them to deal with all that on their own. Perhaps we really need face-to-face interaction with people. When we get the opportunity to do that, we find it successful, as do the people who participate.
2262. Last Wednesday, we had 220 principals at the dissemination of good practice event for literacy and numeracy. At each of those events, I think that people felt that, by listening to their colleagues as well as us, they were learning from that process. I suppose that it is up to us to try to improve communication. So your point is valid.
2263. **Mr Hazzard:** I will go back to the idea of balance and individual school settings.
- Where is the appropriate balance between auditing a school's compliance with DE policy and school improvement in order to foster improvement? Where do you think the balance is? Do you have the balance right? What can be done to strike the right balance?
2264. **Mrs Buick:** I will ask John to come in in a moment. There are some compliance aspects of inspection around, for example, the school development plan and safeguarding, and we must look at those. In general, we are looking at the quality of the education that children and young people get. We are looking at achievement and standards, teaching and learning, and quality of provision. We check the compliance issues, because we have a statutory responsibility to do that. We absolutely strike a balance in looking at the quality of education and training that young people get and promoting improvement.
2265. **Mr John Anderson (Education and Training Inspectorate):** I hope that the balance is evident in any post-primary inspection report that you read. We explain to the school, just to remind it, that the main focus on promoting improvement is around our quality indicators in Together Towards Improvement. We report what we find in a school, such as its effectiveness or lack of effectiveness, or its lack of consistency in the quality of its provision or in any aspect of Together Towards Improvement that we inspect. In addition to that, as Noelle said, there are certain *[Inaudible.]* asks us to report on, and she mentioned a couple of those — for example, child protection. We are always asked to report on a school's progress against the Programme for Government targets for GCSE and A level. We are always asked to report on a school's progress towards delivering the entitlement framework, which is being phased in and finalised over the next two years. More recently, the Minister has asked us to report on the quality and effectiveness of a school's careers provision. He has also asked us to report more precisely on the extent to which governors provide challenge and

support to a school. That is not quite everything, but it is almost everything. We always report on the effectiveness of provision for pupils with special educational needs. So you would find those in the report.

2266. Let me take one example. The Department expects us to report on the extent to which a school is “compliant” — that is the word — with departmental regulations on school development planning. We always have a footnote in the report that discharges that duty, which states that a school development plan is or is not fully compliant with it. However, within the body of the report, you will find that what we report is not so much how the school development plan complies with a certain regulation checklist, but how effective a school’s process of school development planning and improvement is, as we discussed at our last evidence session a fortnight ago. That gives you a sense of how we manage the balance between those issues that certain policy branches in the Department want to read from our reports, as well as trying to give the school as much as we can in support of improvement. However, I would have to say that, although the report seeks that balance, the main input that we can give to a school in contributing to its capacity building for improvement and how much it is getting better at it, is in the dialogue that goes on during visits, not only in the inspection visit but previously by the district inspector, and the district inspector who might do a follow-up inspection or continue monitoring whatever is necessary, depending on the outcome of the inspection. That is how we try to achieve that balance.
2267. **Mrs Buick:** You raised an important point about the district inspector, who picks up the follow-up inspection process. If a school is satisfactory or less, the district inspector undertakes the interim follow-up visits and the follow-up inspection.
2268. **Mrs Graham:** Noelle referred to a “running record”. We are working on that at the moment and trying to collate all the evidence that we collect during an

inspection, which a school would not have unless it made an FOI request. That will be professionally productive for a school subsequent to the inspection.

2269. Certainly, during primary or post-primary inspections, when an inspector has responsibility for a particular area in a school — for me, it is English and drama — you have extremely detailed professional discussions, which are not captured in writing, with your colleague in the school who has responsibility for that area. Very often, we learn as much from those discussions as the person who is in receipt of the inspection. However, there is not always a way to feed those back in a detailed written format to the school. I suppose that the busyness of an inspection in the course of a week like that can mean that someone will have found the discussion very valuable but will almost have forgotten the detail because it happened in such a busy period. We are trying to look at providing as much detail as we can to a school about the actual process of inspection that took place during the three days that we were there. We do not want to give that to people until we are content and confident in doing so, because we have to give people information that our colleagues are confident about preparing and sharing, and in a way that is productive for a school.
2270. **Mr Hazzard:** I have one final question on the improvement side of things. Previously, the ETI has contended that, since 2010, the vast majority — some 80% — of schools that had been reinspected have improved by at least one performance indicator. What contribution do you feel that the ETI made to that improvement?
2271. **Mrs Buick:** I hope that I articulated some of that in my introduction. We identify what a school does well and what it needs to improve on. Then, through the follow-up process, if a school is satisfactory or below, we support it through the challenge of the interim follow-up visits to make sure that progress is being made, and, finally, we evaluate that through the follow-up

- inspection visit. However, we do not do that alone. As I said, we are a catalyst for improvement. Schools that are in a formal intervention process obviously get CASS support, and principals get other support through the area learning communities. Ultimately, school improvement happens within a school, and, for it to be sustainable, it has to be a process within a school, and it has to be continuous. I think that we provide that catalyst for improvement.
2272. **Mr Lunn:** I want to ask you about the external evaluation of your own effectiveness. You point us to the annual NISRA survey. That is fair enough; it is very complimentary, with a figure of 81% improvement, and so on, but it is not the only review of your performance. I am looking at the GTCNI survey. It is fair to say that the two do not quite marry up. In the GTCNI survey, for instance, 70% of principals felt that an inspection encouraged compliance but not innovation and was overtly data-driven. What are your thoughts about that? How do you reconcile those two positions?
2273. **Mrs Buick:** I want to make some comments about that. The ETI has no issue with the GTCNI reflecting the professional views of its members, but we have genuine concerns about the methodology and reliability of the survey. I make no apology for challenging a survey that I think was flawed in its methodology. That was confirmed by NISRA, who are the statistical experts. No form of identification, for example, was needed. The survey was open to absolutely anybody to complete openly on the website. Anybody could complete it. There was an opportunity for multiple entries. There were no checks and balances in the survey, and, shall we say, no safeguards were put in place to reduce that risk.
2274. There was no random sampling. There was the use of leading questions. I will give you an example of a leading question, which perhaps demonstrates the very point that you made. The question was:
- "The inspection process has an in-built social bias in favour of socially advantaged schools because insufficient account is taken of context and intake".*
2275. NISRA considered that to be a leading question. According to NISRA, you are led to give a particular answer, so I have real issues about the outcomes of the GTCNI survey and its reliability, as has NISRA. I am content that our survey was carried out by NISRA and under the best statistical principles. Therefore, our survey is absolutely fair and accurate. It is feedback from the schools that were inspected, so it is a post-inspection survey that is carried out each year.
2276. **Mr Lunn:** Do you have any concerns about leading questions in the NISRA survey, or are you happy with them?
2277. **Mrs Buick:** They are NISRA-validated questions so they subscribe to the principles of best questions. So no, I have no concerns.
2278. **Mr Lunn:** You seem to have a problem with the reliability of the GTCNI survey, with leading questions and all the rest of it. However, the people who respond to that survey are professionals and have an interest in the subject. From what you say, it may be slightly troubling that it is anonymous, but that does not mean that people do not give an honest view. There is such a diametric difference between what comes out of one set of professionals and what comes out of NISRA.
2279. Up to 45% of principals felt that you did not explain the inspection criteria and did not accept evidence-based challenge. Also, only some 30% of principals thought that the inspection took account of what schools produced in terms of value added.
2280. **Mrs Buick:** I explained to you my concerns about the reliability of the survey, and those concerns remain.
2281. **Mr Lunn:** Do you think that all those answers are produced by leading questions?
2282. **Mrs Buick:** There were positive comments as well as the comments

- that you describe. Although I have concerns about the validity of the survey, I accept that we need to consider the themes that came out of it. Some of those themes would not be unknown to us from other evidence that has come through to the Committee. If you look at our survey, which to me is robust, valid and reliable, you will see that it says, for example, that 86% of schools felt that they had a good opportunity to brief the inspection team of the context of the organisation, and 81% felt that inspection helped the school plan and promote for improvement. Some 93% felt that the team was courteous, and 87% felt that it was approachable. Some 80% felt that they had a good service from the inspectorate, and 80% felt that they were treated fairly. To me, that is valid and reliable statistical evidence, but it does not mean that everything is perfect and that we do not have work to do, which is why I outlined the development of inspection work that we are undertaking over the next period so that we can be even better at building on the good practice that we already have. I accept that there are areas that we need to improve.
2283. **Mr Lunn:** There is another external report from EMQC Ltd. If I remember correctly, it has given you a highly complimentary, gold standard report for the past 13 years. What are the mechanics of EMQC Ltd and how it evaluates your organisation? What does it actually do? I presume that it visits schools.
2284. **Mrs Buick:** Yes, it inspects a range of providers. It is the customer service excellence award. It looks at a range of characteristics about how we provide information to those we inspect, how we actually carry out the process and the impact of the process. It has a set of criteria that it measures us against. We have just had a full re-evaluation of our customer service excellence in February this year, and, again, we came out very strongly through that process. I think that it is a very thorough and robust process that looks at how well we deal with our customers — that is, the schools we inspect. As you said, it came out extremely positively.
2285. **Mr Lunn:** When the company visits a school as part of its assessment, is it accompanied by a member of your team?
2286. **Mrs Buick:** I cannot remember whether the assessors are accompanied or not. I suspect that somebody does go with them as a courtesy, but assessors will carry out the interviews with those whom they are visiting and make their own determination. It is an absolutely independent charter mark, or whatever you like to call it, and we have no interference in that work, other than to provide the evidence and information that an assessor requests.
2287. **Mr Lunn:** We have been told that assessors are accompanied by a district inspector when they go to a school.
2288. **Mrs Buick:** I would hope that, because they are on unfamiliar territory — our assessor is from England — we would drive them wherever they need to go.
2289. **Mr Lunn:** Do you not think that that would perhaps colour the reaction of a school? I could draw an analogy with some other type of follow-up inspection whereby an organisation that is being assessed is present when people are being asked questions about its performance. It does not seem —
2290. **Mrs Buick:** I am sure that the organisation would have something to say about your comments. It is an absolutely independent assessment. An assessor makes independent judgements.
2291. **Mr Lunn:** Which organisation?
2292. **Mrs Buick:** The customer service excellence — EFQM, or whatever its initials are.
2293. **Mr Lunn:** Do you pay for that service?
2294. **Mrs Buick:** We do.
2295. **Mr Lunn:** Is it expensive?
2296. **Mrs Buick:** It is in the submission. I cannot remember exactly how much it

- is. We could probably refer you to the submission that we have already put in. It is not a huge amount of money, but there is an expense attached.
2297. **Mr Lunn:** I have made my point about an assessor being accompanied. To me, if people are following up on your performance, they really should not have a member of your team present while they ask questions of the people who have been inspected. It just does not seem to be necessary or to add any validity to whatever outcome they come up with. They have come up with a fantastic outcome, it seems to me, for every year that the exercise has been carried out. You would think that there might be a blip along the way somewhere, but no, there are 13 gold medals, apparently.
2298. **Mrs Buick:** We do a good job, Mr Lunn. I do not find the outcome of that surprising. We have partial compliance and some aspects that we have not complied with over the years. This year, two of our partial compliances were made full compliances, so we are moving even closer to getting that absolute gold star that you talk about. It would be disappointing if you were saying that, because it was a glowing report, it was in any way tinged with ETI influence. It absolutely was not. The assessor makes their own professional judgement about the quality of service that we provide to our customers. That came out very strongly.
2299. **The Chairperson:** To help here, may I just come in? Imagine the man from Mars who lands here and looks at the process. This is what EMQC stated in its report on the process, so listen to this and determine whether there is objectivity in this. Remember that that was the issue on the district inspector:
- “The on-site assessment visit started with the assessor meeting the Chief Inspector, the Assistant Chief Inspectors, Managing Assessors and Assessors reviewing documentary evidence and meeting with customers of the service and observing service delivery in the Inspection Services Branch. On the second day the assessor accompanied a District Inspection on visits to customers and met a selection of customers over a buffet lunch and met with lead officers in the Department of Education.”*
2300. Could you write the term “objectivity” over that?
2301. **Mrs Buick:** I am disappointed to hear you say that, because I can tell you that the process is completely objective. What you did not read out is that practically a whole day was spent in a telephone conversation with our managing inspector, who leads on this process. We did a self-evaluation for the customer service excellence award. So, that was the first bit. There was then a telephone call during which he quizzed the managing inspector on our self-assessment. Then, on the first day of his actual visit in Northern Ireland, he discussed aspects of the self-assessment report with us. On the following day, he went out and met some of the customers, that is, the people whom we inspect. So, I believe that it is a robust process and that it is objective.
2302. **Mrs Graham:** I think that it is fair to say, as we would about our inspection process, that that is one element of the evidence that the assessors collect for that award. Actually, we have not had it for 13 year — we have had it since 2007, and it was hard won to get it by 2007. We did not get customer service excellence the first two times that we applied. We had to work very hard as an organisation to get it in 2007. However, it is not a repeated process; it is a continuous improvement process, and it is about looking at what we have achieved and trying to build on that successfully over time. So, in that sense, there is a lot of additional work. Obviously, the questionnaire returns are part of what is submitted. What the assessor then does is sample some of the schools. I think that we can absolutely share that with them and the idea that we should perhaps not be part of the discussion. I have to say that it is only part of the evidence that is considered in that instance.
2303. **Mr Lunn:** We could talk round it all day. There is the same contrast

between NISRA and GTCNI as there is between EMQC and GTCNI. I am not convinced by your assertion that GTCNI responses are coloured by the fact that the questions were leading or that people have perhaps a bit of grudge or something like that. We are talking about professional people here. One of the witnesses that we had recently described himself as a fan of ETI but indicated that, in his opinion, the inspectorate had a degree of “institutional arrogance”. I know that that is a catchy phrase, but they were his words, not mine. Do you think that that would explain some of the adverse commentary that is perhaps in the GTCNI or in the Committee? I ask because a thread that has been running through this from the day that we started is that there is a contradiction between what you say and what the professionals in the schools and the system say.

2304. **Mrs Buick:** John probably wants to come in there, but I will just respond to the question. NISRA carried out the analysis of the survey. That means they were not my views but NISRA's, as the statistical expert, that it was unreliable. That is the first thing.
2305. **Mr J Anderson:** It might be worth adding a few percentages from the GTCNI survey. You quoted some who suggested that they are very out of line with what is found in the annual NISRA survey of those that had just been inspected in the previous year. Obviously, the GTC inspection is open to anyone, whether or not they have been inspected recently. The GTC responded to NISRA's critique of its methodology and extracted the returns from principals, as opposed to teachers. They might have been more open to it, but the principal has greater oversight than any one teacher of what is happening in the whole school. Teachers might see part of the process but not the whole process.
2306. Although the NISRA positive percentages are in the range that you mentioned of 80% to 90% of those that had been recently inspected, in the GTC survey, some of the returns are of interest.
- For example, 68% of principals agree that inspectors provided appropriately detailed feedback on inspection criteria. Some 70% of principals agreed that the inspection has been central to later improvement. Some 69% of principals agreed that the inspection took appropriate account of their own context and intake. Some 77% of principals agreed that the inspection process took appropriate account of their school self-evaluation, and 77% agreed that the inspection process took appropriate account of the range of practice in their school. My view is that those are good figures, but, as a managing inspector, my view is that they are not good enough. Although they come from an evidence base, we want to improve on some of those percentages. They are not as strong as NISRA's, but they are not that dramatically different from NISRA's responses. They are lower but not significantly lower. I just think that it is worth looking at the figures in that way as well.
2307. **Mr Lunn:** It said in the survey that there was an approval of the system. That is fair enough. I have taken certain statistics from what it says. However, in a way, its survey is only a reflection of what we have heard from virtually every organisation talking about your organisation. Whether it is unions, teachers, individual schools or the GTC, there is a theme running through it.
2308. **Mr J Anderson:** I think that we have indicated that we have work to do on addressing perceptions so that we are better at explaining the role that we play. Professor Gardner said very clearly last week that we need to focus on explaining how we contribute to improvements so that things are better understood than currently.
2309. **Mrs Buick:** As John describes, there are some myths about inspection. That is something that we absolutely must do something about, but the percentage of responses to the NISRA post-inspection survey, which is the schools and providers that have recently been inspected, is largely in the high eighties. So, when we carry out an inspection, for

- the most part, those who are part of the process regard it well. However, there is no doubt that we need to improve our wider perception of how we carry out inspections.
2310. **Mr Lunn:** I will leave it at that. There is a fine line between fighting your own corner, defending your performance and “institutional arrogance”, which is a term that I do not particularly like.
2311. **Mrs Buick:** I would hope that that is not the case with ETI. We take our work and the feedback that we receive very seriously. The improvements that I outlined and that have been in train since 2011 are improvements to work in greater partnership with those that we inspect. I think that if there is an underlying message coming through, that is it.
2312. **Mr Lunn:** Thanks very much.
2313. **The Chairperson:** As outsiders watching it being played out in recent days, it has been interesting to see the reaction that there has been to some elements of the inquiry. The survey from GTCNI has been a typical example, where there was an exchange of emails between you and NISRA. If you read it in the context of what was going on, you could have concluded that this is only about trying to rubbish the GTC survey because it was uncomfortable, as opposed to the explanation that John gave, which was, “There are many things in the survey that we recognise, and we accept that there are things that need to be improved”. If that was the context or tone of the way in which the queries, questions and concerns were being raised, I do not think that people would have been as exercised as they were, because they are having a very adverse reaction to all this. When you see the drawbridge being pulled up, you wonder who is inside the castle. What are they trying to defend? If we are saying that there are things that we need to address and that we need to be open and to do all these things, the way that we go about that is sometimes evidence that we are genuinely concerned about the issues that are being raised.
2314. **Mrs Buick:** I will repeat what I said. We are an organisation of great integrity, so we take all the evidence and information that we receive on that basis. As I said, I make no apology for challenging a survey that was flawed in its methodology. NISRA, which is the independent statistician, said that it was flawed. GTC is entitled to take the professional views of its organisation, but we have, and remain with, genuine concerns about the quality of the survey. As I said, I think that we have to take some of the broad messages on board, and, as I described, we are already beginning to work on those aspects through the development of inspection work.
2315. **Mr Newton:** Thank you for coming up. When we met on the Falls Road a few weeks ago, I told you that my background was in Investors in People, national vocational qualifications (NVQ) and so on. So, I have a slightly different cultural approach, I think, to inspection. I have to say, however, that when I was in that work, I always held the ETI as a paragon in inspection. So, I will say that now to you.
2316. I want to explore a couple of things with you. Faustina referred to Scotland's experience, and Heather indicated that she had been in Scotland for a period. In your introductory remarks, Noelle, I think that you indicated that inspection is not a one-dimensional approach and that schools have a role to play. I think that the evidence in Scotland is that there is a much stronger focus on the cooperation between the schools and the inspection process. Maybe that is also true in other jurisdictions. How might ETI develop a more two-way collaborative approach to inspection?
2317. **Mrs Buick:** I might ask Heather to come in and talk a little bit about what she observed in Scotland. We already work in partnership with those whom we inspect, but we have identified that we could do that further. We have the pre-inspection visit, which the reporting inspector carries out. They go to great lengths to explain the inspection process to the principal and staff and

- to set up the inspection so that it works for the inspectorate and for the school. In post-primary, for example, there is dialogue on which classes will be followed as part of the class pursuit on the Monday. So, quite a lot of dialogue happens before the inspection to set it up in a way that works for both.
2318. During the inspection week, a lot of professional dialogue, as it was described, goes on with all the staff that we meet. We meet pupils, and we feed back to the principal and vice-principal each day to make sure that they are aware of the emerging issues. However, as I described, we can take that a stage further and get the principal more involved in our team meetings. That is a challenge for us and for our inspectors, because that has not happened before. I think that that will help the principals to be clear about why we have come to the conclusions that we have and will help them to better understand the areas for improvement. So, I think that that will help to do that.
2319. We have the dissemination of good practice events. Those are incredibly successful and very well attended. They are an opportunity for us to explain the inspection process. They are also an opportunity for principals to see those practitioners who have been through the inspection process and who have been identified as having good practice demonstrate that good practice to others. Of course, we also have the district inspector role, which involves the inspectors who, next week, might be reporting inspectors working with schools. So, I think that a lot of activity is already going on to join that process up.
2320. **Mr Newton:** Is that a change in process or a change in culture?
2321. **Mrs Buick:** I do not think that they are mutually exclusive. From our perspective, our culture has always been to be open and transparent in the work that we do. I think that some people are saying that they would like us to be more open and transparent. That is what we want to do. They want more transparency; it is not that we do not do it.
2322. **Mr Newton:** Would Heather like to comment on that?
2323. **Mrs Heather Jackson (Education and Training Inspectorate):** My experience in Scotland was in one primary school; therefore, it has been prefaced by that conditioning. There are similar processes there that are robust, rigorous and fair. The key emphasis is on what the children learn, the extent to which they learn and their entitlement to the Scottish curriculum for excellence, just as we would look at the Northern Ireland curriculum throughout primary and post-primary provision.
2324. I have experience of being both a principal and being in ETI. I know that if I were still a principal, I would prefer our model, but we would welcome your advice and recommendations about where our inspection process goes. From the point of view of a principal's accountability, the process is very intense over the five days. The principal would be involved in different meetings, but an essential difference in a primary school would be that the principal and the senior leadership team nominate joint lesson observations. That would be a new departure. District inspectors in ETI do that at the request of individual principals and negotiate it with the teachers. However, in the Scottish model, that is a component for primary schools. So, that is part of the two-way process that Mr Newton was talking about.
2325. There would need to be a lot of negotiation with our unions, training and principals to accept that. You have heard through your research about aspects in Scotland, but ours would have to be a made in Northern Ireland version as opposed to an adoption of a simple version. So, from the accountability point of view, there are higher stakes in the Scottish model for the principals' experience and understanding of what makes high-quality learning and teaching.
2326. There is a scoping exercise on the Monday, which is the first day. In primary schools, we rely on the school development plan for the evaluation, as you were told in the meeting in the West

- Belfast Partnership headquarters. As mentioned, those are the compliance aspects of school development planning. In Scotland, prior to the inspection, there is a self-evaluation pro forma, which the school uses — this is the two-way negotiation aspect — to nominate three areas that it would like the HMIs to observe, evaluate and track throughout the inspection, as well as all the school curriculum areas. As a result of that, whereas teachers in primary and post-primary schools tend to be visited once a day, the teacher in Scotland can be visited two or three times a day as necessary to obtain the first-hand evidence in the classroom observation and so that the learning can be looked at closely.
2327. We talked about the running record, which is currently being trialled in post-primary schools. The record of inspection findings is left with the school two weeks after the inspection, as Faustina explained. The accumulation of the evaluative statements about the quality of learning and teaching under five key indicators is shared in confidence with the principal and the equivalent to our CASS officer on the fifth and final day of the inspection in a primary school. It is then edited, obviously, and sent to the school. However, as opposed to transparency, there is almost a quota for or a restriction on who can access it. It is very detailed and mentions specific teachers by year groups. That is why, as I say, there would need to be an evolutionary stage for us in Northern Ireland to agree to that form of reporting on individual teachers without the teacher being there and with it being in a written document. So, as a former teacher and principal, I have questions about how that would be used. It is kept with the equivalent of the chair of a board of governors here — the chair of the parent forum, the principal and the local education officer. That is very useful, and, as John would rightly tell you, the schools would find it very beneficial to move it on as an improvement document. I certainly think that there are issues there with transparency and about who would obtain the report.
2328. The parents get a separate letter that focuses on three headings: how well children learn and achieve; how well the school supports children to develop and learn; and how well the school improves the quality of its work. There is then a concluding statement, of which there will be four to choose from: no further inspection activity; additional support for improvement; continued inspection, which is the equivalent of our follow-up process; and innovative practice, which would be equivalent to our very good or outstanding schools.
2329. There are similarities, and there are equal challenges there, but the focus is very much on the learning. From a Northern Ireland perspective, there would have to be negotiation, as I said, between principals and teachers over what happens with the record of inspection findings and the confidentiality in that. By the way, in Scotland, they have indicators that are similar to ours, so where we have outstanding to unsatisfactory, they have good, weak and satisfactory.
2330. **Mr Newton:** I want to explore the situations in which you are moving into support for schools or intervention. In your opening remarks, Noelle, you indicated that formal intervention should be supported by CASS. The evidence that is being presented to the Committee suggests that CASS services are being wound down and schools are being deprived of the necessary support to help them to improve.
2331. Obviously, our objective is to improve for the pupils, as you outlined, and that is the goal that we are all dedicated to. I take your comment about formal intervention being supported by CASS. How would we see that in a situation where CASS support is not as extensive as it has been previously?
2332. **Mrs Buick:** It has been well recorded that there have been some changes to the CASS service. It now focuses its activity on the schools that are in the

- formal intervention process. You will see in our follow-up inspection reports that we always refer to the quality of support that CASS has provided to those schools that are in the formal intervention process. I think that it is fair to say that the support is usually good. That is what we normally see. However, it is like a leg everywhere else, in that there is only a certain amount of resource to go around the schools. The resource is focused on those schools that are in the formal intervention process.
2333. I said that there were, broadly speaking, 10,000 pupils in schools that are in, or were, in the formal intervention process and that there are 5,000 pupils who are in better schools as a result of the support that has been provided through the formal intervention process. So, there are clear examples of improvements to the quality of pupils' learning as a result of that supportive process.
2334. **Mrs Graham:** The difficulty is that this is something that we are storing up for ourselves, in a sense. As Noelle indicated, there is sufficient support to help those schools that are in the formal intervention process. All the CASS services prioritise those schools. On the other hand —
2335. **Mr Newton:** Sorry, I want to make sure I picked you up right. Did you say that you think that there is sufficient support?
2336. **Mrs Graham:** Yes, to support the schools that are in the formal intervention process. That is certainly what our CASS colleagues tell us. They prioritise the schools that are in the formal intervention process.
2337. Nevertheless, Noelle said in the last chief inspector's report that, particularly at post-primary level, once you get to a stage where a school is in the formal intervention process, the decline in standards and the downward trajectory has almost become endemic. You referred to culture, and when it gets to that point, it is quite difficult to turn things around and to improve them quickly.
2338. Every School a Good School outlines the importance of support being in place before a school gets to that point. I think that that is where we have some difficulty at the moment, in that the support services are prioritising the schools that are already in a difficult situation, but really and truly, as a system, we need to be looking at ensuring that schools do not get to that point in the first place. The amount of time that has to be invested then in trying to improve things for everyone in that situation is difficult, and I think that our colleagues in CASS would say that they struggle to provide support to a school before it is in crisis. I think that that is a hugely important area that needs to be addressed in the system.
2339. **Mr Craig:** I have met John to discuss the issues with all this. I can go only by my experience. You talk about adequate support, but I have noticed that, in the past year, the support officer on the board of our school has changed three times. I do not think that that experience will be much different to that in any other board or school. In my mind, there is definitely an issue with the changes in resources in boards. That has an impact on the level of support that you get from CASS, and I think that we need to bear that in mind when we say that there are adequate resources. If there were adequate resources, I would have expected more support than I have seen. We need to bear in mind that, with the running down of boards and the potential of something replacing them, a gap has been opening up. I can see it clearly, and I am not the principal of a school who is relying very heavily on that resource. So, I think that we need to be careful about saying that we believe that resources are there. I think that they are struggling to provide those resources. However, that is just my personal experience.
2340. **Mrs Graham:** I agree, but that is outside our control. If you can exercise any influence there to support our colleagues in CASS, I think that that would be of huge benefit to the entire system. As I said, I think that people

- are doing a valiant job to support the schools that are in the formal intervention process.
2341. **Mr Craig:** They are struggling. I can see that.
2342. **Mrs Graham:** I think that that is a fair comment.
2343. **Mr Newton:** Faustina, you will be aware that the OECD report commented on ETI and CASS along the lines that Jonathan was talking about.
2344. Can I ask you about the English and maths outcomes? You have recently engaged with, I think, 20 schools with poor English and maths outcomes. As ETI is now engaging with schools with numeracy and literacy issues, does that indicate that we are beginning to review the methodology and that we are maybe now looking more at a CASS-type approach rather than an intervention-type approach?
2345. **Mrs Buick:** The project to support the 20 schools — 10 in English and 10 in maths — is a new area of work for us. It was identified, and I agreed with this, that the level of expertise that our English and maths inspectors have in their subject is superb. This project provides an opportunity for them to disseminate that expertise on a one-to-one basis with the schools. In the past few months, we have undertaken baseline inspections in each of those schools to identify the areas for improvement, and those inspectors now go in on a monthly basis to support the heads of department to implement their action plan. They will be supported by two expert practitioners, one each in English and maths, and where collective areas to be addressed are identified, they will run workshops to which all English and maths specialists will be invited. So, it is a new departure for us. It was cautiously received at the outset, but it has been well received now that it is in train and is providing dedicated support to those schools.
2346. **Mr Newton:** Am I right in thinking that that falls under the CASS-type approach?
2347. **Mrs Buick:** It is very much a supportive process and something that we have not done before. It is an extension of the interim follow-up activity and the district inspector activity that we do. However, it is different, in that it is targeted and dedicated support to those schools.
2348. **Mr Craig:** I start off by declaring an interest as the chair of a board of governors of a school that is subject to your inspection at the minute. I pay tribute to John. I am a firm believer in working with you, not against you, on these issues and, in fairness, John went well and truly out of his way to attend a board of governors meeting about a month ago. That was one of the most useful meetings that we had ever had on how to make improvements at the school. That ties in with the subject of value added, and part of our discussions that night was how we can measure that. There are a lot of figures floating about in secondary schools in particular about the performance of pupils, and you and the other inspector were able to tell us quite clearly how there is a methodology by which you could track progress and see the value added in pupils. It might do no harm to indicate to us that there is a method of doing that.
2349. Whilst there is a lot of information floating about on performance in secondary schools, I was struck by the question of whether there was the same amount of information floating about in primary schools. Do you think that there is? If not, how would you track the value added in primary schools?
2350. **Mr J Anderson:** First, thank you for the compliment, but it is misdirected. The district inspector, John Murray, is the person who has worked most closely with the school.
2351. **Mr Craig:** I know he has, but I appreciate that you were there too.
2352. **Mr J Anderson:** As you indicated, we discussed how a school would understand whether it was effectively adding value for its pupils. In other words, and to put it more into the language that we use in 'Together

- Towards Improvement', how they were making progress by building on their prior learning and achieving their potential. That is the language of 'Together Towards Improvement'. Value added can have technical explanations that are not necessarily as clear as that.
2353. We talked about the information that a school has on its intake and the level that they might have achieved in Key Stage 2 assessments. While many schools will say that that is a crude measure and they do not feel that they can rely on it enough, nevertheless government funds are invested in providing those levels, and levels of progression are currently being embedded in schools. In addition, schools use a number of other diagnostic and other standardised tests to add to the information that they have on each pupil, such as the cognitive ability test, progress in English and mathematics tests, and others. Schools vary in what they choose but those are the most common. They also use predictive data tests from university providers called middle years information system (MidYIS) and the year 11 information system (Yellis). Those allow the school to predict, through the test, what those pupils should be expected to achieve by Key Stage 3 and by the end of Key Stage 4 and GCSE.
2354. The key to success in a school understanding whether it is providing sufficient individual support is to bring that basket of test measures together and add to them the judgements of the teachers who are working with them daily in the classroom — that is the most valid of all the assessments that teachers have — and the school's knowledge of that child's circumstances and what barriers outside school he or she has to overcome, what his or her attendance rate is and whether he or she is subject to suspension or is engaging in low levels of disruptive behaviour. The more a school can bring together a basket of information about a pupil, the more successfully it can intervene — that is a word that carries no baggage in a school — in supporting a pupil if they seem to be falling behind their expected achievements. Additionally, they can ask themselves what else they need to do to try to help those pupils do better than the expected level by Key Stage 3 and GCSE. The success of that approach will determine how successful individual pupils are. That has to be the school's first priority. We had discussions along those lines during the meeting with the governors that evening.
2355. **Mr Craig:** Yes.
2356. **Mr J Anderson:** We tried to help to unpack the understanding among the governors of how the senior leaders and the middle managers — the heads of departments and the coordinators for literacy and numeracy — were effectively supporting those pupils. The history, without going into too much detail that would identify where we are talking about, is that, over the recent period, they significantly improved achievement in English and mathematics. The broader issue was how they could use those improvements to lever improvements across all subjects since, after all, literacy is the language of learning and mathematics, as in numeracy, is essential to success in a number of other subjects. Is that helpful?
2357. **Mr Craig:** That is helpful. It explains how we do it in the secondary situation. However, John, what are your thoughts about where that leaves a primary school that perhaps does not have the same —
2358. **Mr J Anderson:** Perhaps Heather is the best person to answer that question.
2359. **Mrs Jackson:** The process would be very similar to what John has explained. In the primary sector, from when the child enters year 1, there is a transition record from the preschool. That gives evidence on the six areas of the curriculum and the pastoral well-being of the child. That is analysed by the year 1 teacher. During the two-year foundation stage — years 1 and 2 in primary school — the qualitative data is built up

- on how the child learns to read and how successful they are in acquiring number skills. That is the qualitative evidence that the teacher would have. In primary schools, we also have the middle infant screening test (MIST). That determines levels of responsiveness to reading text and writing. So, there is a qualitative build-up in years 1 and 2.
2360. In years 3 and 4, and then through years 5 to 7, almost all primary schools now use the Progress in English and Progress in Maths assessments. They measure the children's in English and maths from year to year. That is tracked on an individual basis, in cohorts and across the whole school. Some schools also administer a non-reading intelligence test. That measures the potential of a child. Most schools are comparing similar data and asking whether they are doing a good enough job. They are taking their qualitative data from the child's free action on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis. In some schools, there is rigorous monitoring and evaluation of progressing the individual. In certain cases, as John said, individual targets are set for children. Children are involved with their own learning targets.
2361. The quality of the teaching is so important that the programme in the class is designed around it. We cannot escape the high-quality teaching. It is about using that information to make a difference for every individual child. Those benchmarks are available in the primary school. We also have the levels of progression in communication, which is English and literacy in the wider field and also in maths. That sets almost a Province-wide benchmark of progression through those topics.
2362. **Mr Craig:** That is interesting. It leads to a number of questions on all of this. You have indicated how you can measure the value added to a child throughout both primary and secondary school. The fear out there, which has been expressed time and again by just about everyone who has given evidence to the Committee, is that there is an artificial, target-driven system for inspection, whereby we must get to this level here,
- but there are schools and children out there whose level starts off so low that it is a massive achievement to get them to this level and it may well be impossible to get them up to the artificial target that is out there. Do you take that into account?
2363. **Mrs Buick:** I think that, in my opening presentation, I said that progress is an important determinant in our evaluation of achievement and standards. I think that progress, or added value, as you describe it, can lead to a judgment that, on the face of it, may be out of line with the GCSE outcomes for similar schools. However, schools have to be able to demonstrate to us that they add value to their pupils' learning. I think that what John and Heather have described shows that we absolutely take into account added value when we make our evaluations.
2364. Schools that have been through the inspection process know that that is how we work. I just wonder how many of the submissions that we have had are from schools that have not been through the process and have a different perception of how we carry out inspection. I know that we take account of value added. Heather and John have described very well how we do that. So, as part of our communication, perhaps that is something that we need to communicate more widely.
2365. **Mr J Anderson:** I will make two points, if I may. First, the chief is right, of course, but the point, as I indicated, is that we are really interested to know how well the school knows that the pupils have added value. I referred to the second point in my answer to Chris Hazzard's question. We are required by the Department to report on the school in the terms of the targets set out in the Programme for Government, which are set by the Executive. Therefore, five or more GCSEs, including English and Maths, and seven or more in a grammar school, are the prime targets that people regard in the Programme for Government, and we are obliged to report on that. We do that in every report.

2366. However, if the only focus in a report was whether a school was achieving that magic number, we would be doing it a lot of disservice by failing to recognise the extent to which it serves all pupils and the whole ability range within that school. An unintended and undesirable outcome of focusing on only one government target would be that the school, in order to demonstrate that it achieved it — at whatever level government has set — would focus on moving pupils who might attain a grade D over the boundary and into grade C. And that is all very well and good, because the school will have raised standards. However, it may well do that at the expense of more able pupils in the school who attain a B but should get an A or an A*, or the lower-ability pupils in the school, who obtain a G when they should have obtained an E, which would provide them with a progression pathway into apprenticeships and training, whereas a G would not.
2367. Therefore, although we have to report on Programme for Government targets, we look at a whole range of assessment measures in a school to try to ascertain, depending on the make-up of that community in that school, how well it serves its particular community. That requires professional insight and judgement, and knowledge of how the community in that school is made up. That is where the strength of our district inspector's knowledge of the school comes into play. I think that the misapprehension occurs because schools see that we have to report on the standard in the Programme for Government: any five GCSEs, including English and maths. However, they perhaps do not realise — unless they have been recently involved in the inspection process, as the chief indicates — that those other measures are important to make sure that the school is doing its best for everyone, not just for those who, if I can put it rather bluntly, make the school look better.
2368. **Mr Craig:** I think that is a big issue. A target-driven approach does not necessarily indicate the value added that the school provides for pupils, and that goes right across the board. That leads me into another area that I need to ask you a few questions about, which is the actual reporting and the way the initial report is worded. This is something which happens, and we are all guilty of it. We all get a report so thick, and what is the first thing we do? We look at the summary. In the case of your inspection report, we look at the last page. In particular, the press is looking for only one thing, and that is the final word. The press has damaged and destroyed many a good school out there by that type of reporting. I want to know your thoughts and opinions on that. You are very limited in the wording that you can use. As John well knows, there was a heated argument about this in the moderation meeting, as you called it. I thought it an amusing term, because there was not much moderation in that meeting. What are your thoughts on the wording? Are you happy with the way reports are worded at the minute, or should we move to something that better reflects the fact that there is a fundamentally good school there, but there is a need for improvement?
2369. **Mrs Buick:** There has been a lot of internal and external discussion about the performance levels that we use. However, it is fair to say that those performance levels were set before my time. The words that we use — “outstanding” to “unsatisfactory” — were agreed after a significant consultation with a whole range of stakeholders. That is how they came into being, but that is not to say that we do not need to look at the wording and performance levels. We have already some work on that internally that we have shared, in the broadest terms, with the teaching unions and the associate assessors. What we are looking at are statements, not just one word, possibly around the six performance levels. The feedback that we get is that they are still considered relevant because schools are able to demonstrate improvement, whereas, if we had fewer than that, it would be more difficult for a school to demonstrate improvement.

2370. That is where we are currently. We are certainly looking at more statements on the performance levels that we award, rather than words. We are also looking at the overall effectiveness, evaluation and performance level that we use at the moment. Would that be better written as a “capacity to improve” judgement, more linked to the self-evaluation process? Do we think that a school has the capacity, through its self-evaluation, to improve? That is where we are. We are not there yet, because there is still considerable work to be done, but we are certainly having that discussion and dialogue.
2371. **Mr Craig:** I know that you did not create the system and you have to live within it, but is there an acceptance and realisation of the damage that it can potentially do to a school?
2372. **Mrs Buick:** We have to report without fear or favour, as we find. All of us in this room have one focus and one interest: improving the quality of provision for learners. We will always have to do that. What happens with the inspection outcome once we report is out of our hands. If there is anything that we can do jointly to moderate the reporting of that more widely in the media, that would be beneficial to all, I guess. We can never walk away from saying that provision is not good enough, but we make sure that, though the supportive process of the interim follow-up visits, the follow-up inspection and the district inspector activity, we do our bit to support the schools to improve the quality of provision, which I hope we are demonstrating that we are doing, alongside our CASS colleagues.
2373. **Mr Craig:** If we are asking the press to take part in all of that, I think we are on a hiding to nothing. Bad news sells papers, unfortunately. They never sell good news. Scotland has reviewed that process and come up with completely different wording. Has that been looked at, Noelle?
2374. **Mrs Buick:** The wording in Scotland, as Heather described, is almost identical to our current wording. They write a letter to parents, which does not have the performance levels in it, but it is put on the website. They also have a more detailed document that does have the performance levels attached to a series of indicators. That is on the website right alongside the parents’ letter. So they do report exactly as we do at the moment, except that they have the separate letter that goes out to parents. However, if you look at any school, you will see performance levels one to six attached to that school.
2375. **Mr Craig:** One to six, but do they use those emotive words “satisfactory” and “inadequate”?
2376. **Mrs Buick:** They are very similar. Heather probably has them. They use “weak”.
2377. **Mrs Jackson:** Yes, the inspectorate in Scotland, HMIE, still makes the call on the standards and quality of the learning and teaching in the school. That is a separate document. I have read out the wording for the letter to parents — “no further inspection activity”, “additional support for improvement”, “continued inspection” and “innovative practice”. That is the wording that will be sent to parents, but, as Noelle has rightly pointed out, a separate sheet stands alongside that gives quality indicators such as “weak” and “satisfactory”, so they still make the call on the overall standing, benchmarked across Scotland, similar to what we do in Northern Ireland.
2378. **Mr Craig:** That is interesting: “weak” and “satisfactory”.
2379. **Mrs Buick:** They go from one to six. There are six levels. I cannot remember the exact wording for each.
2380. **Mrs Jackson:** “Weak” would be equivalent to our “inadequate”. They are very similar.
2381. **Mr Craig:** They may be equivalent, but do they actually use the word “inadequate”?
2382. **Mrs Jackson:** No, equivalent to our “inadequate” would be their “weak”. They use the word “weak”.

2383. **Mr Craig:** You will understand why I am asking about this. I find that language around education in schools is incredibly important. The difference between a parent making a choice to send a child to an “inadequate” school and a “weak” school is massive. You may well make the decision to send your child to a “weak” school, but once the word “inadequate” is used, you start to ask all sorts of questions. As a parent, I would ask the same questions. If a school is labelled “inadequate”, why would I ever send my child there? That is why I ask whether you are looking at that specific word that is used. It has all sorts of negative connotations that do not necessarily reflect the school at all.

2384. **Mrs Buick:** We are looking at the performance levels and the language because that is the feedback that we have had. Work is in progress to do that. The direction of travel that we are going in is that it will not be one word but it will be a statement. Nevertheless, whatever the wording is, at the end of the day, we will still have schools that are better performing than others. The language might be different, but the reality will be the same.

2385. **Mrs Graham:** We also accept that everything is of its time. From what you are saying and from what we are seeing, in some instances, people are reducing the inspection report to the one word, which does not mean that the school itself is inadequate but is about the quality of teaching. That is how people interpret it, and I fully accept what you are saying. As former teachers, we know that no one wants even a pupil to look just at what it says at the end. We want them to look at the annotations and at the areas that you have identified in the body of a report. If schools are not using that information from the report effectively, it starts to become counterproductive, and I think that we have to take that into account. We might even be ahead of Scotland by taking that into account and reviewing it. I would like to think that we can do things better here, as opposed to just emulating what other people do. I think that what you

are saying is accurate in that, when we introduced the six performance levels, we carried out an extensive consultation with the system, but times change. At that time, there was absolutely not the same press interest, for example, in inspection reports. I think that it was done with the right intentions in the interests of transparency, but we accept that, at this time, we need to review that. Hopefully, we will be in a better place with that.

2386. **Mr Kinahan:** I know that inspection is absolutely vital, so any question that I ask or anything that I say from a negative point of view is meant to be helpful. One of the matters that really bothers me is how you assess before you get to a school. You talked about objectivity, greater partnerships and dialogue. How do you assess whether the school has had time to do all of the things that we are asking of it? So, my question is more on the longitudinal process of studying the schools. What are you putting in place to ensure that, when you get there, with the cuts that are coming in or the mass of paperwork of assessment systems that are being put in place and the lack of time that they have to do the training that they are meant to be doing, they can do it and that you are assessing them fairly, if I can put it that way, against a system that is cutting more and more and making their lives busier and busier? Most teachers and principals I talk to seem to be working until midnight almost every day.

2387. **Mrs Buick:** I accept that jobs in education, like many others, are demanding. There is no doubt about that, and principals do the job because they are absolutely committed to improving the life chances of young people. On the question of what we do about it, we come back to where we started. School improvement and the sustainability of school improvement rest with the school, and the most important and fundamental thing that a school can do is to carry effective self-evaluation that is a process, not an event. Through that, with the

- resources and the time that they have, they can identify the priorities that they can improve. That is fundamental to the school improving and is also fundamental to the start of our inspection process because we look at the school's development plan and the self-evaluation process as part of our inspection process. Of course, we have talked about the district inspector's role in supporting a school if it needs some help with the self-evaluation process, although there is also other support through CASS. Schools themselves, post primaries in particular, get good support through the area learning communities, where aspects of good practice are discussed and shared.
2388. **Mr J Anderson:** I touched on this matter during our meeting a fortnight ago. District inspector knowledge is key. The district inspectors now receive the annual data pack, which the statistics team in the Department produces for the board of governors of every school. Also, in their link with the school, they will be aware of the school's current work on its development plan priorities and how its action plans are progressing. There is limited time as you heard; nevertheless, specialist inspectors would have time to make some visits to schools, and they will always make a record in our database of their visits so that the district inspector, or the reporting inspector when it comes to planning an inspection visit for the team, can look back over all the information that is available to make some sort of assessment. This information is important to us because it feeds into our proportionate risk-based approach. Schools are not selected randomly for inspection; a percentage is promoted based on the time that they are due for inspection and there is an assessment of some of those risks that are contingent on the performance of the school. If we need to look at the school earlier than we might normally, we will promote it in the inspection schedule. That is the kind of information that allows us to make the assessments that you are asking about.
2389. **Mr Kinahan:** Is there a feedback system? I know that you give feedback to the Committee to question the Minister on all the policies that are coming through. Is there a feedback system that allows you to say that you need more resources or district inspectors so that you can do your job effectively?
2390. **Mrs Buick:** We have a business planning process that takes place each year. We talk to each of our commissioning departments; we do not just inspect for DE but for DEL, DCAL, CJI and lots of other departments and inspectorates. It is through that commissioning process that we identify the resources that we need.
2391. **Mr Kinahan:** I will turn it round slightly. A quote that we had from someone the other day was, "Does it have to be like this?", which really refers to the stress that is often perceived as part of the inspection system. What are you putting in place to try to get rid of the stress factor? Part of it is the area planning and part of it is the viability audits that are loaded on to them, though not necessarily with your agreement. What are you putting in place to try to take the stress out of it so that the moderation becomes a softer process?
2392. **Mrs Buick:** We have a lot of available guidance about the inspection process, which has been mentioned. We also have the role of the district inspector in liaising with schools around inspection, and we have the pre-inspection meeting, which is important because it outlines how the inspection process will take place during the week. However, it is not just our responsibility to take the stress — if I can use your word — out of inspection; it is a big responsibility for a principal. A principal said to me, "When the letter about the inspection lands on my desk, my first job is to tell the staff about the inspection and say that the inspectors are not looking for anything that we are not already doing". What we are doing is just looking at what a school does normally, and it is the principal's job to make sure that the staff are not stressed. It is a joint role

- to make sure that the inspection runs smoothly.
2393. **Mr Kinahan:** Thank you. With regard to the way in which questionnaires are used at the moment, do you accept that they can be used to either abuse the system or to exacerbate problems in the system? There a mechanism there for people who have either decided that they do not like a teacher or do not like the system to load the system by their comments.
2394. **Mrs Buick:** We have worked very hard to refine our questionnaires and our questionnaire process. For each questionnaire, the teachers have to identify themselves through their teacher number, and support staff have to put their name on the questionnaire, so there is that check and balance that they are authentic. We use the questionnaires to determine lines of inquiry; we do not use them absolutely as part of the inspection process. In any organisation, I guess that there will always be people who, for whatever reason, are unhappy and want to have an opportunity to highlight their issues. However, we take a very balanced view of the information that we get through the questionnaires and use them as lines of inquiry.
2395. **Mr J Anderson:** I will make two points, if I may. First, we need to recall that the vast majority of parents and teachers' responses in the questionnaires are highly positive. They appreciate the school, they affirm the school, they like having their children there, they like working there and they believe that the school is doing the best job possible. They are not, as they are portrayed sometimes, gripe sheets.
2396. Secondly, rather than the odd negative comment, issues may emerge that may be significant, and there may be a number of comments around the same issue. The first things that we need to know are whether the school is already aware of that, whether it is conducting its own questionnaires with parents and staff and whether it is aware that there are issues. If it is aware, we need to know how it is managing those issues. That is the line of questioning that we would take. We do not set out to investigate accusations or allegations that are made; that is not our role. That is the role of the principals, the governors and the employing authorities of schools, not the role of the inspectorate. Our interest is in how well the school is managing issues and how aware it is of the views of parents and staff about successful life and work in that school. We absolutely stand over the right of parents and staff, with the opportunity of an inspection visit, to provide their views on the way that we do it. I want to set it in that context.
2397. **Mr Kinahan:** Would you encourage them to use third-party questionnaires or to use outside systems?
2398. **Mr J Anderson:** Effective schools already do that, and the interesting thing for us will be that an effective school that knows its community well and its staff — the internal and external communities — will not be surprised about any issue that we say has come up on a questionnaire. The effective school will be able to tell us what it is doing to address it.
2399. **The Chairperson:** Jonathan, please be brief, because I am well aware that time has marched on.
2400. **Mr Craig:** I will be very brief. Do you at some level correlate internal complaints? No matter what questionnaire you use, you will pick up internal politics that go on in any school among the teaching staff. Have you ever correlated that with the performance figures that you gather around some of the teaching staff? To me, there can sometimes be a very interesting correlation between the complainants and the performance issues that adversely affect the school.
2401. **Mr J Anderson:** There may be.
2402. **Mr Craig:** Is that taken into account when you are doing the overall report?
2403. **Mr J Anderson:** When we have the response summarised for us and it is

- sent to the reporting inspector, the first thing that he or she does is discuss it with the principal and the senior leadership team to ascertain that the questions, as I said in answer to Mr Kinahan —
2404. **Mr Craig:** And —
2405. **Mr J Anderson:** Secondly, they will share it with the governors when they meet them so that they are aware of the issue. It may point to an area that needs to be investigated that falls within the inspection, but some issues raised will not.
2406. I will give a real example. If you look across all the questionnaires, you see that, more often than not, the question about careers education gets the lowest score. The reason for that is that parents may often be discontent because their child did not have the career interaction that they wanted. They may therefore give careers education a lower score because they believe that, if the careers education guidance had been better, their young person might have had a better career pathway. If a number of people were saying that, we would discuss it with the school and ask whether it is aware of it.
2407. Secondly, we would inspect careers provision, and we would be able to say, in our view, whether it is just a concern that some parents have because the child did not get the career, the job or go in the direction that they wanted. Or, we would be able to say that there is a weakness in the careers provision, which we would have evaluated independently from anything that the parents might have said, that merits further discussion. That is a way of illustrating it. If it points to an issue that needs inspection, we can look at it, but we do not use the answers themselves as first-hand, prima facie evidence. We use them to prompt a follow-up of our own evaluation.
2408. **Mrs Dobson:** I will focus my question on parents. The submissions to the Committee from ParentsOutloud and Sir Robert Salisbury highlighted
- the concerns about limited parental understanding of and engagement with the schools around school improvement. Can you explain why the understanding of the inspection process and inspection reporting is so poor among parents?
2409. **Mrs Buick:** Our engagement with ParentsOutloud was the first engagement that we had with any parental group in Northern Ireland. We would like to engage with parents more. That is definitely one of the things that we think is important. We have information on the website that is designed for parents. If someone is a parent and their school is being inspected, there is information on the website that they can access.
2410. We would also expect the school, when it is being inspected, to inform parents that it is being inspected and to send out a questionnaire. When the inspection is complete and the report is published, we ask the school to send the inspection report out to parents and to confirm that that has happened. Those are the things that we have in place to engage parents as well as the parental questionnaire, which we highly value, during the inspection process.
2411. I agree that we need to engage more with some parental groups to inform them about the inspection process. One of the things that came out of that parental engagement was the extent to which parents value inspection. It is really reassuring that inspection is highly valued by parents.
2412. **Mrs Dobson:** It has been said, Noelle, that the ETI not taking the trouble to explain itself to key stakeholders — in this case, the parents — is an example of organisation arrogance. That certainly is a worry, and that is what I am hearing in my constituency. When your inspectors arrive at a school, who, essentially, are they there for? Are they there for the teachers, the principal, the pupils or the parents? Can you rank them in order of priority? How do you see your role? Who are you there for primarily?

2413. **Mrs Buick:** I will go back to your previous point. If your constituents have ways that they, as parents, would like to engage with us, we would be really interested to hear that feedback, because that is an area of work that we wish to take forward. We are there to promote improvement for learners. That is our purpose. We are there to make sure that —
2414. **Mrs Dobson:** The pupils.
2415. **Mrs Buick:** Yes, absolutely. In that, we recognise the role that teachers, leaders and managers have in making sure that all pupils get high-quality teaching and learning and the outcomes that they deserve from their life in school. You will know that the key principles of Every School a Good School are about leadership, good teaching and learning and engaging with parents. So, we are very interested to hear how the school engages with the community, because I think that that is an important aspect of a good school.
2416. **Mr J Anderson:** I recall — I cannot remember how long ago now, but it was some years back — engaging, for a time, in evening meetings with the parents of a school that was due to be inspected. We discontinued that practice for a couple of reasons. First, the turnout among parents was so small that it simply was not worth the resource. I reiterate what the chief says: we welcome any opportunity that we are offered or can find to meet parents' groups, as opposed to what we already do, which is meet governors routinely when we are inspecting. At the moment, we are involved, or are about to be involved, in a second round of meetings presenting to governors about our role during in an inspection, how we look at the governing process and the degree of support and challenge offered to a school through the governors.
2417. **Mrs Dobson:** I am glad to hear that pupils form the central reason for inspections when inspectors arrive at a school. I very much welcome your willingness to engage with and get feedback from parents. I hope that you do not regret that.
2418. **Mrs Buick:** Not at all.
2419. **Mrs Dobson:** I will certainly pass that on to the parents who contacted me.
2420. That being the case, taking the position of a parent reading through a report, do you feel that you have a long way to go to present your findings in plain English? It seems so overly complicated. Parents want to fully understand what you are saying about their school and how the school is performing in their child's education. Do you agree that you have a way to go to present that in plain English?
2421. **Mr J Anderson:** I believe that communicating clearly is a work in progress all the time. No matter how well you might think that you are doing it, there is always scope to improve. I would like to think that, if you looked back at inspection reports from five years ago, you would find that they are clearer now than they were then. However, that does not mean that there is not scope to bring even greater clarity and simplicity of language.
2422. I noticed an example given by Professor Gardner when he spoke to you. I do not think that some of the language that he used would appear in a report, but other language would. I am not sure that we would use the word "familial", because I am not sure that I would explain that easily. However, we do talk about curriculum breadth, and we assume that people know what that means. Perhaps we need to explain it in a simpler way.
2423. It is my constant work to see whether my colleagues can communicate their findings in a way that makes it clear to parents what evaluations they came to and how they came to them; in other words, that they stand over the evidence. That goes back to a very early part of our meeting here about the process of quality assurance. Apart from ensuring consistency from team to team, very often, it is about ensuring that the report communicates clearly the evaluation that the team came to

- and the evidence that they based that on. That is, for me, a continued work in progress.
2424. **Mrs Buick:** We spend a lot of time talking about our reports, their structure and how we can make them clearer. In September, we did a revision of our reports. I hope, as John says, that people think that they are clearer, but I suspect that we will never be done in improving the clarity.
2425. **Mr J Anderson:** We produced a new editing guide as part of that so that we would have better consistency. Our reports are read by a wide diversity of audiences, all of whom want different things from the report. When writing the reports, one of the challenges is trying to say something that makes sense to an advisory officer, a departmental official, a parent, a teacher and a pupil. They all want to read different things.
2426. **Mrs Dobson:** It is essential that parents can understand what is in the report. There is a way to go to make it easier.
2427. **Mr J Anderson:** If it is clearly communicated, it should be clear to all those audiences.
2428. **Mrs Dobson:** That probably leads into parental engagement, which you spoke about. So, you are keen to facilitate parental engagement.
2429. **Mrs Buick:** Yes, definitely.
2430. **Mrs Dobson:** Do you believe that the district inspector should play a larger role with parents, obviously, in communicating the concerns of our schools and in helping to explain self-evaluation to parents? They are still baffled and left in the dark.
2431. **Mrs Buick:** We still have a finite resource; we cannot stretch it to everything. I certainly get letters from parents. Parents write to me about aspects of their schools' provision. Although we cannot investigate individual complaints or concerns from parents, all those letters are copied to the district inspector, and they pick that concern up on their next visit with the school, in a very open and transparent way, so that the principal is aware that we had the letter and has the opportunity to explain the circumstances. That happens all the time. We pick up on concerns that come directly to us from parents.
2432. **Mrs Dobson:** At the start of your presentation, Noelle, you said that our inspections are but one dimension. So, it is vital that the information gets out and that the relationship with parents is built up so that they can understand it. It is not just purely about inspection. You have to communicate successfully around self-evaluation, in particular, with the parents. They need to feel involved with their school, which they are passionate about, and understand it.
2433. **Mrs Buick:** You have probably heard this, but we do see good engagement with parents and schools. Some schools take groups of parents in to talk about various aspects. It might well be to include their views in the self-evaluation process. It is good practice to do that. So, the schools also have a responsibility to make sure that parents are clear about how the school operates, self-evaluation and the priorities for the schools. We see that schools often send out to parents a synopsis of the school development plan or their self-evaluation so that they are clear about those priorities. It is a joint relationship that we need to develop.
2434. **Mrs Jackson:** Consultation with parents, children, governors and the community are essential aspects of the regulations for the school development plan. Therefore, there should be ongoing annual feedback to parents, and parental involvement, on the creation of a school development plan. If it is not annual, it should be done at least every three years. If the school is not doing that, you have to ask about the communication systems within the school.
2435. **Mrs Dobson:** In my experience, the communication system with schools and parents is usually very good.

2436. **Mr Rogers:** Good afternoon, everybody.
[Laughter.]
2437. **The Chairperson:** It was the morning when we started.
2438. **Mr Rogers:** As somebody who is going to another education inquiry at 2.00 pm, I will be brief. In February, you mentioned the unions, and there were certain minor industrial relations situations. Is it a fact that, in 2011-12, about 10% of inspections were not finished and put back until the following year?
2439. **Mrs Buick:** We did have the action, short of strike, that was taken by the teaching unions. That was nothing to do with inspection as such. The reason for the action was around the discussions, which were then ongoing, about pay and conditions. Inspection was used as the vehicle to articulate that concern. We had non-cooperation in a number of schools. We carried out the inspection activities that we could carry out in the time that we had scheduled, and then we went back and completed those inspections a year later. So, they are all now complete.
2440. **Mr Rogers:** Do you believe that industrial relations/unions is crucial to the school leadership and the school inspection process?
2441. **Mrs Buick:** I think so. Relations with the unions have improved since the action, short of strike, was suspended. It has never been formally called off. We have regular meetings with the NITC, which represents most of the teaching unions in Northern Ireland. I think we have good dialogue. We do not always agree, but we have good dialogue now around aspects of inspection, which is the area that I am interested in.
2442. **Mr Rogers:** The OECD said that the Department could do more to embed self-evaluation in schools. What is your comment on that?
2443. **Mrs Buick:** More can always be done to improve self-evaluation. We got the revised TTI in 2010, which supports school self-evaluation better. We have also got the new regulations for school development planning, which embeds self-evaluation as part of the process. A light is being shone on self-evaluation, which is helpful, but we can always do more to support the process. The fact that it is absolutely key to post-primary inspections is important.
2444. **Mr J Anderson:** It is central to the inspection, Seán, but it is also the one measure on our evaluation of schools that is the least effective. Action to promote improvement [Inaudible.] underlying action plan in monitoring and evaluation allows the school's priorities to be turned into practice, but it is the weakest area. In almost half the schools that we evaluated in the [Inaudible.] it less than effective. It is better in primary, but that is because post-primary schools are more complicated organisations.
2445. The answer has to be yes. There is a lot of work to be done to promote the effectiveness of it in bringing improvement. That is arguably the highest priority.
2446. **Mr Rogers:** Coming back to Jo-Anne's point, would that also help the link between parents and schools? They would have robust information year on year, which would help that process as well. If it was well enough embedded in schools, would it slightly change the whole inspection process?
2447. **Mr J Anderson:** Of course it would. We have always described inspection as coming alongside self-evaluation. The schools that are most ready for inspection, as if it could happen tomorrow without any real anxiety, are those that have a really effectively embedded self-evaluation process because they are already engaged with the quality indicators, the evidence and the process that we bring to a school when we carry out our inspection visit. That is where real stress and anxiety would be reduced.
2448. In schools that do not have that as part of their working culture and engage in it only because of a looming inspection, you can see where there might be higher

- stress as a consequence. They are not, if you like, inspection-ready at any time. Obviously, an objective would be that, because they are sufficiently well engaged in self-evaluation, any school should be inspection-ready.
2449. **Mr Rogers:** The real question then is this: what can the ETI do to build the capacity for school self-evaluation?
2450. **Mr J Anderson:** We have been asked that before, and the answer is that we take any opportunity that we can to contribute to helping to promote the use of our self-evaluation process, 'Together Towards Improvement', and understanding the language in it. Some people say that they do not understand the language in it or are not familiar enough with the processes. We will take any opportunity. On a school-to-school basis, that can best be done through the district inspector, but we look for other opportunities and events where we can communicate with other agencies, for example, the regional training unit. Perhaps that whole process should have a much higher profile in leadership development at middle management as well as senior management level.
2451. **Mrs Buick:** There are also the area learning communities. Post-primary principals certainly value the opportunity to share good practice around a range of things, including self-evaluation.
2452. **Mr Rogers:** In an answer to Robin about CASS, I heard the expression "outside our control". School inspections, improvements and development and the provision of high-quality staff development are of major concern, but you say that the fact that they cut so much of the budget is outside your control. There was also something you said, John, about levels of progression. It is a programme of government, but it is a crude measure. I am particularly concerned about that, because we know that they are very crude measures. Is your role in the inspectorate compromised because you are part of the Department?
2453. **Mrs Buick:** No. I have responded to that question before. We are embedded in the Department, but the judgements and evaluations that we make are made without fear or favour and without interference from the Minister or anyone else. Our judgements and evaluations are completely independent. I have said to you before that I have experience of working in an NDPB. I also have experience of working in a non-ministerial government Department, and I now have experience of working in ETI, which is embedded in the Department of Education. There is no difference in terms of our operational independence to be able to make the decisions that we make about inspection. There are benefits from a financial perspective in that we can share human resources, finance and so on, but our decisions are absolutely independent on the quality of provision in schools and all the other areas that we inspect.
2454. **Mr Rogers:** The levels of progression are crude measures, and I will illustrate one example. A child at level 4 communication could be, in the standardised score, between 95 and 125. A child that scores 95 needs immediate intervention, and a child with a score of 125 is a very competent communicator. If those are crude measures, why can ETI not do something with the Department to make it a better measure?
2455. **Mrs Buick:** I will ask John to come in in a moment. If we find issues with any aspect of the learning journey or experience, we will report it. For example, we carried out the ETI evaluation of the computer-based assessment arrangements. That is one example, and Faustina very much feeds into discussions about the levels of progression, but there are complications in getting agreement on the moderation of the levels of progression. We all fundamentally agree that the teachers' input into determining the stage that a child is at in their learning experience is fundamentally important, but there are some things that need to be addressed around the moderation process. I think

- that the principle that we subscribe to is right.
2456. **Mr J Anderson:** Let us remember that we are only in the second year of teachers' experience of using the levels of progression across the whole system. The first use of them fully across the whole system was last year. So, in a sense, they are still bedding in. They are perhaps broad rather than crude. You know them well and can understand the breadth within them. They are a broad measure. Schools sometimes express anxiety to us about whether the levels reached at the end of Key Stage 2 for all of their contributory primary schools are consistent or not. Heather may or may not want to comment on that. The issue, as I indicated in an earlier answer, is that you never depend on one single measure. Broadly speaking, if a pupil is at a certain level at Key Stage 2, you ought to expect them to reach a certain level at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. The school's job is to add value to that — in other words, that they do better than expected. That ought to be the school's mission. However, you would not use that measure alone. You use teachers' judgement, other assessment measures and your knowledge of the pupil, their background and the barriers that the pupil needs to overcome in order to progress and build on their prior learning. I do think that our language around there, as already indicated, is a much more helpful way of looking at it than value added.
2457. **Mr Rogers:** Yes, but, unfortunately, parents and schools are driven by what is in league tables and whatever else, and once schools see that they are below the Northern Ireland average, it causes problems. Some of that data could possibly be skewed as well. Do you not think that it is a major problem that needs to be addressed?
2458. **Mr J Anderson:** By whom? I suppose I am asking you to clarify: by whom? I have indicated what we do in inspections, because we have to report on the Programme for Government target. We do not limit ourselves. That would be very narrow, and data like that does not provide a conclusive view about a school. There is a very broad range of learning experiences and improvements that pupils make as they progress through the school. So, we know what we are doing to look at the school in the broader sense. We work within some government statistics that are provided to benchmark that school. If there are ways to improve on those government statistics, we will work in that context, because that is the government context in which we work. You have heard rehearsed throughout this inquiry the difficulties about getting anything that might be more effective and that does not have negative consequences.
2459. **Mrs Buick:** We have a role in raising expectations too. We know that one of the things that enable a child to be successful is a school having high expectations about their achievement. Comparisons with the Northern Ireland average help to do that. As John said, they are not the only thing, and they are not the only thing that we take into account, but they are helpful in delivering the message that high expectations are important.
2460. **Mrs Graham:** It is fair to say as well that in the primary sector in particular, we will have plenty of instances of inspection reports which may say precisely that. Those outcomes are reported factually. We are not making an evaluation of those outcomes; they are reported factually as being above or below the average, or if they are above the median with regard to free school meals as a comparator. You will find many examples in the primary sector where it may state "below the average", but that does not mean that achievements in standards of those pupils are evaluated as satisfactory or less. It will often still be good overall, because we look at everything in the school, as John indicated.
2461. In primary, we look at the end-of-key-stage results. As Heather indicated, we are looking progress in English and maths. Most importantly, however, we are looking at what happens in the

- classroom. That, ultimately, is the thing that we do that no one else has, I suppose, the privilege of doing, which is observing first-hand what is happening in the classroom. We marry that with the teacher's planning and with the assessment processes that are ongoing in the classroom and the work in the children's books. In the primary sector, that is often nearly easier to do because each class has one teacher, as opposed to post-primary, where you have a spread of teachers.
2462. In looking at all of those things holistically and collectively, that is where we make the evaluation. That is much fairer than a school simply being part of a league table, in the sense that we have had what looks like league tables published in the press, but we would never use any one of those indicators on its own as a way of evaluating achievements and standards in the school. That does not mean to say that, as we have talked about this morning, the perception is different to that. We still have to work at clarifying that so that people feel that they are being looked at in that rounded way. They really are.
2463. **Mr Rogers:** OK. Why are draft inspection reports, then, shared with the Department?
2464. **Mrs Buick:** They are not.
2465. **Mrs Graham:** No. The only thing that will ever go to colleagues in the Department is where a school is likely to go into formal intervention and we do what we call the oral report back before it receives the final report. We leave an A4 piece of paper that sums up the strengths that have been identified and the areas for improvement. Those are left with the school so that it can get on with the action planning process and work with the support services to begin to address any of the issues that have been identified.
2466. We also provide that information to the Department: nothing else, simply that one page that the school is in receipt of, so that that process can be enacted as quickly as possible. That is because Every School a Good School states that the school must provide a management response to the Department within 30 days. Therefore, to try and give each party the information, we pass that on to colleagues in the Department. But we would never share a draft report, no. The first time that anyone will see the draft report beyond us is when it goes to the school to be checked for its factual accuracy.
2467. **Mr J Anderson:** We also tell the Department right away if we evaluate the school as unsatisfactory for child protection. That is the other thing that we communicate immediately.
2468. **Mr Rogers:** Thanks for clarifying that. Why does the ETI have a role in development proposals for area planning?
2469. **Mrs Buick:** There are six criteria, as you know, to determine the sustainability of a school, and one of those is the quality of education. Our input into that is only one part. We give a factual outline of what we know about the school from inspection or through the district inspector process, but we have no role or locus in making any decisions around area planning. It is purely one piece of information that feeds in — a development plan, sorry.
2470. **Mr J Anderson:** The district inspector would, for example, summarise the most recent inspection evidence and inspection history of that school. That is provided as a memo to that division in the Department. And if there are implications for other schools nearby, the inspector would point out that there are other schools enrolling pupils from the same contributing primary.
2471. **Mr Rogers:** Can you see how that particular practice could actually damage the professional independence of ETI?
2472. **Mr J Anderson:** No.
2473. **Mrs Buick:** It is a factual record that is provided; nothing other than that. It is

- available after the development proposal is made.
2474. **Mr J Anderson:** Only the inspectorate can tell the Department what the quality and effectiveness of the education provision in that school is, so that is what the district inspectors do. They summarise what has been said about that school through inspection evidence.
2475. **Mrs Graham:** And we have always done that, even when there has not been the whole emphasis on area-based planning. As John said, we are the professional advisers to the Department in that way. Colleagues in the Department of Education are then free to accept, reject or ignore our advice. That is as it should be, but we will still offer that advice, and it is up to the person who is looking at all the advice — as Noelle said — in the round to make a final decision. If anything, that is more likely to be supportive of the school, because we have first-hand knowledge of it and of the quality of education provision in it. So, on balance, that works more favourably for the school than being likely to be adverse, in summary.
2476. **Mr Rogers:** Time precludes me from going any further.
2477. **Mr Hazzard:** I want to touch quickly on Irish-medium education. I think that most of us were quite surprised to learn that inspections were taking place with inspectors who had, let us say, less than proficient understanding of immersion education and use of Irish. I am looking for your view on that, and what is being done to address it.
2478. **Mrs Buick:** Some 42 of our inspectors mainly undertake school inspection. Of those, about six, or 14%, actually have Irish as one of their language skills.
2479. **Mr Hazzard:** Sorry, to what level?
2480. **Mrs Buick:** There are various levels. We have fluency, and we have people who have A-level Irish.
2481. **Mr Hazzard:** How many of the six are fluent?
2482. **Mrs Buick:** It depends on how you determine fluency.
2483. **Mr Hazzard:** How do you determine it?
2484. **Mrs Buick:** We have people who can undertake observations in Irish, converse in Irish and understand what is happening in the classroom in Irish. That is the lowest level to those who are fluent in Irish. We have six inspectors that we deploy effectively on our Irish-medium school inspections. As I have said, that is about 14% of our provision. The Irish-medium schools make up something like 2.7% of schools. What I am trying to demonstrate is that we have skills and expertise within the inspectorate commensurate with the number of schools that we have in the Irish-medium sector. We will always have those inspectors also inspecting in English-medium schools, because the Irish-medium sector is part of the schools landscape. It is not apart from it. Therefore, it is important that the standards that we see in English-medium schools are consistent with what we see in Irish-medium schools. We spend a lot of time providing training in language for Irish-medium inspectors. We have a very joined-up process with the South, and we have inspectors going there. The South has a summer school where they talk about inspecting Irish-medium education and conversing in the language of inspection through Irish. Our inspectors attend that, so we have a good staff development programme for those inspectors to improve their skills.
2485. **Mr Hazzard:** I do not share your confidence with regard to the percentages. We could have a thousand inspectors for Irish-medium, but if they do not have that level of understanding of immersion education, they are still no use. Is there any scope to work with the South to have inspectors from there inspecting schools in the North? Again, despite the explanation that you have given today, the representatives of the sector do not have any confidence whatsoever. They made it very clear that day that they want to see attention put on this. I do not think that the Committee can do anything other than

- empathise with the situation. Certainly, when it comes to full-immersion Irish-medium education, I think that we are unique here in these isles in that English-speaking inspectors are going in to inspect full-immersion schools in the North.
2486. **Mrs Buick:** We will always have an Irish-speaking inspector on the team — at least one, if not more. Please be reassured that that always happens. With regard to your question about doing more joint work with the South, yes, I have discussed that with the chief inspector in the South. I think that we are both open to that. What we need to discuss is whether the legal landscape will allow us to do that. We are actually both very open to doing that joint work. We already do North/South exchanges anyway. In fact, our agriculture inspector has gone down and carried out inspection in the agricultural colleges in the South because they are just starting to do that work. I suppose that that has paved the way for that sort of exchange and interaction to take place. So, yes, I am very interested in pursuing that.
2487. **Mr Hazzard:** I think that it is important that we focus on it. I do not think that we would tolerate someone who was German with A-level English to come in and be fully expected to understand the whole scope of our English-speaking schools. I do not think that it is the same. The same sort of equity should be applied.
2488. **Mrs Buick:** I think that what I explained, Chris, is that that is the lowest level that we have. We have people who go up to full fluency. In September, we actually recruited a new fluent Irish-speaking inspector. So, we are adding to our resource as resourcing will allow us.
2489. **Mr Lunn:** Is this not a classic situation in which the role of the associate assessor could be brought into play and an associate assessor who is fluent could be brought in from another Irish-speaking school?
2490. **Mrs Buick:** Where we can do that, we do. However, you will know that the Irish-speaking community is actually very closely knit —
2491. **Mr Lunn:** I think that there are enough of them out there that you could find someone.
2492. **Mrs Buick:** We have associate assessors in Irish, and we do use them, without a shadow of a doubt. However, in some cases, there are conflicts of interest where it is just not possible. We have got them, and we use them where we can.
2493. **Mrs Graham:** And we need more. We will appoint people who apply and who meet those competencies at interview. However, we would also encourage more people from the Irish-medium sector to apply for associate assessor roles, because we have struggled with recruitment in the past. It would be really helpful if we could get more people to apply for the posts, as well.
2494. **The Chairperson:** Robin, you have one final question. I need to bring this to a conclusion.
2495. **Mr Newton:** Very quickly, Chair. You know that we had a meeting with district inspectors. There were a number of features and points made in the discussions about their role and their ability to visit. I think that they quoted something like it could be five-plus years before they actually get a chance to visit a school. You made the point that CASS is outside your control. I just wonder whether there is not the potential to use the district inspectors to help a school in a pastoral role, I suppose, and to help the improving school, rather than concentrating on inspections? Is that not perhaps a more constructive role than an inspection one?
2496. **Mrs Buick:** I think that I mentioned earlier that 14% — in fact, if you include the work that district inspectors do with follow-up inspections, it is 21% — of our resourcing available days are used for district inspection. At the moment, what they do is challenge and support schools outside the regular inspection process. That is really beneficial and very useful. However, at the same time,

- we need to carry out the inspections of individual schools and institutions to give a broad view and picture of what the quality of provision is like. As Jo-Anne has mentioned, parents value that information about schools. So, we are trying to balance those two resources all of the time. I know that the district inspectors carry out good work in the schools that they are able to visit. However, we have only a certain amount of resource to be able to do that. At the same time, the actual institutional inspections are really important, too. So, we need to balance that all of the time.
2497. **Mrs Graham:** I think you really have to look at being very clear about what people's roles and responsibilities are. To just go into a support process from the point of view of ETI would not necessarily be appropriate. Professor Gardner spoke to you last week. He sees the two things as being very separate and distinct. An inspector gains the expertise and experience they have, first and foremost, through being a teacher, but then through the broad experience they get in visiting so many schools, seeing so much practice and beginning to see how those standards actually work across the sector.
2498. If you are working only in support, on what basis are you supporting the school? It has to be on the basis of the knowledge and expertise that you have gained. So I think it is about being very clear about what you would be doing in that particular situation, as opposed to it just being an easy move from being an evaluator to being someone who is offering support. In the same way that our colleagues in CASS are trained in providing support, you have to be sure and there has to be clarity around the role that you are carrying out. I am not saying that that cannot be done, but I am saying that there would need to be a very clear strategy that outlined either that we were evaluating and providing some sort of support or not, as the case may be. It cannot be just slipping in and out of one to the other.
2499. **The Chairperson:** Members, the PAC has to be in here for 2.00 pm, so we are really under time pressure.
2500. **Mr Rogers:** I am part of the PAC, so I am fine.
2501. **The Chairperson:** Unless the inspector wants to stay and be quizzed by the PAC. That would be fun.
2502. **Mr Rogers:** It is a very quick one. You talked about the Irish medium. Will you just clarify? You said that one of the team had Irish. It is that one has some Irish, or that one is fluent in Irish?
2503. **Mrs Buick:** At least one of the team will be highly proficient in Irish. At least one; it could be more.
2504. **Mrs Dobson:** Finally, in your submission you said that most inspection teams include associate assessors who, as we know, are practising principals, vice-principals and senior managers. Obviously, they will have considerable experience. Are you not concerned that that creates inconsistency in inspection outcomes?
2505. **Mrs Buick:** In what respect?
2506. **Mrs Dobson:** You said "most". You did not say all inspections.
2507. **Mr J Anderson:** It is a logistic point.
2508. **Mrs Dobson:** But to be consistent —
2509. **Mr J Anderson:** In a small school, for example, where there may only be 17 teachers — I am talking about a very small post-primary school — the team has to be kept at a reasonable level. You do not want to swamp the school.
2510. **Mrs Dobson:** I understand. I am just thinking from a constituency angle. I understand that you have over 200 associated assessors. How many are you using at any one time? What percentage of inspection teams includes associate assessors? Obviously, you have alluded to smaller schools.
2511. **Mr J Anderson:** I will leave Heather to comment on the primary sector, but in the post-primary sector, for example, there are three inspections under way

this week, and there are associated assessors on all of them. In one team, there are two.

2512. **Mrs Jackson:** It is similar in the primary sector, where they are available. They are not always available, because they have responsibility in their own school and they also have periods, for example, at Christmastime, with school plays and carol services, so they would not be available and we would inspect. It is by mutual agreement that they are on the team.

2513. **Mrs Buick:** It is a mutually valuable experience. We [*Inaudible.*] inspection teams, and, where we can, that is what we do. I am sure that you heard from them that they find value in being on the team too.

2514. **Mr J Anderson:** It is also worth adding, since you are asking about this area, that we are always looking for ways to develop the role of the associate assessor. We have already had one instance, and we intend to have more, where, on the follow-up inspection, the associate assessor who was on the original inspection, if available, may be a member of that team, so that we get more consistency and more involvement of associate assessors throughout.

2515. **The Chairperson:** Noelle, Faustina, Heather and John, thank you very much. It has been a long session, but I think it has been very productive and worthwhile. I am sure that you will look forward to our report, and we look forward to working with you.



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25 September 2013

Peter McCallion, Committee Clerk
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A chara

Re: Education Committee Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate(ETI)

As a major stakeholder in the provision of support to Irish Medium Preschool projects, I am writing on behalf of Altram, the leading regional support group for Irish language early years projects to raise some concerns with the inspection process in relation to Irish Medium Immersion Early Years preschools.

Background

Altram, which was founded in 1995 by local preschools in Armagh, Belfast, Derry and Newry, represents the growing Irish Medium Early Years Care and Education sector.

Altram promotes the development of quality early years services through the medium of Irish as the foundation of an Irish Language community. Altram believes the Irish language should be open to all and promotes inclusion and mutual respect.

Growth in provision

Parental choice and commitment have led to rapid growth in the enrolment and number of Irish medium settings regionally. There are now 45 early years' projects providing over 1200 places (almost 800 Peeps places and over 400 PrePeeps places) and 32 primary schools with 2675 pupils. As well as Pre-school provision, a number of projects in the Belfast area have, in partnership with the Belfast Health & Social Services Trust developed additional early years and family support services, including breakfast clubs, afterschool clubs, crèche/daycare services, holiday and summer schemes and Sure Start programmes.

Services provided:

Altram has two regional offices, one in Belfast and one in Derry, which provide a wide range of services, including:

- Early Years Specialist Support for groups within the Pre-school Education Expansion Programme (PSEEP).
- Regional Outreach Support for Irish Medium early years projects, including standalone statutory nurseries and nursery classes, family support centres and non-statutory Pre-School groups.
- Curricular advice and support for staff in statutory & voluntary IM early years settings
- 6 staff training cluster days per year across the region as well as a yearly conference
- Local cluster meetings
- Facilitation of in service training
- Development and delivery of a University of Ulster accredited certificate course: *Certificate in Irish Immersion Education: Early Years*
- Regional information service for those managing and delivering Irish Medium Early Years projects and programmes.
- Development advice and support for new Irish Medium Early Years projects
- Management support, including providing up-to-date guidelines, for project committees
- Accredited Child Protection Training
- AccessNI child protection registration service.
- Representation on statutory and funding bodies
- Production and provision of high quality resources such as books and materials for use in the Irish Medium Early Years sector
- Support for staff and committees delivering the *Sure Start: Programme for Two Year Olds*
- Toy & Book Library (Western Childcare Partnership and Belfast & South Eastern Childcare Partnership)
- Spraoi Spórt Manual and CD (Play-Based Physical Exercise Programme)

Certificate in Irish Immersion Education: Early Years

Altram developed the early years' Irish language immersion education qualification in partnership with the University of Ulster and the North West Regional College. The Certificate in Irish Immersion Education Early Years is directed at the specific needs of staff in the sector and provides training in methodology and language. The course equips students with the theoretical basis and the practical skills necessary to enable them to deliver an effective early years' language immersion programme. The course units draw on theories of second language acquisition, as applicable to young children, and on international methods of good practice in immersion and early years learning. The Certificate is the first of its kind in Ireland or Britain.

Regional

Altram has 6 full-time and 3 part-time members of staff. Core funding comes from Foras na Gaeilge and the Health & Social Care Board provides funding for two of the full-time Early Years Specialist posts. It

works closely with Forbairt Náionraí Teoranta (an all-Ireland Irish medium early years' network) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (the NI Irish medium Education Council).

Altram works in partnership with the Department of Education, including the Education & Training Inspectorate, the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure, local Health Trusts and key voluntary sector partners in developing the Irish Medium sector. It represents the Irish language early years immersion sector on various statutory bodies including, in particular, the Department of Education Early Years 0-6 Strategy Advisory Group.

In partnership with the Health & Social Care Board Altram has provided capacity and funding support, family support programmes and early years specialist training and support to groups in the Board areas. It expanded its early years support service in 2012 through the appointment of a dedicated Irish Medium Regional Support Specialist for the Programme for Two Year Olds funded by the Regional Childcare Partnership. Regular cluster training and workshops are organized for preschools in the Board areas and accredited Child Protection Training and registration with Access NI are also available.

Language Immersion programmes

Although Irish language immersion programmes in the North have been operational for over thirty-five years, there are many decision makers within educational agencies who have little or no theoretical background in or practical experience of early years immersion education.

Language immersion is a method of education in which children are taught through a language which is not the language used in the home. Children educated in language immersion programmes usually come from homes in which a dominant language is the language of communication. The parents of these children often choose language immersion for their children because they themselves identify with the cultural and linguistic values represented by the immersion language.

Immersion language learning in the early years setting is not, as many individuals feel, a simple, straightforward, uncomplicated process. Children do not absorb the language simply by being exposed to it. A systematic approach and the use of deliberate strategies on the part of the staff, beyond their ability to speak the immersion language, are necessary to assure successful acquisition of the language.

The skills in methodology needed by staff in early years immersion settings cannot be met simply by translating material designed for a home language early years situation through the medium of the immersion language. Outside the immersion language sector, individuals tend towards an even more

simplistic version of this and presume that the only difference between the home language situation and an immersion language situation lies in the language used by the staff. For them, the immersion language setting is just a home language situation with the immersion language as an additional factor. This leads to their perception of the quality of the early years immersion setting as being defined, almost exclusively, by the home language template.

There are many commonalities between a home language early years settings and an immersion language early years settings. In both situations the focus is on the development of the child. Child care issues are the same so the general principles involving the provision of a high quality learning environment are the same. The early years Irish immersion PEEPS programmes in Northern Ireland incorporate the guidance outlined in the DE document "Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education" to ensure the delivery of this curriculum in a holistic way through play and other relevant experiences. Staff in an immersion setting, however, must have additional skills and competences and also need to have a firm knowledge regarding the processes of language learning.

Early Years language immersion staff must be able to identify the fundamental principles of good early years immersion practice in order to promote effective language learning. They have to understand the additional challenges which arise from immersion language learning.

In order to provide an effective language immersion environment, staff need to:

- participate in maximizing exposure to the immersion language
- support the development of children's ability to understand the immersion language
- support the emergence of children's ability to speak the immersion language
- contribute to the planning and implementation of immersion language activities to promote and maintain the interest, motivation and emotional well-being of children in an immersion setting.

In order to plan, implement and evaluate the provision of an effective language immersion environment, it is necessary for staff to:

- Plan for immersion language learning using relevant frameworks and guidance
- Plan and organize the physical environment to optimize children's immersion language learning
- Plan and implement specific activities and experiences to promote children's immersion language learning

- Monitor and evaluate activities and experiences to promote children's immersion language learning

Language is learnt by children by hearing the language spoken. Therefore, in an immersion language educational setting staff must contribute to the creation and maintenance of an environment in which children are surrounded by the language they are learning and hear the language being spoken constantly to themselves and others.

Therefore, it is vital that staff in an early years immersion setting:

- Use the immersion language at all times
- Speak the immersion language naturally and frequently in a variety of activities
- Maintain a high level of verbal interaction with children in all activities
- Maintain a sustained flow of language with children
- Cooperate with colleagues in providing opportunities to use language with children
- Provide clues which will help children understand what is being said
- Use strategies to increase exposure to key language areas
- Use coherent strategies to help children remember key language
- Build up children's familiarity with key language areas systematically
- Provide children with opportunities to say things in the immersion language
- Respond appropriately to children's attempts to use the immersion language
- Make useful contributions to language planning
- Implement language plan
- Promote children's enjoyment and success
- Practise a simplified language register placing the use of language in concrete, practical contexts and situations
- Build up children's specific understanding of key language items systematically
- Be familiar with the content of the language programme
- Use techniques of repetition, restatement and expansion regularly in verbal interaction with the children
- Target the language focus of the current language plan through repetition, restatement and expansion techniques
- Use repetition, restatement and expansion to consolidate and maintain key language items of past planning and past experience
- Collaborate with colleagues to model verbalization

These language strategies must be integrated into the daily routine so that staff may counteract additional challenges to an early years immersion language setting which include:

- Reduced exposure to the immersion language
- Ratio of fluent speakers to learners
- Children's immature learning strategies
- Lack of any conscious motivation on the part of children to learn a new language

The immersion language early years setting requires a direct and interventionist approach. Adult presence in children's activities is more frequent and the adult input in verbal interactions is more predominate-this is inevitable. The adult cannot remain a discreet presence in the background waiting for opportunities initiated by children to enrich their linguistic competence. At the same time, there is no place in the language immersion environment for a heavy-handed coercive approach. Children need to enjoy their learning, feel comfortable with all staff and experience some sense of control in their choices and decisions.

Too often, the inspection process does not take the above factors into consideration when inspecting Irish language Early Years settings.

As a result Inspection Reports and oral feedback reports often reflect:

- a shortfall in awareness of what early years immersion education involves
- the tendency to include evaluations based only on the characteristics of good preschool education but to ignore the evaluation on the characteristics of a good early years language immersion programme
- the lack of cognizance of the necessary balance of adult interaction and the child's freedom in order to ensure focused approach to language development
- the lack of awareness of the need to consistently use the immersion language through all activities for all children
- inconsistencies in the ratings awarded to immersion early years settings
- the inclusion, at times, of subjective factors in determining the quality of provision
- the absence of any reference to the specialised needs of Irish immersion staff in relation to language and methodology in evaluating and recording templates

Altram request that the above factors be taken into consideration in the inquiry.

Is mise le meas


Máirín Murray

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Aspect Group of Prospect



Aspect Group of Prospect Submission to NI Assembly Education Committee

Inquiry into The Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Aspect Group of Prospect as the autonomous professional voice of experienced school improvement specialists accepts that the focus of government has shifted towards a more rigorous accountability process in terms of school performance and pupil achievement. The policy document “Every School a Good School” (ESaGS), published by DE, sets out future aims and objectives in relation to school improvement and governance. In response to this, ELBs are moving towards an agreed set of criteria for identifying individual schools which require formal intervention in order to address serious deficiencies in pupil achievement and school performance, as measured against comparable data from schools of similar type. Future school improvement services must therefore be flexible enough to be able to respond to a range of emerging school needs as identified by performance data or external audit. It is the Education and Training Inspectorate that provides the external audit for schools in Northern Ireland. The function is to quality assure the provision of education in schools and colleges and youth organisations in Northern Ireland and education provider organisations up to tier 4 but only as far as tier 3 provision.

In its document “A charter for Inspection” ETI describes its purpose “is to promote the highest possible standards of learning, teaching and achievement throughout the education, training and youth sectors. In achieving this purpose, we: Provide an unbiased, independent, professional assessment of the quality of learning and teaching, including the standards achieved by learners.”

Aspect fully supports the principal of independent quality assurance of teaching and learning within the context of a partnership arrangement with the education authorities and school support and improvement services. While ETI insists that the inspection process itself is pivotal to school improvement it is not the only nor the most important factor in the school improvement process.

Recent ETI documents emphasise the value of self-evaluation processes which are encapsulated in the Quality indicators first published in “Together Towards Improvement” document. Aspect believes that supported self-evaluation is a powerful tool in establishing the baseline for a school's performance at any given time and the key role of ETI is to quality assure the self-evaluative process and to report on the school's capacity to identify issues that are risk factors in poor performance and the resources and capacity to address those factors.

It is Aspect's strong contention that the predominant focus of ETI and the inspection process is on the external audit function. This is how it should be. It remains the function and responsibility of the employing authorities to take whatever action is necessary to address any issues that may arise from such external quality audits. It is the responsibility of government to ensure that the employing authorities have the resources and structures to support the school improvement actions that follow many inspections recently reported on in schools.

In this submission to the Education Committee Aspect Group of Prospect wishes to draw attention to some key issues surrounding ETI and the School improvement process

1. Accountability taking precedence over strategic improvement planning
2. Openness and transparency of the Inspection process
3. Information flow in the education system
4. ETI view of what drives school Improvement
5. Consistency of approach across all schools types and locations
6. Inspection process informing or being driven by external priorities

- 1.0 All schools are accountable for the welfare, education and achievement of the pupils. The principal and teachers are accountable to the parents, the education authority, Department of Education and the community. Recent changes in the regulations relating to School Development plans have specified clearly where the lines of accountability lie. However what appears to be emerging is the particular foci of the work of the principal, governors and teachers towards setting goals and targets that will fulfil criteria for success for the institution rather than success for the individual pupils. This impacts on the nature and type of courses offered to pupils in order to maximise achievement in external award bearing courses. There is an incentive for school managements to become risk averse to avoid the pitfalls of being open, dynamic, stimulating and challenging organisations that state that their pupils are at the centre of all their deliberations and then practise this by demonstrating pupil centeredness in the school planning and delivery of the curriculum, and extracurricular activities.
- 2.0 Much work has been done by the inspectorate to explain the process and methodology of the inspection. Schools however still approach the announcement of an inspection with fear and trepidation. This is because of the aura of uncertainty surrounding the process. This is not so much that Principal, Governors and Staff do not know what the procedure is but are unclear about what inspection teams expect to see in classrooms during lessons and at senior leadership meetings. Aspect welcomes the introduction of quality indicators in relation to the inspection process and is supportive of further measures to demystify the purpose and outcomes of classroom observations.
- 3.0 There is a plethora of data and information emanating from schools to education and library boards, CCMS, DE and C2K. There is currently no central administration for this data, while efforts are being made to streamline the access to data and the use of such data to inform the school improvement agenda. Since much of the performance data is already contained within the School Development Plan which all schools are obliged to produce and send copies to the Education authorities, then ETI could utilise this evidence reducing the burden on overstretched schools and principals and seek only what additional data is required for the purposes of the inspection process.
- 4.0 ETI have the view often stated in Chief Inspector's reports that the inspection process and ETI in particular are the key drivers of school improvement. This may have some validity in some schools and circumstances but by no means gives the whole picture. If this was the case then it is interesting to note that the inspection process and the inspectorate has been in existence for over 150 years while the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services of the Education and Library Boards have existed for just over 30 years. The truth lies somewhere in the middle. The partnership between ETI and CASS has without doubt accelerated the pace and scope of the school improvement agenda. The research evidence relating to what constitutes a good school is much more explicit and the professional development of the teaching force now focusses much more on raising standards for pupils and developing school leaders that have as their main priority raising attainment for pupils. It is essential that this partnership continues to exist and that both groups of professionals recognise in

each other the unique contribution that each makes to reduce the level of underachievement among some of our children. School improvement professionals in CASS should be integral to the inspection process with contacts with ETI prior to inspections during the process and particularly at the feedback report.

- 4.1 Recent proposals by the Chief Inspector to “put” subject specialist inspectors in literacy and numeracy into a number of identified schools across Northern Ireland to carry out baseline inspections followed by advice and support over a sustained period of time with the aim of raising the number of pupils in receipt of free school meals that achieve 5 GCSEs at Grade A* -C including English and Mathematics. This represents a major shift in role for inspectors and raises a number of potential conflicts. For example, if ETI support these schools and then subsequently carry out a follow up inspection to evaluate the outcomes of this support how can the inspection process be seen as independent? Currently ETI undertake quality audits of the advice and support given to schools by CASS. There is most definitely a potential conflict of interest at best and an undermining of the widely recognised and valued work of the advisory services at worst.
- 5.0 There is a widespread perception, real or imaginary that different types of schools are treated in different ways during the inspection process. This perception relates to anecdotal stories about inspections in schools in rural versus urban areas, secondary versus grammar schools and schools in socially deprived areas versus schools in more affluent areas. The perception is sometimes reinforced by the wording of the inspection report. To remove this perception many of the recent actions taken by ETI to make the inspection process more transparent are to be welcomed, though there is much still to be done in this area. There needs to be a robust mechanism for recognising the “value-added” nature of the work of schools in areas with high levels of social deprivation, coupled with actions designed to address the constraints on schools in such areas. The recent report chaired by Sir Robert Salisbury on school funding alluded to ways in which the matter could be alleviated.
- 6.0 Since the publication of the document “Every School A Good School” (ESAGS) there has been much debate about the mechanisms to address underachievement and lack of adequate performance in schools as evidenced by external examination results or the outcome of inspections which grade schools from outstanding to unsatisfactory. Aspect does not doubt the necessity and efficacy of quality assurance in our schools and the need to intervene in order to improve the situation when required. However the establishment of an action plan to remedy the situation must take into account the context of the school and the circumstances that have given rise to the underperformance. The changes to the evaluation of governance in schools has followed very rapidly on the production of School Development Plans which are still very much work in progress for governors in terms of having a firm grasp of the key elements of these pivotal documents. The potential effect of a heavy handed approach to the work of often busy dedicated individuals that constitute Boards of Governors may well deter even the most conscientious and experienced governors and Chairs of governors from giving further service in what is after all a voluntary and unremunerated activity. Aspect supports the right of ETI to comment on the governance in schools but is wary of the methodology used where Boards of Governors are obliged to justify their record of work by providing extensive evidence of the outcomes of meetings and procedures. We must bear in mind that the key purpose of inspections is to raise standards by providing information on the quality of teaching, learning and governance in schools.

Conclusion

Aspect recognises the highly professional expertise of inspectors and the role they play in seeking to improve standards of achievement in schools. Much has been done by ETI as an organisation to develop processes and procedures that take account of the sensitive nature of quality assurance and the potential effects of inspections on the principals, teachers and governors in schools. Aspect further recognises the partnerships that have been established between many individual inspectors and Aspect professionals in the CASS services and supports the formalisation of these partnerships by ETI as an organisation and by education authorities. To this end Aspect strongly believes that there must be a range of partnerships developed by all the main key players in the education sector. This would facilitate the flexible interchange of personnel across the organisations involved in education at all levels and allow a much greater movement of expertise, skills and talent within and across the partner organisations in temporary or longer term position.

Sean Maguire, Aspect Group Vice President

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27 September 2013

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Associate Assessor - Principal Drumahoe PS



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

19th March 2014

Mervyn Storey M.L.A.
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BT53 6EA

Dear Mr Storey,

I am writing to you in relation to my position as an Associate Assessor with the Education Training Inspectorate, a role that I have fulfilled since my initial appointment in July 2006 to the present.

Firstly may I apologise for my unavailability to attend the recent informal briefing event with AA's in Parliament Buildings on Wednesday 19 February 2014 but my school was being inspected the following week so I was otherwise occupied!

What has both surprised and taken me aback is the reading of the Minutes of Evidence from the meetings held on 26.02.14 and 05.03.14 and the comments attributed to Mr T Lunn:

...“ MrLunn: I had not heard of associate assessors until a few weeks ago. That is my starting point. I am a complete ignoramus on this matter, but it sounds like a very good system. It is like a lay assessor. It compares with other situations, as long as their input is valued and they have some control or responsibility in the overall outcome. As you said, Noelle, you have not seen the results of last week's discussions yet. You might want to reflect on those when you see them because I do not think that they feel as valued as you seem to value them. I wonder what happens when they disagree with the outcome.”

...“It is fair to say that the associate assessors do not feel sufficiently valued in the process, yet the inspectorate says that it values them very highly, their input is taken on board, and so on. Somebody is wrong. It sounds to me like a good augmentation of the system, if for no other reason than it gives those head teachers — it is normally head teachers — the experience of an inspection, which will be valuable to them when they come back to their own schools.”

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Principal: T. R. McMaster B.Ed.





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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

If the inquiry is there to influence the future of school improvement and the effectiveness of the relationship of external inspection to internal improvement, then it would be remiss of me, in my experience and insights of working with ETI over the course of eight years, not to totally refute the above sentiments which you yourself in the minutes state ... *“none of the comments are attributable, but they give a sense of what came out of the event.”*

I can safely say that my own experience of working as an Associate Assessor has been the most valuable piece of continuing professional development (CPD) that I have undertaken as a Principal of some seventeen years in developing my understanding of the inspection procedures, processes and protocols. Together with being involved in many inspection teams, I have also had the opportunity of being seconded for a term to work for E.T.I., been involved in various aspects of survey work supporting policy advice for DE and also asked to serve as a primary principal representative on a focus group to advise on a draft strategy for inspecting schools.

In all of these different activities undertaken with ETI, I have always been treated as a highly valued member of any team that I have had the privilege to be a part of and my own personal knowledge and experience has always been sought after and respected. I have always felt that I have brought the outside perspective of a serving principal to the team which on occasion has challenged the process but in a positive way.

In terms of self-evaluation, the experiences I have had on inspection and in the training provided by ETI for AA's has complemented the internal self-evaluation process of my own organisation which I have no doubt contributed to the most positive nature of our own most recent school inspection.

In conclusion, I have been encouraged by reading the recent Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) Review of Evaluation of Assessment in Education: Northern Ireland which acknowledges the positive role of Associate Assessors in the inspection process and indeed included it in the “Synergies for Better Learning” good practice report (see below).

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

**Box 6.9 Recruiting senior educators to join external school evaluation teams,
 Northern Ireland, United Kingdom**

In Northern Ireland, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) recruits “associate assessors” from among senior staff in schools (e.g. school principals, deputy principals or senior teachers) to participate the external evaluation of individual schools. ETI recruits associate assessors via public advertisement and an interview process. Selected individuals join a pool of associate assessors and can be invited to join an external school evaluation team on an individual school inspection. Normally an individual will not be involved in more than two external school evaluations each year. Associate assessors receive training from the ETI and are introduced to the procedures and performance indicators used in external school evaluation.

This strategy has two objectives: first, it is hoped that the experience of involvement in assessing quality in another educational establishment will help to develop the individual’s capacity to monitor, evaluate and improve the provision in his/her own school; second, the presence in the team of someone coming directly from the school context adds a dimension which can help to develop the ETI’s awareness of the current perspective of schools.

Source: Department of Education, Northern Ireland (forthcoming).

I trust you will take my views into consideration when considering the evidence for your Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the School Improvement Process.

Thanking you in anticipation of your co-operation with this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

Developing the potential of everyone to the full, within a caring and stimulating environment.

Principal: T. R. McMaster B.Ed.



Association of School and College Leaders

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

The Association of School and College Leaders represents 17000 post primary school leaders nationally. Here in Northern Ireland, ASCL represents the Principals and Senior Leaders in most of our largest schools across all sectors. ASCL members have responsibility for the education of 45% of all post primary pupils in Northern Ireland and given their level of responsibility and commitment to the success of our schools, they wish to offer their frontline experience in the planning for the future at this critical time in the evolution of our education system.

1. The view of the association is that the current measures of school performance and benchmarked comparison in inspections do not always reflect the true value added to pupil attainment by schools and by implication the quality of leadership in those schools.

At the ASCL NI Annual Conference in November 2012, Minister John O Dowd challenged ASCL to become involved in improving the overall quality of leadership in schools as it is a key factor in system improvement. Since then the association has been working closely with DE, ESAIT, ETI and the University of Ulster in devising new approaches to leadership development. An important starting point is agreement on effective leadership practice and recognition of the school contexts in which leadership and school improvement are operating. Support for school leaders in difficult circumstances, improved leadership training pathways and increased sharing of accountability by middle leaders in schools are therefore ideas being explored and ASCL will continue to offer its expertise to aid this process.

2. The practice of using the percentage of pupils entitled to Free School Meals to categorise and compare school performance during inspection is not always an accurate or useful measure. The coalition government in England is now moving away from context value added indicators due to concerns about their robustness. The association of lowest funded education authorities in England, F 40, argue strongly that a system based on classroom behaviour and parents' education taken together with educational attainment is a better indicator of social deprivation. Briefing papers to the Education Committee on the robustness of the Free School Meals measure confirm these concerns. The Northern Ireland Assembly Briefing paper 39/11 published in February 2011 conducts a thorough analysis of current value added measures. It notes that there is now widespread use in the post primary sector of private testing instruments such as midYIS, yellis and ALIS to assess and track pupil progress but emphasises the inability of the Department of Education's InCAS tests in primary schools to be coordinated with these to achieve on-going tracking cross- phase.
3. In a published Statement of Intent 2013 on School and College Performance Tables, the Department of Education in England has as its major recommendation the intention to introduce three year averages for headline key stage 2 and key stage 4 pupil attainment. This does not happen for key stage 2 in N Ireland and current approaches to average examination benchmarks can fail to recognise real achievement in a school. While literacy and numeracy levels, expressed as % level 5 and % level 4 are included now in Northern Ireland inspection reports for incoming Year 8 pupils, they are not used as a statistical comparator or a standardised baseline for calculating value added improvement in pupil achievement, as in England. These levels are used rather to provide anecdotal contextualisation. Qualifying paragraphs appear in inspection reports like – “ a very mixed ability intake for a selective school”, to explain below average public examination outcomes. These key stage 2 levels are not factored in to the overall judgement of a school in terms of inspection grade. State sponsored, standardised, numeracy and literacy tests at 7,11 and 13 would allow accurate mapping of pupil progress and could be used to set key stage 4 and 5 targets. An effective value added measure is therefore missing in our system. The former transfer test, while imperfect, at least provided standardised, system wide, benchmarking for a very large

percentage of each pupil tranche. Attempts to replace this measure have not been effective in producing comparable benchmarks to date.

4. Anecdotal feedback from recent inspections suggests an overemphasis on headline statistics. Schools are being challenged for example, for allowing U6 pupils to sit 2 A Levels and an AS course rather than 3 A levels, because this lowers the A*-C pass overall. Another example of statistical misdirection would be a school with a 6th Form of 100 having 10 pupils achieving 3 A grades each and the remaining 90 pupils getting 3 C grades each coming out with a higher headline A Level average, than a comparable school where 95 pupils get 3 A passes and 5 pupils get 2 A passes and a D. More discriminating measures are needed including credit for pupils achieving 3 + A levels at grades A-D.
5. While ASCL acknowledges the need for inspections to canvas staff opinions, we wish to put on record our deep concern at the manner in which current survey processes can operate to the detriment of school leader morale and school improvement generally. To achieve a change in accountability culture and challenge underperformance requires resolute, determined leadership. Care must be taken to ensure that effective leaders are not undermined and that staff comments/complaints are balanced by the inclusion of a survey filled out by the Principal and VPs on staff training, performance issues, mentoring, support staff, staff absence etc. to achieve a more rounded view.

Frank Cassidy Regional Officer ASCL NI

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

ATL Recommendations to the Committee for Education - Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Recommendations: to improve the approach to school improvement

1. *Undertake a cost benefit analysis* of the relationship between inspection and school improvement (Whitby, K. 2010 in Perry, C., 2012, P21)
2. *Develop a supportive quality assurance model* (Finland/Scotland) which uses positive language (for example, Very Confident, Confident, Not Confident) aligned to support systems that involve more seconded teachers;
3. *Stream-line future school evaluation processes* to provide clearer guidance on data requirements; permit verbal (and written) challenge; reduce reporting timescales; and improve the qualitative detail of unpublished reporting to schools.

Recommendations: to improve the assessment of value-added

4. *Use NISRA census information and geographic information system (GIS)* to identify school characteristics and to stratify schools by socio-economic intake to help allocate resources effectively, target social need and calculate value-added.
5. *Assess productive language (oracy) on entry to school* as a key indicator of future educational potential and as a base-line measure of school value-added.

Recommendations: to improve system monitoring

6. *Use light sampling* to provide robust and independent monitoring data over time, disentangling teacher assessment from accountability (Tymms & Merrill);
7. *Use International data* (PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA) to provide additional quantitative and qualitative information as a broader comparative measure.

Recommendations for alternative measures of achievement

8. *Commission international research* and development to assist CCEA in developing innovative 21st Century assessments and examinations.
9. *Separate teacher assessment from accountability* to safeguard assessment for learning.
10. *Develop wider indicators* to 'enable progress in all important learning goals to be reported' (ARG, 2008) and to broaden measurement of 'value-added'.
11. *Use standardised testing data sensitively within schools only* for diagnostic, formative and value-added purposes to prevent teaching to the test.
12. *Use pupil attitudinal and 'well-being' surveys sensitively* to gain insight into the correlation between 'motivation', 'liking' and achievement (Sturman, 2012).
13. *Develop 'unseen' thinking skills assessments* 'to ensure that important 21st Century skills become valued in the education system' (OECD, 2011: 19).
14. *Develop new qualifications for N. Ireland* which reflect the needs of young people, the economy and employment in the 21st Century (CBI, 2012).
15. *Introduce a measure to reduce the number of pupils leaving school with no qualifications* by an agreed percentage.

16. *Review Programme for Government Targets and NI Audit Office Monitoring* to reflect these recommendations, based on an understanding of supportive accountability.

Recommendations for additional powers, governance and transparency

17. *Ensure accurate and transparent media reporting of educational outcomes.*
18. *Require that the evidence-base for ETI judgements is open and transparent.*
19. *Ensure that all future educational policy is based on sound research.*
20. *Invest in teacher professional development and improve political and public respect for teaching as a profession:* Re-route spending on statutory assessment and evaluation systems towards teacher professional development. Develop greater political and public appreciation of the complexity of education, issues of socio-economic deprivation and equity, and the quality of the public service which teachers provide.

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

Follow up submission from Association of Teachers and Lecturers

In evidence I had referred to a study of OFSTED inspection outcomes in my evidence and had indicated I would get the reference for that.

I had referred to recent statistics (2010,11,12) from the Education and Training Inspectorate, and said that one would expect that if the Inspectorate really took account of social class, and the advantages or disadvantages that particular schools face, that you'd find that schools in each social band would show the same broad range of inspection grades. What you actually find, is that schools with the most advantaged intake band are twice as likely to get an "Outstanding" or "Very Good" inspection grade than those from the least advantaged – and that schools from the least advantaged social band are four times more likely to receive an "Inadequate" or "Unsatisfactory" grade than those from the most advantaged intake band.

These findings mirror a recent very high quality research study done by the RSA and OfSTED into the characteristics of satisfactory schools[1].

[1] Becky Francis RSA (Un)Satisfactory? Enhancing Life Chances by Improving 'Satisfactory' Schools, December 2011, see <http://www.thersa.org/action-research-centre/education/social-justice/satisfactory-schools>

The report reveals that schools stuck in the 'satisfactory' grade have a higher number of disadvantaged pupils and working class pupils. Outstanding schools take their fair share of neither. This finding is important. Outstanding schools disproportionately have advantaged pupil intakes. Satisfactory schools have proportionately disadvantaged intakes.

I hope this helps,

Mark

Assumption Grammar School

Dear Mr McCallion

It may be a little late to contribute to the above subject. However, the Board of Assumption Grammar School, due to its recent experiences, wishes to contribute the following to the inquiry:

The Board of Governors, during this academic year, has begun to use the “Quality Indicators – for use in the self-evaluation of Governance.” The Board wishes to put on record that it has found this material to be of great benefit in structuring the manner and type of data, both qualitative and quantitative, which can be used as a tool of self-evaluation to drive forward school improvement.

The Board feels that this is indeed a positive initiative that allows its volunteers to more quickly and effectively make proper assessments on school performance in all relevant areas. Our members, who feel that they have been well informed and have been successful in the areas of whole school performance and accountability, are now able to structure the process of self-evaluation in a better way. One significant development is that we now hold face-to-face meetings with Heads of Department in a framework of support and evaluation.

The Board wishes to record its thanks to the ETI, and in particular, Dr Shevlin for the guidance provided in this area. It would be our wish that further work and guidance/training be provided by ETI in this area, and that its work here would become more wide spread. The governors do not see this as a form-filling exercise but recognise it as an opportunity to share learning not only between the governors and within the school but beyond into the wider learning community.

Board of Governors

Assumption Grammar School

Ballymoney High School

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Submission to NI Assembly Education Committee

On behalf of the Governors and Staff of Ballymoney High School

September 2013

Ballymoney High is a controlled secondary school in the town of Ballymoney County Antrim, currently under the authority of NEELB. The school's present Enrolment is 650 pupils aged 11-16 years, with 47 teaching staff (full and part time).

The school was subject to an Eti Standard Inspection in the first week of October 2012. The school's provision overall was assessed as Satisfactory, but pupil attainment was deemed Inadequate. Three Areas for Improvement were identified and the school is currently addressing these across a 24 month follow-up period.

In the light of our experience of inspection we would offer the following observations and opinions which are chiefly focused upon the Committee's Terms of Reference 1 & 2.

1. Terms of Reference 1: effectiveness of approach

- I. we strongly believe that the approach is currently statistically driven and that performance in public examinations is the over-riding factor in judgements reached
- II. schools like ourselves are well aware of their position against relevant benchmarks and are seeking to make improvements through the regular process of self evaluation and action planning – we believe insufficient credit is given to this planned or existing work of the school during inspection
- III. equally, the drive and focus on performance figures is to the detriment of other aspects of school provision (eg pastoral care or curriculum offer) which we feel are adjudged less favourably in consequence to “match” the final conclusion of the report against the starting point of inadequate results – similarly the concept of “value added” to the lives and learning of the pupils featured very little in our inspection experience – the primary emphasis was on performance figures and the need to raise these and there was a strong perception amongst teaching staff that Inspectors came “looking for” reasons to explain results rather than an objective “looking at” provision alongside results
- IV. such a statistically driven approach naturally operates in a “clinical” manner, which tends to erode or devalue a due sense of context and character important to any school's personality and provision
- V. also, an approach in which the term “Satisfactory” is defined as strengths outweighing areas for improvement, but then goes on to major on the latter, leaves staff feeling under-valued and demoralised – this does not stimulate improvement, but more often generates “paralysis”, unhealthy introspection or doubt about going forward
- VI. the subsequent action planning process proves very bureaucratic with schools needing to satisfy the expectations of both their ELB and the Eti – energy is drained from the actual practical work of response we believe this approach is not effective in fulfilling the Eti's own stated purpose of improving standards and often leaves a school in a “lower” or “reduced” baseline position from which to commence any planned response to inspection – the school is then action planning with meagre support and faces

follow-up visits and inspection where it expects that results will again predominate findings without due recognition of improvements worked – a sense or “fear” of continuing follow-up inspection(s) arises, predicated on the drive for results alone – it majors more on listing deficiencies rather than promoting good practice

- VII. we believe schools would value more and respond more positively to more detailed reports made directly and even privately to the school – this would be more informed and measured both in terms of receiving and responding to areas for improvement – it would fit better too and complement the school's existing self-evaluation and planning and would be less of a “disruptive” moment
- VIII. schools would benefit too from more specific sharing of inspection standards and expectations especially when observing classroom lessons – inspectors are very reluctant to offer any insight in this regard and teachers would value it

2. Terms of Reference 2: follow on review and support

- I. the current regime of inspection majors on the challenge function with performance statistics and contributes little to follow-on support – during inspection some advice may be offered informally, however formal report back (verbal initially and subsequently written) focuses upon areas for improvement identified and offers no advice on appropriate responses by the school – since the Inspectorate gathers a wealth of evidence on good practice could they not at least provide a list of appropriate actions set against specific areas for improvement which would guide and benefit schools
- II. planned response and necessary support require a school to liaise with the CASS service in its area ELB – this service is currently seriously inadequate in terms of staffing and resources and relevant expertise (this is not to apportion blame to CASS, just a statement of fact of current resource levels)
- III. with numbers of inspections and follow-ups growing, the support function of the school's District Inspector is disappearing and the value of positive rapport and professional dialogue and guidance that offered disappears with it
- IV. as with paragraph 1 above, the EtI primary purpose of improving standards is poorly served – schools are not having a positive or supportive regime when the current practice is chiefly to inspect, list areas for improvement and then return to inspect without intervening adequate support function
- V. school improvement depends more upon the effective practice, continuing education, expertise and energy of teaching staff rather than the periodic intervention of inspection process which lacks follow-up support and is diminishing regular contact with its schools beyond the inspection regime – the importance of good will and confidence must not be neglected and are being “threatened” by the current regime.

Belfast Education and Library Board



CM/GMcM

10 October 2013

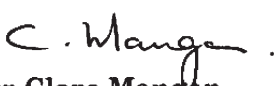
Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk
Committee for Education
Room 241, Parliament Buildings
Stormont,
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr McCallion

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Please find attached, the Belfast Education and Library Board's response to the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Yours sincerely


Dr Clare Mangan
Chief Executive

Enc

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**INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE
AND THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS**

**SUBMISSION FROM THE BELFAST EDUCATION
AND LIBRARY BOARD**

OCTOBER 2013

Introduction

The Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) welcomes the opportunity to engage in consultation as part of this Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the School Improvement Process. BELB places great value on the work done by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and its role in promoting improvement in the interest of all learners.

In response to the issues raised in the inquiry, this paper will firstly present a brief context of the Belfast board area and its current programme for school improvement before outlining a detailed response to each of the four issues.

Context

The Belfast Education and Library Board is charged under the provisions of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Orders with responsibility for providing an education service, including a youth service, in the Belfast area. It serves a very socially diverse area across the city with a population of approximately 270,000. Twenty per cent of the population are under the age of 16, and the city has one of the youngest populations in Europe.

The schools population of 57,000 is catered for by 163 schools (31 nursery, 85 primary, 33 post primary, 14 special). These include controlled, maintained, integrated, Irish medium, voluntary grammar and preparatory departments.

This social diversity is reflected by a range of schools, from those in the most challenging circumstances to prestigious grammar schools. This is also reflected in the results with some of the highest achievements in the UK along with schools which are struggling to meet the basic standards in literacy and numeracy.

Recognising the key role that is also played by ETI in the school improvement process, BELB would like to present the following response to the issues identified by the inquiry.

Issue 1:

Review the effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection/improvement - considering particularly how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment

1. No standardised baseline

- a. The absence of a standardised baseline for children on entry to primary schools in NI makes the measure of 'value-added' in the primary sector more difficult to compare across schools. BELB would welcome a standardised approach to the assessment of children on entry to school in order to more accurately ascertain the 'value-added' impact of the educational provision.
- b. Many post-primary schools report that they pay little attention to the baseline submitted to them in terms of end of key stage (KS) results from their feeder primaries. This suggests that a baseline, which is intended to be criterion referenced, but in reality is often based on teacher judgement, produces varying levels of confidence across the province.
- c. BELB would welcome a more stringent consideration of a school's ability to 'close the gap' via an agreed mechanism which seeks to track the improvement of all children on entry to and from primary and post primary schools. An agreed approach to the factors which determine 'value-added' would be welcome, in line with the approach used in England. This would be particularly valuable for those schools that have lower levels of educational attainment, yet internal base-lining and tracking of pupil performance would indicate that children are achieving in line with their ability and predictions. This dichotomy can only be addressed when NI has a clear and robust 'value-added' system in place.

2. Realistic expectations of end-of-key stage attainment levels

- a. No particular cognisance is currently taken of NISRA data in the assessment of the educational 'value-added'; multiple levels of social deprivation impact significantly on the educational attainment of children and this knowledge should be factored in to the equation when measuring the 'value-added' by individual schools. (The '80/20 rule' purports that school is only responsible for 20% of a child's

education, 80% is gained outside of that eg in the home and community. If this is accurate, then there could be a case for greater collaboration between ETI and other agencies in the inspection of schools, as is the case in Scotland).

- b. Whilst current benchmarking data seeks to identify performance of 'like' schools, 50% of schools will always be below the 'median'. In the past, DE published graphs with 'regression' lines; these were useful for ELBs and schools to determine how close their performance was to this comparative line.
- c. ETI measure 'value-added' by comparing schools to NI average and the ELB average. By definition, this necessitates that 50% of schools will always be below average.

3. Public nature of the inspection findings

- a. Where there are 'serious concerns' it is recommended that a school should be given 6 months to act on the initial findings before the report goes public. This would give ETI a better idea as to whether or not formal intervention was necessary (ie less internal capacity, the greater the need for external support).
- b. The public nature of the findings can often lead to a 'trial by media', which often distracts from the impact which the report should have on improving the quality of educational provision with immediate effect.

4. Criteria used for inspections needs to be open and transparent

It is recommended that:

- a. ETI should make the criteria used for each category of schools transparent and discuss this openly with schools: a particular grade should not come as a shock to a school, nor to the ELB.
- b. Some level of discussion would be welcomed prior to an 'inadequate' or an 'unsatisfactory' grade being given to a school. This would allow for useful information to be shared, which may have a bearing on the overall outcome of the school.

5. Emotional impact

- a. ELBs have a duty of care to all ELB employees and the label of for example, 'inadequate' given to schools achieving standards consistently below NI average leaves an indelible mark on the

principal and staff alike. This often impacts negatively on morale before the leadership and management are in a position to move forward and to act on the areas for improvement. However, the emotional impact may never completely be ameliorated.

- b. BELB welcomes the 'sustaining improvement model' which is due to take place which will involve a one day assessment of a school which has previously been labelled as 'excellent' or 'very good'.

6. Schools often report inconsistencies in approaches used and comments made by various district inspectors and teams

It is recommended that:

- a. ETI should ascertain whether or not this is a valid concern; and
- b. consider an independent evaluation of the inspection process.

Issue 2:

Identify the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI process and the support services provided by the Department of Education and Library Boards

1. Identification of factors which create the main barriers to learning

- a. Social deprivation factors (particularly multiple levels of social deprivation) create barriers which are difficult to overcome for example lack of education of the parent, multi-generational unemployment, lack of aspiration and hope. Schools alone cannot overcome these barriers and ELBs and government bodies should pull resources and work together to address the factors which contribute to underachievement: one example of this might be 'full-service' provision primary schools in areas which are most in need.
- b. In areas with high levels of social deprivation, the rate of progress in reaching the required level (for example Level 4 at KS2) can take longer; this should be taken into account when reaching a judgement on the progress between Key Stage 1 and 2.
- c. Some consideration could be given to pupils being assessed when they are developmentally ready.

2. A broader view than just educational attainment should be factored in to the final analysis

- a. Schools focus on the 'all round' education of the child, not just academic attainment at specific times in a child's life. This supports the ethos of the NI Curriculum (2007).

3. To what extent does the quality of teaching directly impact upon the standards achieved?

- a. In many schools entering formal intervention process there are no 'inadequate' lessons reported by ETI. In many cases, 'quality of provision' is satisfactory or better but yet the overall judgment on the school is 'inadequate'.

4. Teachers no longer receive informal (oral) feedback from the ETI on their observed lessons

- a. This allows a knowledge vacuum to develop, where teachers do not feel that the published report recognises their contribution or, perhaps more worryingly, that they could be responsible for any short-comings in teaching.
- b. BELB would welcome a return to formative feedback being given to all teachers as a norm within the inspection process.

5. Patterns of concern

Once a school enters a formal intervention process (FIP) it should be a 'priority' area for all departments within its ELB; where there are several schools in a local area which have been deemed inadequate then other relevant government bodies should make this community a priority area within a co-ordinated support framework.

Issue 3

Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection, the assessment of value added and improvement

- 1. BELB would welcome DE/ELBs undertaking significant research into education systems in other countries. Here are just a few examples:**
 - a. To develop autonomy of schools it may be worthwhile to consider other systems which require schools to self-evaluate an identified aspect of school improvement on an annual basis. This self-evaluative report is returned to the education authority at the end of the year (for discussion and verification with their 'link officer').
 - b. ETI 'quality assurance model' is a useful system whereby schools can invite ETI to self-evaluate an aspect of school life which they have been addressing. Whilst not mandatory, if widespread, this should enable schools to develop an ongoing relationship with their district inspector, which would focus on self-evaluation and improvement.
 - c. BELB support the view by GTCNI that inspection and review works best when it works in partnership and would promote the autonomy of schools in playing a key role in self-evaluation and external review.
- 2. Consultation with ELBs**
 - a. It is recommended that the timing, frequency and/or the final outcome of a school's inspection should be a consultative process between the ELB and the ETI. The main question should be 'how do we best promote improvement in the interest of all learners?' Is an 'inadequate' or 'unsatisfactory' outcome the best way of achieving this goal.

Issue 4:

Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process including the need for enhanced powers; alternative measures of achievement; improved governance; and transparency

1. Enhanced powers

It is recommended that:

- a. ETI should have the power to identify 'inadequate' and 'unsatisfactory' teachers; these teachers should be entered in to a rigorous and robust 're-training' programme which brings them back to the basics of good quality teaching and learning, whilst at the same time supports them in addressing specific aspects of their teaching which is below standard. This external validation, which should support the principal's findings, would be useful in providing an external perspective on a school's internal judgement.
- b. An ongoing professional development programme for all teachers would be welcomed. This would enable teachers to self-evaluate their own practice based on an agreed and shared set of 'success criteria'. GTCNI are currently exploring active registration whereby teachers would be required to produce a portfolio of evidence on, for example, a five year cycle to show that they are keeping up-to-date with changes in education. BELB would welcome this as a means to ensure that all teachers remain focussed on quality teaching and learning in their classrooms.
- c. Where there are concerns about the quality of leadership and management (particularly the principal), more immediate and focused action should be taken. A dedicated competency-based programme should be drawn up and fully-completed. This may involve the principal and/or others taking a sabbatical.
- d. BELB would welcome a review of the current PRSD programme for both teachers and school leaders.

2. Alternative measures of achievement

- a. A fixed and published 'floor target' would be a clearer way for schools to judge their relative success.

- b. The NI Curriculum (2007) has at its core the importance of educating the whole child ie the inclusion of a new area of study Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) in primary schools and Learning for Life and Work (LLW) in post-primary emphasised the importance of educating the whole child particularly with respect to 'how to do life'. The current emphasis on standards of attainment being the main indicator of a school's success seems to negate this and is a 'throw back' to a previous curricular age.
- c. Explore a common understanding of 'functional' literacy and numeracy: what does it mean and what does it look like in practice?
- d. A measure of an outcome can only truly be determined in terms of value-added when you have a clearly established starting point. Unfortunately, not all children come in to school with the same educational 'start' in life, nor do they have the same ongoing support. This fact cannot be ignored when determining the educational impact which a school has on the community which it serves.
- e. BELB would welcome a NI wide consensus of 'low' achievement and 'underachievement'. Underachievement exists in many contexts and this should be highlighted to a greater extent than is currently the case.

3. Improved governance

- a. Should ETI be an independent body which remains impartial?
- b. Should schools be able to engage in a 'two-way' discussion re. evidence base determined by ETI? The inspection process is one-directional and based primarily on what is 'seen' during a 2.5 day span (in the case of a focussed inspection). BELB would welcome a more formative approach which focuses on next steps in a school's development, in line with the principles of assessment for learning.
- c. In terms of governance of schools, ELBs need to explore ways of providing training on Quality Indicators for Governance (ETI) as a judgement on this is now reported in all inspection reports with effect from April 2013.

4. Transparency

- a. 60-day period for schools entering FIP is sufficient, however DE could grant 2 additional School Development Days, which would

have to be taken during this 60-day period. Schools receiving a satisfactory grade (30 days to prepare action plan) could be given one day. This is particularly pertinent if a school is inspected in the 2nd or 3rd term, where there may not be any school development days remaining. Schools could access SDDs from the following school year in advance.

- b. Follow-up inspection (FUI) reports are currently issued in the form of a letter. These inspections do not always provide the specificity and wealth of information required for the institution (or support bodies) to identify the clear reasons behind an inspection grade. As these inspections can result in a school dropping a grade or entering FIP, this clarity of evidence is even more important. In Scotland, the current practice is to provide a short report for publication and a more detailed confidential report for schools.
- c. ESAGS identifies a 'School Improvement Fund' for schools in the FIP. However, there should be clearer mechanisms detailing how this funding can be accessed. There is currently no clear guidance for schools and/or ELBs as to how this should be done. (Schools have benefited from the opportunity to see what 'good' or 'outstanding' looks like and initial funding would be useful to enable principals, SMTs and teachers to do this following an inspection, particularly in schools where budgets are in deficit.)

Summary: Priorities and actions – Recommendations

- 1. Schools deemed to be in danger of entering FIP should be given a 6-month period to address emergent issues before the publication of their final report and 'outcome'.
- 2. The importance of key stage data needs to be reviewed– *should this 'outweigh' all other aspects of the provision of a school?* Without a standardised baseline the over emphasis on educational outcomes seems unfair to those schools that work in the most challenging of circumstances.
- 3. Entry and exit points for Formal Intervention should be more clearly defined. A school should be able to self-evaluate against open and transparent criteria: an 'inadequate' or an 'unsatisfactory' school should not be a surprise. The introduction of the QA model would give greater autonomy to schools and enable them to decide when they are in a state of readiness for inspection against aspects of provision which they have

developed as part of their ongoing school improvement work. This would promote and encourage a culture of school self-evaluation and review.

Conclusion

Many educationalists embraced the theory, principles and practices of the NI Curriculum (2007) because of the important role it places on autonomous learning: within an assessment *for* learning process, each child is supported in the identification of the 'next steps' in their learning, based on an ability to self-evaluate and engage in the setting of personal goals and targets, with a view to ensuring sustained and ongoing self-improvement. These same principles should be applied to our schools as they too engage in an ongoing process of school improvement and self-evaluation.

HM Inspectorate of Education (Scotland) believe that 'Inspection and review works best when it is conducted in the spirit of partnership' and have developed a two-way collaborative approach, which aims to develop positive working relationships between inspectors and reviewers. As a result, they have also developed greater collaboration with the school support service.

This seems a very worthwhile development to explore for education in NI so that the best educational provision and outcomes can be achieved for all our children.

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE AND THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Appendix to the Submission from Belfast Education and Library Board

Further to consideration of this issue by board members, the following additional points have been received.

The end of Key Stage data is a highly unreliable indicator of school performance. At primary level, tests are internally administered and marked. As principals have become cognisant of their centrality to inspection, the integrity of the data has become increasingly dubious.

Principals, out of fear of inspection, are in some cases, setting about designing 'inspection-proof curricula', potentially causing extreme stress and workloads for staff, and at risk of delivering a very narrow range of test-led learning experiences for pupils.

Many report a marked dichotomy between the ETI's rhetoric of 'collaboration and professional discussion', and the interrogative, data-driven, mechanical and perceived demoralising nature of the actual process.

There is a view that a 'call-back' to schools judged as 'very good' or 'outstanding', is an appropriate strategy. The rationale underpinning this approach is unclear. In the primary sector, it would be entirely possible for a school to be unable to replicate or improve on a previous year's KS2 results, due to a weaker year group having reached P7. Under the current inspection system, such a school would be judged as having failed to maintain its standards.

Dr Martin Brown

I am writing to you in relation to a request for written submissions relating to the inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) that is currently being conducted by the Northern Ireland Assembly. Having reviewed the terms of reference for the committee Inquiry, I am writing to inform you that over the last four years I have conducted an intensive study on inspection policy and practice in Northern Ireland that specifically addresses the terms of reference mentioned in your investigation. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, apart from the attached study, no such study exists that specifically addresses the issues that you seek to investigate.

In sum and of relevance to your own investigation; this research consisted of:

1. a quantitative survey of every school principal in Northern Ireland's perceptions of school evaluation;
2. in order to elucidate the research findings further, interviews with policy makers, inspectors and principals from Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, as part of the case study component part of the study and in order to validate the research further (*coupled with the attached recommendations for improved school evaluation*); the ETI also kindly facilitated me a request to visit a number of schools in the West Belfast area that was kindly organised by Dr. PShevlin from the ETI. This aspect of the research was particularly valuable to the study and in particular, highlighted the significant importance of the role of District inspector as an agent for change in the school improvement process. It was also carried out in order to observe first hand evidence on the value added dimension of the ETI and, how schools in Northern Ireland respond to and use Inspection frameworks and recommendations for school improvement. Furthermore, during the course of the research, I was also asked to participate in the OECD review of evaluation and assessment that revealed interesting observations on evaluation policy and practice in its own right.

In conclusion, although there are many recommendations in the attached study; on an aside point, what I found particularly striking was the wealth of knowledge by those Northern Ireland participants mentioned in the acknowledgement section of the study relating to evaluation in other jurisdictions in Europe and elsewhere. This observation, coupled with research participants unique and forward thinking knowledge on school evaluation, I was unable to find in any peer reviewed literature or otherwise. In this regard, I would strongly recommend that, those Northern Ireland participants mentioned in the acknowledgement section would considerably enhance your investigation.

Please find attached the four year study on Evaluation and inspection that will hopefully be of use to you and your committee of which, if required, I would be willing to discuss further. In this regard, I would be willing to give oral evidence to the committee if this will add value to your findings.

Finally, may I take this opportunity of wishing you and your committee the very best in your investigation and in agreement; most importantly, hopefully, as per your pod-cast, your investigation will '*add value to good quality education for all our children*'.

Please find attached the four year study.

DECONSTRUCTING EVALUATION IN EDUCATION

**A thesis presented to Dublin City University
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

By

Martin Brown

M.Sc, H.Ed

Supervisor

Dr. Joe. O'Hara

Volume 1 of 2

NOTE: This document forms part of a forthcoming series of articles; monographs; standalone book or book chapters and in this regard cannot be directly printed or distributed without prior permission of the Author.

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NAME OF INDIVIDUAL/COMMITTEE/ORGANISATION:
COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION, NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

FOR THE PURPOSE OF:
INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE (ETI)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines school evaluation policy and practice in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and seeks to articulate how the education community can respond to finding a balance between school self-evaluation and inspection as a moral and social discourse for quality in education. The author presents a review of the literature on the varying concepts of quality in education and how these complementary and at times contradictory concepts of quality have managed to influence the school evaluation frameworks of most countries. Using an extended version of Nevo's (1995) dialogue model of evaluation, the author examines the challenges of trying to find a balance between school self-evaluation and inspection. Finally, an analysis of the systems of school evaluation in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is described. The author utilised a concurrent multi-phase mixed methods strategy that consisted of an all island survey of every school principal in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Semi-structured interviews were also carried out with a sample of school principals and inspectors in order to elucidate further the questionnaire responses and recommendations for improvement. Findings suggest that, although there are many similarities between the systems of school evaluation in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; there are also differences in terms of how to ensure that evaluation is used as both a benchmark and promoter for quality in education.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The initial title for this study was *Nijesh solk mwil start gyamyath* (save us from the time of trial). The saying originates from old Shelta, a language used among the travelling community in Britain and Ireland. Kirk and Ó Baoill (2002) state that the language is referred to by a number of names, such as Cant, Gammon or Tarri, although the etymology of its origins is contested. Indeed, within the lexicon of the travelling policy of educational evaluation, contestation relating to the purpose of and meaning of the terms ‘inspection’ and ‘evaluation’ are also open to debate; contrariwise, the former may be referred to as accountability or school effectiveness and the latter may be referred to as self-evaluation or school improvement. What is not open to debate however is the fact that the word ‘Shelta’ first appeared in written text in 1882. This same period also saw the establishment of a national inspectorate of education on the island of Ireland where ‘in May 1832, four men were appointed as inspectors’ (O’Connor 2001, p.2).

The role of the inspectorate, whose *raison d’être* is to provide for government and people, or whomsoever, a balanced and fair assessment of how education is being provided’ (Coolahan 2009 p.314), was later summarized in a select Lords Committee of Inquiry on Education in 1837.

They were charged with investigating new applications for aid; they were to visit schools being built; and they were to visit schools actually in operation and to examine the work of the teachers and monitors therein (O h’Eideain, 1967: 128). The third duty became by far the most important, in practice it began to occupy most of the inspectors’ time and indeed has continued to do so up to the present time (O’Connor 2001, p.2).

Indeed, the core function of inspectors in both the ROI and NI has not changed since the Stanley Letter (1831). Furthermore, in the case of the inspectorate of NI, ‘the present Inspectorate is in direct unbroken descent from the Inspectorate established in 1832 by The Commissioners of National Education in Ireland’ (ETI 2012). What has changed since this period however is the view that education is now accepted as one of the key determinants for increased social and economic development, and within the global education space, effective educational evaluation policy and practice is also seen as being one of the foremost catalysts to ensuring that students have both the human and social capital required for active citizenship. By way of contrast, it is the author’s belief

that—not only in the field of education but also in other essential services such as public health and wellbeing—erroneous evaluation policy and practice at the school and regional level could also be viewed as one of the key factors resulting in successive governments and educationalists reverberating the plain language statement, ‘Where did it all go wrong?’ The importance placed on the significant role of educational evaluation in realising the stated goals and objectives of government and school, as advocated throughout this study, cannot be underestimated.

In this century, however, educational evaluation is no longer merely considered an external monitoring process or top-down externally devised legitimate dictate of examining, sanctioning or rewarding. In the case of inspections carried out in nineteenth century England, it was said that, ‘Superintendence ought to be felt; ... it should be a constant, forceful, living power’ (Graham 1885 in Thody 2000, p.53). Rather, educational evaluation is widely viewed as an allogamy of external evaluation carried out by the inspectorate in parallel with internal evaluation carried out by a school, the dual purpose of which is to serve both the accountability agenda on the one hand and the school improvement agenda on the other.

Commentators suggest that self-evaluation, embedded into the educational frameworks of most countries, is centred on a much wider decentralisation agenda in Europe and elsewhere. Whether perceived or true, there is also a widely held belief, in line with the key theme advocated throughout this study, that when inspection and self-evaluation are treated as interconnected units and used in partnership, both systems of evaluation have the potential to counteract the flaws that are inherent in each system. However, as Newton (2006) states,

Any quality assurance model, method or system, will always be affected by situational factors and context. This leads to the view that the success of a system may be less dependent on the rigour of application, and more on its contingent use by actors and protagonists, and on how the system is viewed and interpreted by them. (Newton 1999 cited in Newton, 2006)

Furthermore, it could also be argued that in order to gain an understanding of how best to form an amalgam between IE and EE, it is imperative that the perceptions of an array of stakeholders who are central to the process are taken into account. Otherwise, research of this type could be construed as selective and, to coin a phrase, an

unintentional form of *manufacturing consent*. To counteract this assertion, the approach taken in this study centred on a range of antecedent and perceived subsequent variables influencing and shaping how evaluation is interpreted from both the perspective of principals and inspectors who are deemed central to the process. However, it is acknowledged as a limitation of the study that other stakeholders who were not included in the study, such as parents and teachers, also form a significant part of the relationship between internal and external evaluation.

The aim of this thesis was to provide a critical analysis of school evaluation as it exists in practice. Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study, coupled with a description of how behaviourist interpretations of evaluation are now being replaced with more constructivist approaches to evaluation that are however strongly influenced by historical interpretations of quality in education. Chapter 2 described the rise of the quality improvement agenda and, using Harvey and Green's (1993) and Harvey and Knights' (1996) classification of quality in education, also provided a description of how deterministic assumptions of quality have managed to influence the development of evaluation frameworks that currently exist. Leading on from this, the theoretical foundations for the study was described by using an extended version of Nevo's dialogue model for evaluation. Finally, a description of the systems of evaluation that exist in the NI and the ROI were described. Chapter 3 provided a description of the multi-phased mixed methods approach that was used in the study. Finally, using a modified version of Bushnell's (2000) training model, Chapter 4 extended the authors understanding of the relationship between IE and EE to four overlapping systematic layers of evaluation that have an effect on the co-existence between IE and EE. Leading on from this, each layer was subsequently classified into additional sub-layers in order to further elucidate participants' perceptions of the factors that affect the terms of co-existence between IE and EE.

Further to the evaluation layers mentioned, the research also investigated how other relevant, but often overlooked, antecedent variables have an effect on the commitment of inspectors and principals to fully embrace both forms of evaluation. These variables were inclusive of, but not exclusive to, the indirect effects of evaluation, such as changes in stress levels during the evaluation cycle and the efficacy and popularity of evaluation among users. The main conclusion argued by this study is the belief that there is a greater likelihood of understanding critical variables that affect the mutual

terms of co-existence between IE and EE and how both systems of evaluation have an impact on the quality of education provided when the systematic layers of IE and EE are analysed concurrently using both a theoretical framework and the practical experience of users. Indeed, the professional contribution of inspectors, management, teachers and the wider school community need to be recognised in an open culture of collaboration, trust and respect, empowering all members to make meaningful contributions to the school community as a whole and to recognise the deep meaning of teaching and learning.

In conclusion, after a four-year study consisting of an all island survey of every school principal in the ROI and NI that included interviews with a sample of principals and school inspectors in both regions, it would be reasonable to suggest that, despite the systems of evaluation in NI and the ROI having many similarities, both regions are undeniably at different stages of realising the dual culture of evaluation in education.

On the one hand, in the case of the ROI, it would reasonable to suggest that inspection of post-primary schools has been received as being a significant catalyst for school improvement (pp.228-234). In this regard, the DESROI could be commended for the manner in which inspection was introduced, particularly since, prior to its introduction in 2006, school inspection was an unfamiliar concept to the majority of post-primary school principals and teachers in this region. Moreover, one could also say that schools in the ROI must also be commended for the widespread acceptance of inspection rather than what could have been abjection and rejection. In the case of NI, it would also be reasonable to suggest that the system of school evaluation that has been developed, implemented, improved and used should also be used as a model of best practice for the creation of a culture of evaluation by other countries/regions; it appears that the pillars of partnership, transparency and trust are the very driving force for its implementation and success. Indeed, schools and the inspectorate of NI should also be commended for the creation of a culture of evaluation in education where, although tensions inevitably arise, having engaged with the process, the education community of NI now appears to be in the process of asking the question, 'How do we as practitioner researchers improve the quality of education not only in our schools but also in our communities?'

As previously stated, there were many differences and similarities relating to the systems of evaluation that exist in both regions. However, one common trait existed among all of the various actors who participated in this study. That common trait, with all the benefits and indeed connotations and flaws of evaluation, provides great solace and optimism for the future of education in both the ROI and NI; it may be surmised by an inspector from NI when referring to the importance of context and culture in school evaluation policy and practice.

You know I remember being in [NAME OF COUNTRY] once... and inspecting a class. The teacher taught and some of them listened and some of them didn't and I said well, "What about those ones sitting at the back?" and he said "That's not my problem, that's the parents' problem"... We don't do that. You know, we work from the premise you know the pupil and Ireland's not that urbanised. (INI2/538-542)

Although the concept of evaluation as a vehicle for improving the quality of education provided by schools has been embedded to varying degrees into the education systems of both the ROI and NI, this research has also found various differences in both attitude and practice towards certain aspects of evaluation. On the other hand, this research has also found that there were also, quite frequently, significant similarities in attitude among principals and inspectors. These were most noticeable between inspectors with regard to the present and future direction of evaluation policy and practice in both regions.

In relation to the quantitative data extrapolated from the questionnaires, coupled with the qualitative data obtained from the interviews, the following section details the main issues and consequent recommendations drawn from the data presented in this study.

5.2 Recommendations emerging (input)

From an analysis of quantitative data, a majority of principals in the ROI do not believe that the existing resources provided are useful for IE, whereas in NI, this value is considerably less (Tables 4.2.1 to 4.2.2). However, a majority of principals in both regions believe that more resources are required (Tables 4.2.3 to 4.2.4). Furthermore, the majority of principals in both regions believe that schools should be provided with a generic set of tools to assist with the implementation of IE (Tables 4.2.5 to 4.2.4).

Further analysis of qualitative data revealed other limitations; consequently, it is recommended that, akin to NI, rudimentary IE training and research instruments should be provided to all ROI schools. In NI, the majority of principals who were interviewed were of the view that school personnel understand the fundamentals of IE and that the resources required were not those of a procedural nature. Rather, there was a need for resources on how best to share evaluative knowledge among and within schools and communities as a means of further embedding a culture of evaluation in schools (p.122-124). Indeed, with the establishment of Area Learning Communities in NI, coupled with the inspectorate evaluative knowledge gained from visiting schools, inspectors in the form of DIs could be ideally placed to lead this initiative by extending the number of shared case studies on elements of best practice beyond those presently in existence. However, as previously stated by INI1, it is challenging for schools to move from behaviourist competition to a more constructivist approach to school improvement in the form of co-operative competition between schools. In this regard, it is recommended that incentivised support is provided for schools to engage with the process.

Although CVA in the form of Free School Meals has become embedded into the evaluation frameworks of NI and by all extents from an analysis of qualitative interviews, there is a concerted drive for the use of CVA in the ROI (p.5, p.32 and pp.128-130). However, while recognising the benefits of data driven evaluations; at a global level, there appears to be an almost obsequious belief in the usefulness of such processes despite the component of error attached to such data-driven exercises. At the same time, those in power ignore or are unaware of the overwhelming evidence in regards to the most significant barriers to student achievement—the magnitude of importance is not so much the quality of teaching, it is far more quantifiably reliable variables such as a student's socioeconomic status, parental engagement or belonging to a minority ethnic grouping. An article referring to the misuse of accountability systems, written by Ravitch (2010), resonates well with this perspective and in many ways, Ravitch seems to highlight all that is flawed with monocratic nineteenth century evaluation systems that focused heavily on results from standardised terminal examinations as a proxy for quality in education.

It would be good if our nation's education leaders recognized that teachers are not solely responsible for student test scores. Other influences matter, including the students' effort, the family's encouragement, the effects of popular culture, and the influence of poverty...Since we can't fire poverty, we can't fire students, and we can't fire families, all that is left is to fire are teachers. (Ravitch 2010)

Furthermore, Obama, in his national address to school children at the beginning of the academic term (2009), stated,

At the end of the day, we can have the most dedicated teachers, the most supportive parents, the best schools in the world—and none of it will make a difference, none of it will matter unless all of you fulfil your responsibilities, unless you show up to those schools, unless you pay attention to those teachers, unless you listen to your parents and grandparents and other adults and put in the hard work it takes to succeed. That's what I want to focus on today: the responsibility each of you has for your education. (Obama 2009)

In this regard, it is recommended that the IE and EE evaluation frameworks that exist are revised to include more of an emphasis on the quality of school mechanisms and supports to facilitate and promote parental engagement in student learning, not only in designated disadvantaged schools but rather, in all school types, none of which exist to any significant extent in many systems. Indeed, as Harris and Goodall (2008) state,

parental engagement in children's learning in the home makes the greatest difference to student achievement. Most schools are involving parents in school-based activities in a variety of ways but the evidence shows that this has little, if any, impact on subsequent learning and achievement of young people. (p.277)

Furthermore, it would be reasonable to suggest that external test-based scores are the most significant desiderata from which schools are publicly judged. However, it is an undeniable fact that even when CVA results are adjusted for socioeconomic conditions—in almost every region in the world—the majority of schools that perform better in externally devised examinations, such as A level's and the Leaving Certificate, are those schools from more affluent areas. By way of explanation, the school league tables in the ROI's *Sunday Times* (March 2012) reveals that, in most cases, the highest progression of students to third-level study from all 730 secondary schools in the ROI are either from fee-paying or Irish-speaking schools. In the case of NI, an article in the *Belfast Telegraph* reveals similar results: of the 170 post-primary schools, only 'several grammar schools are being outperformed by non-grammars' (Ferguson 2012) in A-level results. However, and in many ways affirming that inspection is not only a data driven exercise, the article goes on to state,

School reports can also give a better indication of a school's achievements on the whole. Some of the schools that are lower down our rankings have much better performance when other criteria is used and many have received glowing inspection reports for their overall quality of education which looks at pastoral care, quality of teaching, quality of leadership, parental responses, special educational needs provision etc. (ibid, 2012)

Indeed, while it is the author's belief that schools that perform well in external examinations should be commended and if there is a need for these schools to celebrate their achievements by making their results publicly available, so too should schools that exhibit exceptional teaching, leadership, parental engagement, etc. in all socioeconomic settings. In this regard, with no significant cost to the exchequer and adding beneficial and true meaning to the term CVA, it is recommended that schools who show exceptional aspects of educational provision be given Department of Education specialist status that is maintained and reviewed over a period of time. This would have the effect of, 'United we stand, divided we fall' ensuring that a school from any socioeconomic condition who shows an exceptional aspect of educational provision receive the affirmation they deserve. It would also affirm that quality can be achieved in all areas of life. As per the recommendation of sharing evaluative knowledge, these schools could also be used as 'educational guides' by other schools who are in the process of trying to improve a particular aspect of educational provision.

In relation to the resources required for EE, from analysis of quantitative data, the majority of principals in both regions are of the view that inspection documents make the inspection process clear (Tables 4.2.7 to 4.2.8) and only a minority of principals in both regions are of the belief that more resources are required to prepare for EE (Tables 4.2.9 to 4.2.10). Furthermore, the majority of principals in both regions are of the view that pre-inspection literature provided by the inspectorate clarifies all issues relating to EE (Tables 4.2.11 to 4.2.12).

From an analysis of qualitative interviews, principals in both regions were of the view that inspection documents act as valuable instruments for schools to ascertain what is required for EE (pp.132-137). However, in the case of the ROI, where reference was made to WSE-MLL, confusion centred on the level of quantitative analysis that was required of the school (p.136).

From an analysis of quantitative data and adding significant confidence to the value placed on the professional capacity of inspectors in both the ROI and NI, only a minority of principals in both regions are of the view that inspectors do not have the capacity to conduct IEs (Tables 4.2.13 to 4.2.14).

From further analysis of qualitative interviews, however, it appears that, where the professional capacity of inspectors is questioned, it centres on the view among principals that inspectors did not have principalship experience prior to becoming inspectors (pp.138-139). Conversely, one could also state that many principals do not have principalship experience prior to becoming principals. On the other hand, a number of principals were also of the view that although inspectors had not been principals prior to joining the inspectorate, this does not actually change the quality of the evaluation. However, given the stated benefits of introducing AAs to the inspection process (pp.140-141), coupled with the success to which it has been greeted in NI, it is recommended that AAs also become part of the inspection process in the ROI and the DESROI refrain from recruiting the last remaining experienced principals in the ROI.

In relation to the capacity of school personnel to carry out IEs, from an analysis of quantitative data, a minority of principals in the ROI and a significant majority of principals in NI are of the view that staff at their school has the capacity to carry out IEs (Tables 4.2.15 to 4.2.16). However, the majority of principals in both regions are of the view that management and teachers need more training on how to conduct IEs (4.2.17 to 4.2.20).

Although principals in both regions are of the view that more training is required to carry out IEs, the training required is different. In the case of the ROI, the perceived training and consequent recommendation centres on the need for principals and teachers to receive training on the rudiments of evaluation. Moreover, a number of principals in the ROI who were interviewed were also of the view that principals needed peer review training to evaluate the professional capacity of teachers (p.146). Moreover, and as part of the author's recommendations, inspectors in the ROI were very much of the view that teachers require more training on how to work collaboratively with partners and that a culture of trust needed to be encouraged (pp.147-158, p.211). These requisites should be seen as part of the development in a teacher's or principal's practice—not as a weakness but rather as an opportunity for school improvement. In the case of NI, principals were

of the view that they had been provided with the necessary training on how to conduct IEs, having learned the rudiments of IE and having been provided with the necessary assistive tools and frameworks for IE, such as PRSDs and *Together Towards Improvement*. However, principals were of the view—which is also part of the author’s recommendations—that more peer-to-peer training among and between schools is required (p.148) in order to fully expedite the advanced stage of evaluation that is evident in many schools in NI.

Finally, from an analysis of qualitative interviews, there were uncertainties relating to other members of the community becoming part of the evaluation (pp.149-151). Although all principals and inspectors were of the belief that data relating to the quality of services provided by schools should be gathered from parents and students in the form of interviews and questionnaires, issues surrounding the capacity and voluntary nature of BOMs were of concern among interview participants. As stated by IROI2 when referring to BOMs in the ROI,

The local county councillor could be the chair. The parish priest could be the chair. A trusted past pupil, a retired principal, and some of those might have some of the skills that might be at the stages of careers that might be tired of it. It’s hard sometimes to find out where the dynamism will come from for action planning and review within boards. (IROI2/125)

After an analysis of qualitative interviews, it is recommended that the present training afforded to BOMs be extensively revised. Indeed, it makes little sense that various organisations provide isolated minimalist training to newly appointed board members given the fact that the majority of legislatively required duties of the respective boards are the same. In this regard, it is the author’s view that all of these respective groups have a collective duty to empower board members, such as parents, to become equal partners by providing training on all aspects of the role and function of BOMs rather than what is presently provided. Furthermore, it is also recommended that BOM members complete the necessary training prior to taking up their positions. One solution, given the voluntary nature of BOM members, would be to provide online training on the role and function of respective BOM members. This effort could be jointly funded by the respective bodies and over time, could also reduce the considerable costs involved in providing on-site training. It is also recommended that a review of how schools are governed is conducted, given the fact that there are in excess of 4,000 separate BOMs in the ROI.

5.3 Recommendations emerging (process)

From an analysis of quantitative data, the majority of principals in both regions are of the view that EE should be based on a combination of a school's IE and development plan (Tables 4.3.5 to 4.3.8), which is also in line with the views of the inspectorates of both countries. Principals in the ROI are also more in favour than principals in NI of being provided with a generic set of tools, methods and procedures for carrying out IE.

Although it could be reasonably inferred that principals in the ROI are in favour of a more isomorphic form of IE than principals in NI, it might also highlight the degree to which schools are able to carry out their own evaluations, as only 26.7% of schools in the ROI as opposed to 81.8% of schools in NI have a set of procedures for carrying out IE (p.152). However, proceeding the qualitative and quantitative part of the research, all primary and post-primary schools in the ROI have now been provided with procedures and guidelines for SE of teaching and learning (DESROI 2012). Indeed, as stated by the DESROI, 'Over time the guidelines will be further developed to support schools as they evaluate other key dimensions of school provision' (DESROI 2012b, p.8), with these key dimensions being that of leadership and management and support.

However, while it is recognised within *Towards 2016 Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006–2015* (Government of Ireland 2005) that schools are required to evaluate teaching and learning as a dimension of overall performance⁹ and 'over a four-year period from 2012, all post-primary schools should engage in school self-evaluation and produce three-year improvement plans for numeracy, literacy and one aspect of teaching and learning across all subjects and programmes' (DESROI 2012e, p.2). On the other hand however, although the dimensions for SE of leadership and management, pre *Towards 2016* will become embedded into future social partnership agreements if still in existence, it seems unwise to wait this long to provide schools with guidelines on these other two dimensions, especially given the view that 'the type of leadership exercised by the principal and the school's leadership team must be linked both to the school's profile of learning results and improvement capacity at

⁹ It is agreed that schools will consider the role and contribution of teachers to overall school performance in the context of the school development plan. Each school will assess performance by using the themes for self-evaluation set out in the above documents for the aspect teaching and learning as a dimension of overall school performance (Government of Ireland 2005, p.125).

any point in time' (Hallinger and Heck 2010, p.106). In this regard, it is recommended, akin to documents such as *Together Towards Improvement* (DENI 2010), that schools are provided with guidelines for SE of leadership and management before 2016 comes to pass. Indeed, although laudable, it also makes little sense for school leaders to venture towards new territories in the form of 'leadership for learning' without having any clear parameters on how their present practice in the form of leadership management and administration can be evaluated.

In addition, in line with the need to evaluate and improve the quality of education in schools, it is commendable that, within the WSE-MLL process, inspectors are gathering statistical data on the quality of education from parents and students through the use of parental and student questionnaires. The WSE-MLL guidelines state that 'the Inspectorate greatly values the views of teachers, parents and students as key stakeholders in the school community' (DESROI 2011, p.10). However, the preceding sentence states that 'as part of the WSE-MLL, questionnaires are administered to a representative sample of parents and students in order to get their views on the operation of the school' (DESROI 2011, p.10). In this regard, and in order to validate the inspection process further, it is recommended, akin to the inspection process in NI, that this process of data gathering is extended to what INI2 refers to as the hearts and minds of education in the form of school personnel who are deemed central to the process.

5.4 Recommendations emerging (output)

The majority of principals in both regions are of the view that the recommendations outlined by the inspectorate in the EE report are fair and reasonable based on the present availability of school resources (Tables 4.4.1 to 4.4.2). Furthermore, principals are of the view that external recommendations have resulted in a faster pace of educational change than would have occurred if recommendations had been made internally. However, in the case of the ROI, principal criticisms of inspectorate recommendations relate primarily to the fact that inspectorate recommendations could actually relate to a number of schools where it appears that recommendations were primarily centred on system rather than school compliance.

Of considerable note, however, was the fact that the inspectorate has not been in contact with the majority of schools in the ROI to see what stage the school was at in relation to

realising the recommendations from previous reports; the opposite is the case in NI. This is no surprise, given the limited number of inspectors employed in both NI and the ROI, the fact that inspectors are frequently assigned to other duties outside of school inspection and the fact that inspectors visit schools at relatively the same intervals except in extreme cases of unsatisfactory educational quality. However, assuming that schools will automatically initiate and have the capacity to realise external recommendations is unwise. In this regard, it is recommended that the inspectorates of NI and the ROI review their schedule of inspection visits whereby inspection visits should be proportionate and based on the change capacity of the school and the required improvement action needed. Indeed, from an analysis of qualitative interviews, a significant majority of principals and inspectors, when asked about their visions for the future of evaluation in education, suggested that their vision for the future of evaluation policy and practice related to the deployment of resources to schools that need help and support the most. An inspector participant, when asked about their vision for the future of evaluation policy and practice in the ROI, stated that ‘So from a policy point of view I would like to see internal evaluation being the main focus. External evaluation looking at national, informing policy and enabling resources to be properly distributed so that we would have perhaps a more equitable system intervention’ (IRO1/238). Indeed, further to IRO1’s view on enabling resources to be properly distributed, this study also recommends, akin to the role of the DI in NI, the repositioning of the majority of inspectors into disadvantaged communities in order to advise and support at an adjacent level, effective mechanisms for school improvement in communities that require the most support.

Further, to the recommendation on the need for proportionate-based inspection and support, it is recommended that the quality indicators in *Together Towards Improvement* be reviewed. This would also form the basis for proportionate-based inspection and support on a particular aspect of educational provision and would also bring clarity to IE planning and improvement priorities in schools. Although the quality threshold levels within *Together Towards Improvement* are based on a six-point quality-banding scale (outstanding, very good, good, satisfactory, inadequate, and unsatisfactory), it is recommended that the term ‘satisfactory’ be removed from inspectorate and IE criteria, as there is uncertainty regarding the long-term effect the word ‘satisfactory’ would have within the priority frameworks of any school

improvement agenda. As stated by PNI6, 'What does it mean? It means it will just about do. That is not good enough for kids'(PNI6/31).

It is also recommended that criteria within the quality continuum of evaluation, such as very good/good, and inadequate/unsatisfactory, be reduced in order to delineate anomalies relating to these threshold levels of quality, as is the case with other regional evaluation frameworks found in the ROI and New Zealand.

The majority of principals in both regions are of the view that EE reports should be published on the Internet (Tables 4.4.5 to 4.4.6). However, the majority of principals in both regions are also of the view that IE reports should not be published on the Internet (Tables 4.4.7 to 4.4.8). This low figure appears to emanate from the recurring view among principals that EE should be used for accountability and IE should be primarily used for school improvement.

Donaldson et al. (2012) state that 'increasingly, as can be seen from the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) website, inspectorates across Europe are embracing transparency as integral to effective external evaluation. Such transparency is seen as fairer to those inspected as well as promoting the integrity, rigour and impact of external evaluation' (p.105). However, in the case of this study and contrary to the preceding statement relating to the importance of transparency in accelerating the impact of external evaluation, principals and inspectors were of the view that schools are more willing to engage with and furnish evidence to the inspectorate when EE reports are not published on the Internet (p.182). Consequently, participants were also of the view, without refuting the importance of public accountability, that the rigour of EE and consequent advice given by inspectors are more beneficial to the schools' improvement agenda when inspection reports are not published on the Internet. In this regard, and as part of the recommendations, while recognising the importance of public accountability, it appears that an acknowledgement and greater understanding of the reciprocal reality and consequent limitations of transparency need to be far more explicitly understood between inspectors and schools than they are at present. Otherwise, the relationship between IE and EE could become nothing more than veiled internal judgements of quality in order to satisfy external demands. As Perryman states,

The performative culture is so deeply ingrained in schools and education systems that I can foresee a game of permanent artifice, where schools squeeze their individual circumstances into a self-evaluation document designed solely to impress inspectors, and hold themselves in a state of perpetual readiness to live up to their claims, the model prisoner. In this context, 'bleak indeed is the desire for perfection' (Marshall 1999, 310)'. (2009, p.629)

The majority of principals in both regions are of the view that inspectors should visit schools more often on an informal basis (Tables 4.4.11 to 4.4.12) and less often on a formal basis (Tables 4.4.9 to 4.4.10). Furthermore, a considerably higher number of principals in the ROI would like inspectors to visit schools more often on a formal basis compared to principals in NI.

While it might be assumed that principals in the ROI place a higher value on EE than principals in NI, from an analysis of qualitative interviews, it appears that ROI principals interviewed are of the view that more inspections of teacher performance were required because of the perceived view that principals in the ROI do not have the same level of legitimate power to deal with what is more commonly referred to as 'underperforming teachers' compared to other jurisdictions.

In addition to the perceived need by principals in the ROI for an increase in teacher accountability, although the majority of principals in both regions were of the view that more informal inspection visits were required, it appears from an analysis of qualitative interviews that principals in the ROI see one of the benefits of informal evaluations (in the form of unannounced inspections) is making teachers in the ROI more accountable. However, in NI, during the course of the qualitative phase of the research, issues surrounding teachers' professional competence rarely arose and the supports and collaboration required during informal visits seemed to centre on the need for the inspectorate and schools to work more collectively together to realise the recommendations of EE reports and also for the purpose of inspectors advising schools on their school improvement priorities.

Indeed, throughout the course of educational evaluation, policy and practice, far too often have educational initiatives been tried, tested and subsequently failed as a result of the misuse of legitimate, coercive and reward power structures. However, it is the author's view that in order to bring about long-term sustainable change for the benefit of all members of the school community that a far greater focus on evaluation should be centred on the informational, expert and referential aspect of educational evaluation

policy and practice. In this regard, it is recommended that the practice of informal inspection visits in the form of unannounced inspections in the ROI be more closely aligned to that of the purpose, function and practice of informal DI visits in NI. Furthermore, it is also recommended that informal visits in the ROI be negotiated with a purpose as opposed to, *admiratio*, in astonishment, inspectors arriving at the school gates. Indeed, as INI2 states in reference to the informal advisory role of DI visits in NI,

There's no point in going in with an external consideration when they're putting their focus on an internal consideration, so take it from where they are. So, that's where the whole idea of, you know, if I have a school in my district and they're working particularly well on the whole idea of language for learning, well why would I go in and look at numeracy? (64)

5.5 Recommendations emerging (commitment)

The majority of principals in both regions are of the view that EE places a lot of stress on staff (Tables 4.5.1 to 4.5.2), whereas this value is considerably lower for IE (Tables 4.4.5 to 4.4.6).

From an analysis of qualitative interviews, however, it appears that one of the foremost factors relating to the stress caused by both IE and EE appears to centre on a challenge to the professional autonomy of teachers in the form of appraisal and peer observation (pp.199-200). There is also the view that peer observation is (to paraphrase Gertrude Stein, 'A rose is a rose is a rose') another form of accountability. Bell is of the view that 'peer observation of teaching offers many benefits such as improvements in teaching practice and the development of confidence to teach and learn more about teaching' (Bell 2005 cited in Bell and Mladenovic 2008, p.736). However, the authors go on to state that peer observation can also be seen as intrusive and challenging. Indeed, Cosh (1999), in line with the research findings from this study, also points out,

Both of these management techniques have strong educational justification behind them, and, used well, they can have a very positive effect on job satisfaction and staff development. On the other hand, many staff see them as threatening, potentially arbitrary, and judgemental. It is, therefore, extremely important for the assessor/observer and the assessee/observed to be aware of the rationale behind these procedures, and the spirit in which they should be carried out. (Cosh 1999, p.22)

From the evidence, it would be reasonable to suggest that schools in NI have engaged with the process of peer observation through PRSDs (p.225), and some schools in the ROI have engaged with observation through the observation of newly qualified teachers (NQTs). With regard to the ROI, DESROI states that ‘for many schools, however, such observation of teaching and learning for the purpose of school self-evaluation is a relatively new development’ (2012b, p.57). In this regard, it is recommended that peer-to-peer training be provided to all school personnel in the ROI. Furthermore, and in order to delineate perceived notions of the purpose of peer observations, it is also recommended that principals and managers of schools create a safe environment for peer observation of teaching practice with the purpose of the observation being that of teacher improvement as opposed to teacher accountability. Indeed, IROI2 is also of the view that management should place a greater emphasis on staff motivation and morale during evaluations.

One major success is trying to determine how it leads to school improvement and trying to quantify...student outcomes in examination terms or in levels of ability, ability of reading and writing. So really, does it affect student outcomes or does it lead to school improvement? Does it lead to one that I think is forgotten, you know, keeping motivation of staff and students high. I think in school environments, they don't put enough emphasis on motivation, morale, that end of it. (IROI2/71–73)

The majority of principals in both regions are of the view that both IE and EE take up a lot of time (Tables 4.5.9 to 4.5.12).

From further analysis of qualitative data, however, it appears that a considerable amount of time spent on evaluation and planning did not necessarily relate to the actual event of evaluation in the form of, for example, peer observation and data analysis, etc., but rather that of pre- and post-evaluation activities, such as form filling and gathering vast amounts of data. It appears that there was a view among schools that school development planning consists of describing enabling actions as opposed to measuring how effective the plan may be in bringing about school improvement (p.205). As stated by INI2, when referring to the early stages of school development planning in NI,

The Internal Evaluation became almost like a thesis or a doctorate, and it was hijacked by this whole idea of writing this wonderful report and then we foolishly...and this was a big mistake on our part—we started looking at their process of self-evaluation when all we needed to look at was how effective was it in promoting and bringing about improvement. (12)

In order for schools to analyse how effective enabling actions following a school evaluation actually are, it is recommended, in line with IN3's assertion, that schools be given the capacity and skill set required to produce what INI3 refers to as 'first-hand evidence'. This would also enable schools to take a far greater ownership of evaluation activities, and it would also allow the inspectorate more time to advise and support schools with regard to their school improvement planning strategies.

Furthermore, from an analysis of inspectorate interviews in the ROI, it is also recommended that the present schedule of inspections should be reviewed, as inspectors were of the view that the amount of time spent on repetitive, cyclical, school-based inspections, although of value, reduces the amount of time inspectors can spend on evaluating wider macro issues (p.206). Moreover, the present schedule of inspections also reduces the amount of time that inspectors can spend carrying out case studies similar to *An Evaluation of Planning Processes in DEIS Post-Primary Schools* (DESROI 2012c), which appears to have acted as a significant promoter for school-wide evaluation activities in schools of this type.

The majority of principals in both regions are of the view that neither system of IE or EE is popular with staff, although IE appears to be more popular with staff than EE in both regions (Tables 4.5.13 to 4.5.16).

From an analysis of qualitative interviews, the perceived lack of popularity towards IE appears to centre on the time spent on pre- and post-evaluation activities. However, it also appears that the lack of popularity towards IE and EE is interrelated to the stress caused by evaluations. The principals and inspectors interviewed are of the view that a culture of inviting feedback does not exist in many schools. Indeed, according to PROI6, 'I do think that the biggest problem would be the culture and there isn't a culture of SE in. There is not a culture of self-evaluation in Irish schools yet. Not to say that that couldn't be fostered' (PROI6/16).

From an analysis of qualitative interviews, the perceived lack of popularity towards IE appears to centre on the time spent on pre- and post-evaluation activities. However, it also appears that the lack of popularity towards IE and EE relates to the stress caused by evaluations. The principals and inspectors interviewed are of the view that a culture of inviting feedback does not exist in many schools. Where a culture of IE has been

successfully introduced, it appears to have been led from the top down, i.e. principals initiated the process.

Although in the case of the ROI, *Towards 2016*, IE will primarily centre on an evaluation of teaching and learning. Nonetheless, in order to delineate the view among some teachers that IE is for the purpose of internal accountability and also to highlight that leadership is one of the central pillars of an effective education, it is recommended that principals in the ROI initiate the process of internally evaluating leadership and management activities in their schools in a safe environment that is conducive to leadership improvement as opposed to leadership accountability. Indeed, Bredeson states,

Scholars of organisational culture and leadership tell us that if you want to know what's important in a school, watch what the principal does... They establish learning as the core of their practice and they set the tone, direction, and expectations for learning in the school by what they pay attention to, what they do, and what they reward (2000, p.392).

5.6 Recommendations emerging (outcomes)

The majority of principals in both regions are of the view that EE results in better management, teaching and learning (Tables 4.6.1 to 4.6.4).

However, given factors outside the realm of inspection, the assertion that inspection can be directly correlated to school improvement is questionable. Nonetheless, almost all of the principals interviewed in both regions are of the view that inspection has had an impact on the quality of teaching, learning and management in their schools, in particular where adherence to management and teaching standards is required. In addition, as a result of inspection, a number of principals were also of the view that there was an accelerated rate of change in certain elements of practice, such as principals using external examination results to form the basis for IE activities.

Furthermore, the majority of principals also believe that IE results in better management, teaching and learning (Tables 4.6.5 to 4.6.8) where dialogue evaluation is seen as central to the process.

However, in order to increase the effect of IE, a number of principals and inspectors are of the view that there should be less time spent on secondary evaluation activities, such as writing up lengthy reports, and more time spent on primary evaluation activities such as peer review. Nonetheless, and as part of the study's recommendations, in order to fully utilise the process of IE and EE as promoters for change, inspectors were of the view that a better system, in terms of schools supplying inspectors with first-hand evidence, needs to be formed to increase the advisory role of inspectors. Indeed, the professional contribution of inspectors, management, teachers and the wider school community needs to be recognised in an open culture of trust and respect at both a regional and national level, empowering all members of the school community, inspectors or otherwise, to make meaningful contributions to the school community as a whole.

In conclusion, it is fitting to leave the last word to Nevo who states,

Those of us who are proponents of external evaluation should find ways to empower schools and teachers to participate as equal partners in the evaluation process and make use of it; and those of us who believe in internal evaluation as a means for school autonomy and teacher professionalisation must admit the legitimacy of accountability and the right of the public to know. They, in their turn, should seek external evaluation as a partner for dialog rather than an object for rejection. (Nevo 2010, p.784)

5.7 Recommendations for further research

Although there has been a considerable amount of research carried out on the perceptions of principals and teachers towards evaluation, only a limited amount of research has been carried out in order to ascertain the perceptions among inspectors towards IE/EE as one cohesive unit for school improvement. In this regard, more research is required to investigate the perceptions of inspectors towards the present and future direction of evaluation in schools.

From an analysis of studies on evaluation policy and practice, including the present study, studies of this type almost always seem to focus on the perspectives of those on the influential apex of evaluation. These studies seek to ascertain how to improve teaching and learning without taking into account the perspectives of those who are directly involved in the process, such as teachers and students. In this regard, as a means

of further improving the effect that evaluation has on teaching and learning, research relating to the opinions and experience of evaluation from the point of view of teachers and other school personnel would be welcome.

In this study, it was found that various factors such as time, lack of training and research instruments have had a debilitating effect with regard to the quantity and quality of internal evaluations that are carried out in schools in the ROI. In this regard, a feasibility study on the practicalities of setting up an IE unit akin to that of the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring in Durham University would be welcomed.

It is also recommended, that studies relating to the capacity and present function of BOMs be carried out in order to ascertain the challenges and effect that BOMs have on school evaluation, policy and practice.

Catholic Heads Association

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The Catholic Heads Association comprises of twenty-nine principals of Catholic voluntary grammar schools. The association welcomes the opportunity to respond to the inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement process conducted by the Education Committee.

The educational landscape in Northern Ireland is unique and any inspection process should always place schools in that context. The inspection process should best suit the education system in Northern Ireland.

Principals welcome any inspection process which will lead to school improvement and enhanced student outcomes. Such a process should involve genuine engagement between ETI and schools and professional discussion and debate including honest, frank conversations where necessary. When difficulties are identified the school should be informed, recommendations proposed and support given to implement agreed actions. Inspections, by their nature, are rigorous and robust and should lead to a fair rounded judgement. It is vital that the inspection process has the confidence of schools, staff, students, parents and the local community.

The overall approach taken by ETI inspection teams is variable. In some cases the focus seems to be on school improvement through challenging, supportive evaluation leading to establishing pathways for improvement in the quality of educational outcomes. At other times the focus seems to be solely on inspection, evaluation and unhelpful challenge which can lead to confrontation and resistance to change. The overall culture should have a clear emphasis on supportive challenge rather than a wholly

evaluative inspection. There should exist a quality audit process which results in more consistent approach to all inspections.

Schools' experience of the role of the District Inspector is also variable. In some cases schools see the District Inspector very infrequently. There are other examples where schools are visited often by the District Inspector, who provides excellent support and makes a positive contribution to improvement. Given the demise of ELBs/RTU there is a need for district inspectors who are keen to help schools improve.

Members of ETI are hardworking committed professionals. The training for ETI inspectors must ensure that those who, do not have experience of leading and managing a school, are fully aware of the breadth, depth and challenges of the roles within the Senior Leadership Teams in schools. The outcomes of recruitment and training must be that everyone has the highest level of confidence in inspectors.

Boards of governors make an enormous contribution to schools. Members give a lot of time and expertise on a voluntary basis to provide support, leadership and, if appropriate, helpful challenge to principals and their senior leadership teams in schools. Governors have a vital yet onerous role. Boards are constituted with personnel from a wide range of backgrounds and bring their expertise to the benefit of schools. Any increase in the role of Governors could have a detrimental effect on the numbers who would volunteer for such a role. Well organised, high quality training for Governors is required.

Grammar schools' intake to Year 8 is broadening. Much of the assessment arrived at by ETI is based on school performance against a group based norm. Other factors such as socio-

economic context, geography, feeder primary schools do have an impact. At the moment there is no agreed value added measure available from DE as a measurement for benchmarking. It would be difficult for an inspection to produce a fair and rounded judgement if there is not an agreed value added measurement.

Schools have grave concerns regarding the use of anonymous questionnaires (staff and parents). The concerns centre on the misuse and manipulation of questionnaires. It seems that questionnaires can be downloaded repeatedly and a person can then submit multiple responses.

Any member of staff or a parent can make negative comments which have no foundation whatsoever without any request for evidence to support such comments. The completed questionnaires are not shown to schools and this adds to a sense of injustice on the part of principals and boards of governors.

The appointment of Associate Assessors is viewed as positive. It enables school personnel to join an inspection team, to see at first hand the inspection process and to have a valuable input to the process.

It is hoped that the comments above are viewed as helpful. The CHA is willing to engage in any further discussions which would have the aim of improving and enhancing an inspection process which would ensure school improvement.

Ceara Special School

Inquiry into the ETI and School Improvement Process

My name is Dr Peter Cunningham MBE, and I am currently the Principal of Ceara Special School, Lurgan. I have spent my entire teaching career, 33 years, in the area of special education. In addition, I am also a member of:

- The Southern Education & Library Board.
- The Special Education and Disability Tribunal.
- The Council for CCEA.
- Three School Boards of Governors.
- Chair of my local Area Learning Community; and
- I was one of the first 'Associate Inspectors' for DE when the 'concept' was being tested almost 20 years ago.

It is my view that ETI's current approach to school inspection/school improvement is generally fit for purpose. I do however have some comments and suggestions to make.

1. Given the increasing number of children who have special educational needs (SEN) in our schools, I feel all ETI members should have experiences in all aspects of SEN, not just the dedicated SEN inspectors.
2. I feel the 'Quality Self Inspection Audit' should be reintroduced to allow schools to identify and self evaluate their curricular provision.
3. Given the current economic climate that we find ourselves in, I feel that ETI should be able to comment on the funding available to schools. Some of our schools do wonders with very little funds while others

In addition, I have two areas that I would wish to make comment on:

Interagency Collaborative Working

Special schools bring staff from two government departments together – education and health. Yet when ETI visit special schools they are prevented from directly inspecting therapy provision. Given the number of concerns in relation to therapy provision in special schools I find this unacceptable. Especially, given that members of the Department of Health's inspectors do not visit schools. In some special schools the excellent educational provision is compromised by inadequate therapy provision.

I suggest that ETI should be allowed to directly inspect and comment on therapy provision in all schools.

Members of Boards of Governors

School Boards of governors are being given ever more powers and responsibilities, yet they are never inspected in terms of training, attendance, involvement with the school or child protection matters.

I therefore suggest that ETI should be allowed to inspect and comment on School Boards of Governors especially with regard to attendance at meetings. Whilst not wishing to name names, I suggest that the percentage attendance at meetings should be included in ETI reports.

I would be happy to give oral evidence, should the committee think it may be of value.

Dr P G Cunningham
6 August 2013

Collegiate Grammar School

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Response to Request for Written Evidence

From The Board of Governors of the Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen

The Board of Governors of the Collegiate Grammar School, Enniskillen welcomes the opportunity to express their views on the issues for consultation.

The Governors believe that, if Inspection Reports are to provide a fair and accurate picture of each school's performance and command public confidence, attention must be given to the range of data sets used and to the wider issues influencing performance within those data sets. For example, the current practice of assessing a grammar school by performance in individual subjects at GCSE A*-B against the Northern Ireland benchmarking average does not take account of the hidden and wider factors influencing that performance across all the schools. A crucial factor is the individual school's curriculum policy which may vary considerably from school to school. Is it fair and accurate that the performance of a school which has universal entry, for example, in English Literature or a Modern Foreign Language is measured against schools which do not operate the same policy and enter a reduced number of candidates for the same subjects on the basis of their ability? A negative judgement made on the school's performance without taking account of the contextual factors of curriculum policy does not accurately reflect the school's performance. It also runs the risk of encouraging a purely outcome driven culture where the priority, indeed necessity, is to maximise the school's performance against the benchmarks rather than to ensure a rich and varied curriculum facilitating the possibility of wide range of curricular pathways at post-16 study.

It is also important that account is taken of the wide range of value-added data which most schools are currently using which indicate more accurately the pupils' holistic achievement and the school's ability to meet the needs of the pupils in the widest sense. A careful analysis of this data will often show that the school is achieving much more than is evident from the data the Inspectorate collects.

We also note that there appears to be significant variation in the evaluation of data and in the tone and balance of the comments made in Inspection reports: it is crucial that there is consistency of reporting.

Finally we have grave concerns that schools' and the public's confidence in the Inspection process, including the Formal Intervention process is seriously compromised by the link made between ETI Inspections and the Area Planning process in the current DE consultation on the proposed changes to the Formal Intervention process. If ETI is to exercise its primary function of effecting school improvement and if they are to have the scope to make fair and balanced judgements relating to a school's performance they must be and they must be seen to be independent of any other process. In the Memorandum of Understanding between ETI and DE published on the ETI website it states clearly in paragraph 3 that ETI's professional evaluations about quality and standards will be made and published independently of DE. The direction of travel which underlies the consultation on the Formal Intervention process represents a significant and serious deviation from the independent role on which ETI has rightly always prided itself.

Peter McCallion

Committee Clerk, Committee for Education, Room 241, Parliament Buildings
Belfast BT4 3XX

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

26.09.13

COMHAIRLE NA GAELSCOLAÍOCHTA SUBMISSION

(Submitted by Dr. Micheál Ó Duibh, Chief Executive Officer)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) was established by the Department of Education (DE) in August 2000 to promote Irish-medium Education (IME) and to act as the representative organisation for the IM sector. DE has a statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium education and in accordance with the recommendations of the Review on Irish medium education, integrate the sector into the education system. It is vitally important that the needs and specific requirements of IME are considered systematically throughout DE policy and in this respect we submit that it is incumbent upon the ETI to address the needs and requirements of IME in re-evaluating its role in the School Improvement process. The vast majority of IM schools are independent schools and therefore are not subject to the same processes as IM provisions under the management and control of the CCMS or the ELBs.
- 1.2 IME has distinctive features such as immersion methodology, bilingualism, dual literacy and numeracy which differentiate it as a model of education from its English-medium counterpart. The Review of Irish-medium Education (DE 2008) emphasised the additional linguistic and cultural characteristics of IME which is based on early full immersion in Irish with the introduction of English beginning in P3/4. The aim of Irish-medium education is to deliver the Northern Ireland Curriculum through the medium of Irish and develop the linguistic ability of the child both in Irish and English. This model, known as 'additive bilingualism' refers to the process whereby pupils add a second language (Irish) to their intellectual skills, while also developing in their first language (English).
- 1.3 CnaG takes the view that the education system has displayed a lack of awareness at all levels regarding IM education, of its distinct features and of the diversity and richness it brings to education. This is reflected across the board and so too in the current practices of the ETI in aiding school improvement. The particular linguistic needs of IME have yet to be properly acknowledged and until DE recognise these specific needs, the policy and practice will continue to militate against IM pupils achieving their full potential. The central place of the Irish language in planning and development for literacy, numeracy and across the curriculum must be recognised by DE, the ETI and the ELBs in order to improve IM provisions.

2. Leadership and management

- 2.1 There is a gap in the selection of governors for independent IM schools in that there is no formal process and no formal monitoring of the selection of governors. Under ESAGS there is much more emphasis placed on the role of the governor and it would be important that a process to ensure that governors with the appropriate skills and experience are appointed to the boards of independent Irish medium schools. The skills and experience of governors needs to be assessed by the ETI and recommendations made to the school in relation to the composition of the board of governors to improve leadership in independent IM schools.
- 2.2 It is the view of CnaG that the management of the school must appreciate the particular needs and requirements of IME. The ETI must therefore assess whether or not the management of English-medium schools in charge of Irish medium Units, have the appropriate level of understanding, experience and expertise of Irish medium education to

meet the needs of the pupils in the Irish medium Unit. Irish medium pupils currently receive an extra amount per capita in recognition of the added content in delivering this form of education and the management must monitor the allocation of the budget to ensure that the IM unit is provided for in line with the requirements of IME. Currently there is such no requirement on the board of management of schools to ensure that they have the necessary competencies to manage an IM unit. The needs of the IM unit must be considered in relation to the allocation of the budget; acquisition of suitable IM resources and school/CCMS/ELB policy in respect of selection for redundancies. The CCMS and the Boards need to ensure that the Principals and management of IM units and IM controlled schools have an appropriate level of understanding, knowledge and skills to manage and Irish medium provision. The gap in leadership and management needs to be filled with a systematic overhaul of the current policy for IM units and IM controlled schools.

- 2.3 The Teaching Appointments' Committee (T.A.C.) of the ELB's must address the gap by updating their own regulations to ensure that there is an IM assessor on the T.A.C. when appointing a Principal for an IM school. It would also be important however, that the ETI assess the ability of the Principal and management to meet the needs of IME and make the necessary recommendations.
- 2.4 There is no requirement to ensure that the co-ordinator of the IM unit is on the senior management team of English medium schools and we deem this to be mandatory to allow for the IM unit to be considered systematically throughout school practice and procedure. It is important that the IM unit has input for example into how the SEN list operates in the school and to ensure that pupils in the IM unit are given appropriate weighting.
- 2.5 The ETI must assess the suitability of the management composition and make recommendations where necessary to ensure the quality in the IM provision within the school.
- 2.6 There is a gap in the advice being dispensed by DE in relation to the admissions criteria for IM schools and best practice as recognised by the ETI. It is our recommendation that the ETI and the schools admissions team in DE liaise in relation to IME in order to give appropriate advice to the governors of IM schools. It is important that Departmental guidance to the governors of schools is in line with best practice in immersion education. Currently DE advice all schools not to name a particular pre-school in the criteria however, there is an obligation on DE to provide a pre-school education under the European Charter for Minority and Regional Languages and attendance at an IM pre-school facilitates a better transition to an IM primary education and is line with best practice. It is therefore recommended that the ETI engage with DE in relation to the specific needs and requirements of IME in formulating guidance for the governors of IM schools.

3. Quality of provision/Standards and Achievements

- 3.1 The ETI does not adequately assess the immersion environment which is essential for the delivery of a quality bilingual education. This is particularly important in the context of IM units and the ETI should assess the school routine and arrangements to determine whether the optimum conditions are provided by the school management to ensure successful language acquisition both formally and informally. Recommendations on foot of such an analysis should be made by the ETI where necessary.
- 3.2 In its submission to the IM Review the ETI provided an analysis of the benefits of bilingualism. ETI noted that bilingualism can be a 'sought after commodity with cognitive benefits in:
 - i) Language acquisition;
 - ii) Cognitive and academic development;
 - iii) The self-confidence and self-esteem of the children;

- iv) Problem solving abilities, with children who are less afraid to get things wrong.'

It is important that the added value of this form of education particularly to children who have lower levels of achievement is assessed and highlighted by the ETI.

- 3.3 Linguistic outcomes in Irish must be monitored, evaluated and reported on and ETI should ensure that appropriate assessment tests are used to monitor these outcomes. The School Improvement process for IM schools should not be based upon evaluating and measuring improvement using tests which are not designed for IME. The report submitted by the IM Working Group on Literacy and Numeracy (Count, Read and Succeed-DE 2011) recognised the need for: - professional learning taking into consideration the sector's particular needs; gaps in availability of data for the IM sector; targets to measure the Irish language at primary level.

CnaG recommends that the above areas are addressed to allow the ETI to monitor linguistic outcomes and ensure that ESA are in a position to monitor such outcomes. In doing so the added value of a bilingual education will be recognised formally and routinely and the data will provide a benchmark to IM schools.

- 3.4 It is recognised that there is a gap in SEN provision for IM schools and it is our submission that IM schools can only improve in their SEN provision by the establishment of a dedicated IM SEN unit in Belfast and in Derry city/Omagh. The need for a dedicated IM SEN unit has been recognised by the BELB and it the ETI should be pro-active in the establishment of such units to ensure equality in provision for IM pupils with special needs.

- 3.5 The dedicated service provided by the ELBs to IM schools is inadequate. The lack of personnel and the requirement for such officers to service the entire region results in a very sporadic and infrequent support for IM schools. It is our recommendation that the service needs to be bolstered with the employment of suitably qualified IM candidates to provide support to IM schools.

- 3.6 The advice of specialists employed by the ELBS to parents of pupils in IM schools is varied in relation to whether or not a bilingual education is appropriate for children with particular learning needs. It is the view of CnaG that there needs to be consistency in relation to the advice being administered by the ELBS to parents of pupils in IM schools and that this advice should be based on research and best practice. The ETI must ascertain the advice being given to IM schools in this regard and make recommendations where necessary.

- 3.7 CnaG recognises and values the work of ETI in supporting and improving IM schools. We acknowledge that inspectors with expertise in Irish language and with immersion experience have been appointed to the inspectorate. It is important that ETI ensure that there is a sufficient pool of inspectors to service IM school inspections ETI can ensure that the specific expertise in language acquisition and immersion education informs the inspection process. It is necessary that there is a general awareness and understanding of the distinctive features of IME within the ETI. The provision of a quality immersion education must be ensured and improved by ETI and to do so the ETI must be informed by best practice in immersion pedagogy and draw on research and best practice in Wales, Scotland and the South of Ireland. ETI should undertake an analysis of best practice informed by research on school inspection in immersion settings to support this (Count, Read and Succeed 6.3).

- 3.8 Inspectors must evaluate the following aspects of IME such as:

- Early years immersion/transition from pre-school setting;
- Transition to IM primary school-including children with IM Early Years' experience, some without this experience, some native Irish speakers;
- Early total immersion including linguistic outcomes;
- Introduction of English including linguistic outcomes;
- Bi-literacy;

- Bi-numeracy;
- Curriculum;
- ICT;
- Assessment,
- SEN;
- Leadership of learning;
- Transition to post-primary;
- Post-primary subject specialisms;
- Child protection;
- Pastoral care;
- Careers.

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 The central place of the Irish language in the planning and development for literacy, numeracy and across the curriculum must be recognised by DE, the ETI and the ELBs in order to improve IM provisions.
- 3.2 It is important that the added value of a bilingual education is assessed and documented routinely by the ETI.
- 3.3 A process to ensure that governors with the appropriate skills and experience are appointed to the boards of independent Irish medium schools. The skills and experience of governors needs to be assessed by the ETI and recommendations made to the school in relation to the composition of the board of governors to improve leadership in independent IM schools.
- 3.4 The ETI must assess the management of English-medium schools in charge of an Irish medium Unit to ensure that the management has the appropriate level of understanding, experience and expertise of Irish medium education to meet the needs of the pupils in the Irish medium Unit.
- 3.5 The Teaching appointments committee of the ELBs must address the gap by updating their own regulations to ensuring that there is an IM assessor on the T.A.C. when appointing a Principal for an IM school.
- 3.6 It would also be important however, that the ETI assess the ability of the Principal and management to meet the needs of IME and make the necessary recommendations.
- 3.7 To ensure that the co-ordinator of the IM unit is on the senior management team of the schools and we deem this to be mandatory to allow for the IM unit to be considered systematically throughout school practice and procedure.
- 3.8 The ETI must assess the suitability of the management composition and make recommendations where necessary to ensure the quality in the IM provision within the school.
- 3.9 It is recommended that the ETI engage with DE in relation to the specific needs and requirements of IME in formulating guidance for the governors of IM schools.
- 3.10 ETI should assess the school routine and arrangements to determine whether the optimum conditions are provided by the school management to ensure successful language acquisition both formally and informally particularly in Irish Medium Units. Recommendations on foot of such an analysis should be made by the ETI where necessary.

- 3.10 It is important that the added value of this form of education particularly to children who have lower levels of achievement is assessed and highlighted by the ETI.
- 3.11 CnaG recommend that diagnostic tools are developed to allow the ETI to monitor linguistic outcome; ESA to monitor such outcomes and IM schools to benchmark.
- 3.12 In doing so the added value of a bilingual education will be recognised formally and routinely and schools will provide a benchmark to IM schools.
- 3.13 The need for a dedicated IM SEN unit has been recognised by the BELB and it the ETI should be pro-active in the establishment of such units to ensure equality in provision for IM pupils with special needs.
- 3.14 The advice of specialists (speech therapists; psychologists) employed by the ELBS to parents of pupils in IM schools is varied in relation to whether or not a bilingual education is appropriate for children with particular learning needs. It is the view of CnaG that there needs to be consistency in relation to the advice being administered by the ELBS to parents of pupils in IM schools and that this advice should be based on research and best practice.
- 3.15 The working Group on Literacy and Numeracy in Irish-medium Education (para1.18) also reported that its work had stimulated a debate on issues of immersion pedagogy in terms of literacy and numeracy within the sector. CnaG through its Education Sub-Committee, Principals' Forum and annual conference has facilitated this debate and in regard to ETI recommends that:
- Inspectors conducting inspections in IM settings should have expertise in IM pedagogy and should be fluent in Irish;
 - Inspectors should have specific quality indicators for IM schools. Judgements should be based on these indicators and not on a model of best practice in English-medium schools which is not relevant to Irish-medium settings;
 - Inspectors should rely on quality assessment tests for Irish when making judgements on Irish language literacy and numeracy. Tests which are not designed for bi-lingual immersion education are not a reliable indicator of achievement and are not supportive of the Irish-medium ethos of the school. Assessment tests for IM should be commissioned by DE with input from the sector and the ETI;
 - All inspectors should have a general awareness of immersion education pedagogy;
 - Inspectors should have the opportunity to develop expertise in Irish language and immersion pedagogy.
- 3.16 CnaG would welcome the opportunity to give oral evidence to the Committee for Education.

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools



Response of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools to the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Education Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (the Council) is the employer of all of the teachers and principals in the Maintained schools sector. It also has responsibility for the standards in those schools.
- 1.2 Council has very considerable experience of the work of the Education and Training Inspectorate. For example, during the period April 2012 to March 2013 there were 61 inspections in Maintained schools.
- 1.3 The inspection of schools is one of a number of processes which should work together in their contribution to school improvement. Inspection processes, their emphasis and the frequency with which they occur should fit appropriately with the improvement work that governors and school leaders are undertaking as well as with the work that CCMS and the Education and Library Boards undertake to monitor school progress and provide challenge and support where necessary. This coherence is currently underdeveloped and is something that the Committee of Inquiry might wish to examine.
- 1.4 Council is very pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry and looks forward to seeing its recommendation

2 The effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection/improvement – considering particularly how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment

- 2.1 The Education and Training Inspectorate has made a very important contribution to school improvement for many years both through its inspection work and its contribution to dialogue and guidance about school improvement. The introduction of Together Towards Improvement (a resource to support schools in the process of self-evaluation) the requirement for schools to make greater use of assessment data and the encouragement of appropriately managed systems for monitoring and evaluating pupil progress, have all made very important contributions to school improvement. However, the education environment is ever changing and it is important that the inspection service keeps pace with current trends and makes the necessary adjustments to what it does when inspecting schools.
- 2.2 Current practice in inspection examines many aspects of school life including, for example, the views of governors, parents and pupils, quality of teaching, educational achievements, quality of pastoral care and many others. However, the value that is added to the personal, social, physical and spiritual development of the pupils may not be sufficiently acknowledged in inspection reports. More effort could be made to find an appropriate balance between measuring and reporting the academic progress children make and the other very important aspects of their development. There may be very good reasons for the current approach because many of the non-academic aspects of a child's development can only be measured

qualitatively. However, by making some changes to the reporting of inspections more could be done to get this balance right.

- 2.3 The inspection process in Northern Ireland is taking place in a society where academic selection leads to educational segregation both on the basis of ability and of socio-economic status. The absence of an appropriate social mix leads to a concentration of problems in those schools in areas where the intake is socially unbalanced with high numbers of children coming from homes facing multiple levels of deprivation, and where the post primary curricular offer may be constrained with consequentially poor levels of attainment. This difference in the educational challenge that schools face makes comparison of schools by use of a narrow range of standardised indicators such as the percentage achieving Level 4 and above or the percentage achieving 5+GCSEs at grades A*-C (including English and Maths) very problematic. The failure to employ and report on a wider range of value added measures may also give rise to the perception that some schools are characterised by educational stagnation or decline while failing to give sufficient recognition to the very good work they do given their circumstances. The removal of academic selection and the establishment of an enrolment policy which ensures that schools have a better social mix would help address this problem.
- 2.4 The current inspection process does not go far enough to measure accurately and reliably the value that schools add for their pupils. While there is an increasing amount of assessment data available in schools, more needs to be done to use it as part of the value added evaluation. A more effective model for assessing academic value added would look at progress against an initial educational baseline position and allow for the impact of special needs and other personal and social factors. It would consider the pastoral and social contexts in which the school is working and include these as part of the assessment of how well the school has done for the children it has enrolled?
- 2.5 Council acknowledges that there is the need to have an overview of how schools are doing relative to one another and that grouping them into broadly comparable sets may be helpful. However, the inspection process must have its prime emphasis on measuring the school against itself - where has it been on its improvement journey and where is it now? If a school's work is only measured in terms of Key Stage 2 assessment outcomes or GCSE results then much of the other excellent work it does will go unacknowledged. Hard working principals and teachers will be left feeling that their efforts will have come to nothing if the publicly reported account of how they are doing does not reflect the value added given the educational reality of the school.
- 2.6 Best practice in inspection involves the well informed evaluation of pupil progress during their time in the school. This is based on close observation of the children and an associated study of their school assessment history at individual level. When inspection is undertaken to this level of detail it often finds that, while performing at a relatively low level, many children have made great progress and have had a lot of value added to their education. It is only by inspecting in this way that a true assessment of value added can be achieved.

The need to introduce a wider range of value added indicators is a challenge for the education system to face and is not the sole responsibility of the ETI.

3. Key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department of Education and Education and Library Boards

- 3.1 Issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties with standards can include:
 - 3.1.1 The high number of pupils being admitted to nursery, primary and post primary schools with significant developmental or learning deficits.
 - 3.1.2 Poor school attendance which can be indicative of a poor parental attitude to schooling and is often associated with low educational aspiration and motivation.

- 3.1.3 Disruptive pupil behaviour which impacts on the success of teaching and learning.
- 3.1.4 Lack of family capacity to support children with their learning and the need for more effective family intervention strategies in schools.
- 3.1.5 Lack of vision, community, team working, challenge and ambition in school leadership.
- 3.1.6 Personnel issues such as strained staff relationships or weak leadership often left unchallenged and unsupported.
- 3.1.7 Poor governor awareness of the reality of the school and the absence of governance practices for monitoring school performance.

3.2 Gaps in the ETI Review Process

To provide a more accurate and reliable evaluation of the quality of provision in a school the inspection process should:

- 3.2.1 Examine specifically the educational (instructional) leadership provided by the principal and senior leaders;
- 3.2.2 Assess the professional relationships within the school community, as this is a major contributor to effective working;
- 3.2.3 Examine the impact of the communication strategies in the school on pupil and parental engagement and on staff commitment to the strategic improvement priorities and actions ;
- 3.2.4 Evaluate teacher effectiveness by looking at pupil progress relative to their educational baseline with account taken of the other factors which are impacting on their education;
- 3.2.5 Seek information about the nature and effectiveness of learning support provided for families and by parents;
- 3.2.6 Examine the role played by governors in promoting school improvement including the presence of a governance plan and the quality of leadership provided by the Chair;
- 3.2.7 Look for evidence of the strength of shared understanding by all staff and Governors of the School Development Plan, the school curriculum, compliance with the Entitlement Framework, strategies for assessing learning and for monitoring and evaluating pupil progress and the quality of staff development;
- 3.2.8 The efforts the school has made to share curricular access, good practice, staff development, planning and resources with other schools;
- 3.2.9 Evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the transitional arrangements with other schools and organisations;
- 3.2.10 Assess the effectiveness of the management of the school budget and resources in the best interest of pupil learning;
- 3.2.11 Record the view of the school about the quality of support provided by the ELB/ESA.

4. **Alternative inspection approaches which might better assess value added and recognise improvements in schools**

- 4.1 This is not just a matter for the ETI. It is a system wide matter which would need to be reflected in education policy before being implemented and subsequently inspected.
- 4.2 When considering alternative approaches which might better assess value added there are a number of issues that need to be considered.

- 4.2.1 An appropriate range of value added measures are likely to have a greater improvement impact than the use of a narrow range of free school meals based benchmarking data currently used and they will do more to inform changes in school improvement policy.
- 4.2.2 Current approaches inspect only part of the value that teaching adds to the education of children. Agreement is required about the aspects of teaching and schooling that we place value on and which might therefore provide the focus for subsequent inspections. The processes by which we establish baselines and reliable progress measures for these also have to be discussed and agreed.
- 4.2.3 Key stage and GCSE data are unreliable indices of educational effectiveness and should not be used as the primary indicators of value added. They need to be considered alongside information about a number of other value added measures all of which need to be set in the community contexts in which the school is working.
- 4.2.4 The need to have some measure of how schools are doing relative to one another is accepted. This overview needs to be informed by a more extensive assessment of value added than is currently used.
- 4.2.5 Inspection should focus on the improvements that a school has achieved with each cohort of pupils that it has admitted. This requires, for each of an agreed set of value added measures, the establishment of a baseline against which progress can be assessed. Pupils will have different baseline positions and require differentiated teaching strategies. Any approach to measuring value added must be able to do so at the individual pupil level.
- 4.2.6 If a wider range of value added measures are introduced schools will need training to ensure that they are being evaluated correctly. It is possible that some teaching strategies might be better suited to some pupils than others. This can lead to unintended differences in teacher effectiveness. Inspections of schools should be alert to this and look for evidence of it happening.
- 4.2.7 The literature on value added emphasises the importance of getting to know the school context. This is an established part of inspection practice but more could be done to extend this and to look at its impact on teaching and learning. It also reinforces the importance of classroom observation. However, periods of observation need to be of sufficient length to allow a reliable evaluation to be made. Feedback should also be given directly to the teacher and to the principal and a record of this retained.
- 4.2.8 Attempts to broaden the range of value added indicators in other educational jurisdictions have looked at:
 - a. the inclusion of progress against student learning objectives,
 - b. the use of student surveys and student feedback measures to assess their satisfaction with the educational experience they are receiving and the quality and suitability of the school environment,
 - c. measures of pupil enjoyment and parental satisfaction,
 - d. And the use of teacher portfolios and videos of lessons.

All of these face challenges about their reliability and the need to remove the possible impact of subjectivity and bias.
- 4.2.9 High levels of academic achievement do not mean that pupils will have had similarly high levels of development with their personal and social skills. If employers and society place high value on the development of those skills and if the school is a place in which they are developed, some effort needs to be made to assess how successful the school is at providing opportunities for this to take place. Inspection should also look at the pastoral care arrangements which are in place to help pupils facing problems affecting their personal

and social development rather than looking only to ascertain if appropriate procedures are in place and what the general provision of pupil care is like.

5. Priorities and Actions that need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process

5.1 Agree what we value and inspect those things using a wider range of value added measures

Council supports a move away from the application of generic assessment standards to schools in broadly comparable groups, toward a model where the educational value added by a school is measured by reference to a wider range of indicators with information available both within the school and from sources external to it.

5.2 More frequent inspection tailored to the needs of the school

5.2.1 Currently, school inspection is a largely cyclical activity with schools being inspected once every seven years. If inspection is important it should happen more frequently, have an emphasis on quality assurance for the better schools and a focus on strategies for school improvement in the rest.

5.2.2 Changes in education may see the gradual shift to schools with varying levels of autonomy. Those with the highest levels will have demonstrated the capacity to be almost completely self-managing using many of the characteristics outlined in section 3. Others will have lower levels of autonomy and will continue to require varying amounts of support and guidance. Models of inspection will have to reflect these differences in levels of autonomy. The recent introduction of 'Sustaining Improvement' inspections is a welcome first step toward recognising the different stages that schools are at in their improvement journeys.

6. **Leading education is a key process**

6.1 During school inspections the current evaluation of leadership and management is fairly wide ranging. This is good but it may not place sufficient emphasis on the quality of instructional leadership, that is, how good the principal is as an instructional leader, how well is he/she developing the teaching staff and implementing monitoring and evaluation strategies and how much time is given to these things. Similarly, there is a need for a greater focus on relationship development and the management of effective communication at all levels.

7. **Governing for improvement**

7.1 In some schools there are frequent governor meetings and a great deal of business is done at them. However, the key business that a Board of Governors should do each year is an informed examination of the progress of the school in meeting the needs of pupils and the actions that are being taken to promote better outcomes, if possible. In this context the Chair of the Governors needs to be a highly competent school improvement governor able to guide the governing team through an assessment of the pupil outcomes, holding the principal and other staff to account and agreeing the remedial and other actions that may be required. Inspections should be looking for evidence of the effectiveness of governance and encourage governors to be more strategic in their work and more aware of the school as a partnership with others in an area to ensure access to quality education for all.

7.2 Council welcomes the recently introduced evaluation of governance as part of school inspections. This change has been managed sensitively during its introduction but quickly needs to become a more important and consistent part of all school inspections.

8. **Change the range of outcomes that may result from inspections**

8.1 School inspections are currently reported on a six point scale from 'Outstanding' to 'Unsatisfactory'. This needs to be reviewed. Council recommends that the six point scale is removed. Instead there should be no overall assessment of the provision of the school. This should be replaced with a system in which each of the aspects of school life that

are inspected is evaluated and reported as being either 'very good' 'good' or 'requiring improvement'. The school would then have a reliable indication of where its strengths and weaknesses are and could begin to work on its improvement strategy and action plans.

9. Comments on school sustainability

- 9.1 Current inspection reports often make reference to school sustainability issues and include a comment such as "the employing authority needs to look at the long-term future for the school". If a school is performing well within its current context but the limited enrolment is having an impact on the access to curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for pupils this should be stated more directly in the report.

10. The inspection workforce

- 10.1 It would be helpful to review the experience and qualifications required by staff of the ETI to ensure that they are well equipped to undertake the work of inspection. It may also be important to review the staffing structure and the range of expertise available with the potential to move toward a smaller fulltime staff and the extension of use of inspection associates who would be very highly regarded school leaders currently in post and very well placed to provide an objective evaluation of the quality of provision in a school. These associates could be seconded for a term or possibly two terms rather than through the current approach.

With the move toward higher levels of autonomy it may be helpful to use people with expertise in financial management and administration as part of inspection teams in future.

11. Who inspects the Inspectorate?

- 11.1 Consideration should be given to the processes used to ensure that inspection services are provided and reported consistently and to the very highest standards. While CCMS does not have concerns about the consistency of inspection and the voracity of inspection reports there is a need for these matters to be kept under review and quality assured by an appropriate agency.

12. Should ETI be independent of the Department of Education?

- 12.1 It is unlikely that full independence could be achieved by any inspectorate as they invariably exist to contribute to the governmental agenda such as the raising of standards which is a shared policy objective of many governments. As policy and practice are closely linked it is unlikely that the ETI could ever be fully independent of the Department of Education. However, it is very important that the ETI has as much autonomy and independence as possible if it is to do its job in the way it should.
- 12.2 Part of the problem of disconnecting ETI from the Department of Education is that the Department sets the standards against which schools are inspected and is entitled to receive the reports of these in order to know how the system of schools is performing. The independence of the ETI is also affected by the Department's reliance of other educational bodies such as CCMS and the ELBs to implement policy and procedure arising from inspection outcomes. ETI is therefore caught between the policy makers and those charged with implementing it.
- 12.3 It is important that ETI has independence in a number of areas. ETI should be able to establish a schedule of inspections, carry them out and report their findings without interference from either the Department of Education or other bodies. However, if schools will continue to have the right to challenge the outcome and conduct of inspections this indicates that inspectorial independence can only be partial. While schools, government and the wider community need an inspection process which operates to the highest standards and is beyond reproach, it may not always be possible to deliver a flawless inspection service. If this is accepted, full operational independence is not achievable.

- 12.4 In the context of a debate about the purpose of inspection it is important that the Department of Education does not exert its influence to the extent that inspection is seen only as a driver of policy but rather that it operates as a support to governors and principals as they work to provide the best possible education for their pupils. There is a balance to be achieved here and one that will only be reached if the inspectorate can get on and do its job as an agency which in observing and reporting what is happening in schools and does so in a supportive manner.
- 12.5 What might the role of inspection be in a context where schools operate in an environment with varying degrees of autonomy? For the more autonomous it would have to be the formal quality assurance agent on behalf of the system.

13 Conclusion

- 13.1 The process of school inspection cannot be seen as something that happens in isolation of other school improvement activities. These include the on-going work of schools, the school improvement interventions from the employing authorities and other support agencies (including the proposed 'Sectoral Support Bodies' envisaged in the Education Bill) and the improvement initiatives being promoted by the Department of Education, including, for example, the recently announced Community Education Initiatives Programme. Council would welcome an initiative to review the wider school improvement strategy with the hope that it might bring greater coherence to the range of initiatives and strategies currently in play. The Committee's review of the contribution of the work of the ETI to school improvement can play a very important part in that.

Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment

Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Education Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

The terms of reference for the Committee Inquiry are as follows: the Committee will

- Review the effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement – considering particularly how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment;
- Identify the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the ELBs;
- Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection, the assessment of value added and improvement;
- Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process including the need for enhanced powers; alternative measures of achievement; improved governance; and transparency; and
- Report to the Assembly on its findings and recommendations by January 2014.

Written responses are sought from all stakeholders by Friday 23 August 2013. Oral evidence will be taken in October 2013. The Committee expects to publish the report on its Inquiry in January 2014.

Request for Written Evidence: CCEA Submission (August 2013)

This submission relates mainly to the areas of:

- the assessment of value added (particularly how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment); and
- alternative measures of achievement.

Introduction

The School Improvement Process is based on the principle of school self-evaluation, supported by the processes and qualitative indicators set out in *Together Towards Improvement*.

A revised curriculum was introduced in Northern Ireland, phased since 2007, and revised assessment and qualifications arrangements are being introduced to support this. There have been a number of changes in emphasis since the introduction of the revised NI Curriculum. This includes an increasing emphasis on the use of outcomes data for a range of purposes. Schools have expressed concerns about the uses to which this data may be put, particularly in a period of close scrutiny on the sustainability of schools and perceptions of competition between schools for pupils. In relation to qualifications there is an emphasis on the achievement of A* to C grades in 5 subjects including English and Mathematics.

Limitations of Data

It is unwise to draw too many inferences from any one measure (teacher assessment or test), particularly if that measure has been designed for different purposes, particularly if these purposes are considered 'high stakes'.

Assigning 'high stakes' to educational assessments, including qualifications, can influence behaviours and cause unintended and undesirable consequences including behaviours that threaten the integrity of the process. Accountability is critical to the success of a system but reliance on a limited range of indicators should be avoided. It is critical that accountability measures are broad and holistic, based more on educational value that is added by high quality interventions than on unsophisticated absolute measures. In this way some of the risks and unintended consequences of using educational assessments for purposes other than they were designed can be minimised.

CCEA facilitated twelve End of Key Stage Assessment workshops over six days at locations across Northern Ireland in June 2013. Principals, or their representatives, from all primary and post primary schools in Northern Ireland were invited, and a total of 398 attended. The events aimed to gather stakeholders' views on the end of Key Stage assessment arrangements.

Views were expressed by the majority of the groups that the use of data and target setting should be fundamentally reviewed. Participants' perception was that ETI and other agencies focus on a narrow range of measures such as end-of-key-stage levels and GCSE grades A* to C. Participants felt that there should be an acknowledgement that learners are starting from different points, for example by taking learners with special educational needs (SEN) and English as an additional language (EAL) into consideration. It was also felt that there needs to be an acknowledgement that there are differences between cohorts – as a school cohort varies in any one year and inputs into the system may vary there should be flexibility with targets, with a pupil-focused, value-added approach. There was a strong view that data should be contextualised; for example, the size and make-up of the school are important factors that must be considered within the data. There was strong support for the use of standardised tests, as it was felt that these would allow for the valid tracking of progression.

Finally, the majority of groups spoke about being content for their school to be accountable but said that it is how they are made accountable that matters. Therefore data alone, such as percentages of levels/grades, should not be used to judge school success or as a basis for funding. Additionally, a large number of participants commented that the current measure of free school meal entitlement (FSME) is not a valid benchmark for funding without consideration of other factors such as those outlined above. There has been an increase in allegations of teacher malpractice and behaviours such as overmarking to the edge of tolerance. Such behaviours threaten both the integrity of the examination process and the confidence of stakeholders in the system. The reasons for this rise in cases is not known although it has been suggested that it may be a reflection of the pressure felt by teachers because of the 'high stakes' placed on examinations.

Alternative Measures of Achievement

In this context, and in order to be effective, the different elements of an assessment and evaluation framework must align with educational objectives of learners and the system as a whole. All of these objectives should be learner centred. Consideration should be given to an assessment/accountability framework which recognises the position of established measures within the framework, but which uses a range of quantitative and qualitative information and which shifts the focus of accountability to effective governance.

School accountability should be focused on governance and school self-evaluation, on how schools use analysis of a range of available data, including examination results, end-of-key-stage outcomes and standardised tests, to identify areas for attention, to effect improvement and to gauge the effectiveness of interventions.

Consideration should be given to addressing gaps such as those identified in the *PWC Final Report on School and Pupil Performance Data* (November 2008), for example:

- suitable baseline measurement and longitudinal data;
- increased focus on qualitative indicators (such as those within *Together Towards Improvement*) to provide a more holistic view of the achievements of individual young people and schools;
- additional measures of performance to guard against the potential risk of perverse performance incentives;
- measures of deprivation and other contextual data in the development of any value-added measure.

Mr Lyle Cubitt and Mr Robin Stirling

Inquiry Into Education And Training Inspectorate 2013

1. The submission is being made jointly by
 - (a) Robin Stirling of Ballymena, a former Headmaster of Gracehill Primary school Ballymena, former local Councillor and a current Governor of a Primary School and
 - (b) Lyle Cubitt of Ballymena, a Retired Solicitor, a former Governor of a Primary School in Ballymena and a current Governor of a Primary School.
2. *It is axiomatic that a form of Inspection is necessary for our education system.*
3. The present structure of Education is divided amongst the Department of Education (hereinafter referred to as DE), regional Education and Library Boards (hereinafter referred to as ELB) and the Education Training Inspectorate (hereinafter referred to as ETI) which raises questions as to demarcation lines in respect of each organisation and exchange of information between the DE and ETI and also ETI and ELBs. It would seem good practice that protocols/directives should cover these relationships and any such should be available in every school for Principals, teachers and Governors.
4. An immediate priority to be addressed by the Committee should be disclosure to all Governors and Principals of the exact relationships referred to in paragraph 3. A further and immediate priority should be the provision to all Governors of the document "A Common Framework For Inspection." The necessity of the provision of these documents is so obvious that no comment upon same is required.
5. A serious issue re the ETI is to define the role which they are undertaking. Are they merely enforcers of the DE to implement the DE policies and satisfy the local Boards preferences?

Consideration should be given to the ETI being put on the same footing as OFSTED.
6. With the abolition of the 11+ and the proposed abolition of the "Dickson Plan" there is no objective standard to assess the success of the Inspectorate in the primary sector and yet in the secondary sector it is not unknown for the Inspectorate to refer to the GCSE results as an indication of the success of their recommendations.
7. Prior to classroom observation the Inspector has sight of questionnaires completed by parents, teachers and support staff. The least amendment should require an objective assessment of the achievements and standards be made prior to any such input being disclosed to the Inspectorate. This practice should be amended to ensure a Principals right to be informed and to reply
8. Fairness requires that matters which are not within the control of a Principal should not quoted as justification of criticism of a Principal The unfairness to a Principal whose teaching is not found to be unsatisfactory or inadequate is clearly obvious if the school itself is placed in one of these categories due to other teachers who do not satisfy the basic standards and the Report should clarify this.

(Nolan Principles).
9. A reconsideration of all primary schools should take place in the light of the demise of Key Stage assessments (which do not appear to have been criticised by the ETI). An OFSTED type ETI should have an ancillary function namely to comment on the standards set by the D E.
10. All information whether correspondence, email or/and verbal from DE and/or ELB with the ETI should be disclosed if for no other reason than to ensure that same is accurate/fair and not

- negligent or at worst malevolent. All material associated with a school inspection should be kept for the minimum period stipulated in a relevant Retention and Disposal Schedule.
11. The Inspector on a Follow Up Inspection should not comment on matters, as if he/she had dealt with the issues on an earlier inspection, when in fact no comments were made as this is at best misleading and unfair.
 12. The failure by the ETI to in any way acknowledge the PRSD assessments carried out by the Local Board requires investigation as to why not and is PRSD simply a waste of time and money
 13. The ETI should identify factually the areas for improvement so that all parties are aware of the exact failings rather than parrot the phrases “to build working relationships; to improve inadequate leadership” as failure to do so can have a detrimental effect on the school.
 14. If additional Governors are recommended the ETI should specifically meet with the Governors and identify the particular reasons why such a recommendation, and should be prepared to advise the Governors where they allegedly failed particularly so if they have criticised the ETI and thus they may be left wondering if criticism of the ETI may have been an influence in making such a determination.
 15. Prior to making a recommendation for new Governors the ETI should ensure that such persons are available and the BOG should be advised of the criteria for assessing the “appropriate experience and expertise” of these new Governors and how these new appointees comply with the criteria. In the interest of transparency all meetings and communications amongst the DE, ETI and Board officials with the DE appointed Governors should be recorded with proper minutes and any meetings/discussions be reported to the Board of Governors.
 16. There should be an independent Appeal Procedure available for Principals/Governors.

Cubitt and Stirling further response

LYLE CUBITT LLB

19 Derneveagh Road
Ballymena
BT43 6TX
(028) 25648397

8th November 2013

OUR REF: LC/CM

Dear Sir,

I refer to the submission made by Mr Stirling and myself. I advised the Board of Governors of the School of which Mr Stirling and I are members that we were making a submission to your committee and that we had not identified the School; I also advised that the comments were objective. They passed a vote of no confidence in us for making such a submission and accordingly I would be interested in the views of the committee on such a course of action by the Board of Governors.

Yours Sincerely


Lyle Cubitt

Mr Peter McCallion
Secretary Education Committee
Northern Ireland Assembly
STORMONT

Early Years



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14/08/2013
Peter McCallion
Room 243, Parliament Buildings
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Email: committee.education@niassembly.gov.uk

Inquiry into the ETI and the School improvement process

i. Early Years – the organisation for young children

Early Years¹ is the largest organisation in Northern Ireland working with, and for, all young children. It is a non-profit making organisation and has been operating since 1965 to promote and develop high quality, evidence-informed early childhood services for young children, their families and communities. Our vision is that children are strong, competent and visible in their communities; physically and emotionally healthy; eager and able to learn and respectful of difference.

We work within a strong set of values which place listening to children and those who care for them; inclusion and diversity; a strong voice for children; parents as first educators; participation of children and families; community involvement and development; partnership and excellence and evidence-based innovation at the forefront of what we do. We believe our vision and values not only create a framework for us to provide services consistent with our positive vision of and for children but point to many areas of relevance to this present, much needed, inquiry.

ii. Inquiry terms of reference

Prior to commencing with the main body of this written submission, Early Years wish to express disappointment in the actual terms of reference for the Committee's inquiry circulated to stakeholders. The terms of reference outlines the areas which the Committee will explore as including school inspection, the school improvement process and issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties. Such consistent usage of the term 'school' in this manner is regrettable. Experience has taught us that this inevitably leads to an assumption that the fundamental stage before formal school commencement, pre-school education, is not worthy of consideration. The precise use of terminology is extremely important here. Specific reference to the important pre-school level of the education pathway should have been included. This Early Years submission, towards a more holistic approach, therefore will seek to highlight significant suggested areas for the Committee's inquiry broken into 1) key issues within the current system; and 2) recommended priorities and actions to be taken forward whilst maintaining a focus on pre-school education.

1. Key issues within the current system

The ETI used to have its own budget but this is now controlled by the Department of Education. It is contended that this creates a number of associated implications for the required role of the Inspectorate as an assessor, challenger, advisor and supporter of settings within an overall environment of continuous improvement and

¹ For more see <http://www.early-years.org/>



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**

Silver



self-reflection/evaluation, given that this role presently does not stem from an independence from the Department. Such implications include:

- The Department of Education utilises too narrow a definition of literacy² concerning the use and understanding of appropriate and legible written information. This should be much wider given the range of children within the tiers of our education system and the widely acknowledged (such as in the recent Public Accounts Committee Report³), convincing evidence which indicates the greatest improvements in literacy and numeracy skills will come from sustained intervention and investment in children's early years.
- It would appear that the ETI is being driven by the Department's current emphasis on statistics and data. As such data is only available at primary and post-primary levels, the perception is growing among stakeholders that the work of the ETI is currently more focused on primary and post-primary levels of the education system with an ever-decreasing focus on pre-school education.
- Early Years would prefer to see a more holistic approach to children's education. We must seek to skill and support our children for the future in which they are growing and learning towards and this has to include a focus so that the essential abilities for all future learning, successful social engagement and preparation for life (perseverance, negotiation, self-regulation, motivation, ability to interact) can also be acquired. To quote Eric Hoffer, 'in times of change, learners inherit the Earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists'.
- We also note that the most recent Chief Inspector's Report did not receive the same level of dissemination within the pre-school sector as the other sectors. Separate conferences were held to disseminate the findings to principals of primary, secondary and special schools yet no such conference took place in relation to the pre-school sector. This was regrettable given the significance of many of the findings in the report pertaining to the quality of provision in pre-school settings. If the pre-school sector is to continue to improve, then similar opportunities for settings to come together and address issues within the CI report should have been provided

The current area of, and processes surrounding, inspections themselves will be a significant aspect of the Committee's Inquiry. Within the present system, despite initiatives underway to shorten in some cases and standardise inspection notification periods, it is contended that inspections are, or at least are being perceived as, becoming 'an event' to be prepared for following receipt of notification. Inspections need to be viewed as part of the 'process' of continuous improvement and self-reflection/evaluation carried out by schools and pre-school settings.

2. Priorities and actions

To support the Committee's consideration of what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the improvement process as part of this Inquiry we recommend the following:

² For example see the 'Count, Read: Succeed' Strategy

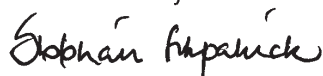
³ Report on Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in School: May 2013; NIA 116/11-15
ISBN: 978-0-339-60482-7

- In developing an environment of assured quality and stakeholder confidence in the required role for the Inspectorate as an assessor, challenger, advisor and supporter of settings within an overall environment of continuous improvement and self-reflection/evaluation, the ETI should be independent from DE.
- In order to ascertain the true state of affairs, unannounced inspections should be the norm not the exception.
- Inspections should not be perceived as just an event: instead, they should be viewed as part of promotion of continuous improvement and a culture of self-evaluation.
- There also needs to be developed more sustained relationship between district inspectors and their schools/pre-school settings.
- Consideration should be given to more joined-up inspections with ETI working more closely with other inspection bodies, in particular, the HSCT.
- The ETI should report in greater detail on the advancement of 'Shared Education' made by individual schools as recommended by the Ministerial Advisory Group for the advancement of Shared Education in Northern Ireland.⁴
- The ETI inspections should focus more a child-centred approach rather than DE's narrow pursuit of statistics, data and measurement and the employment of limited definitions of literacy and numeracy.
- In line with other approaches towards area based planning, more opportunities should be presented for ETI to inspect how pre-school settings and other professions in an area work together to promote specific actions and improvements together towards a child centred and holistic approach and supporting the child and family through all stages of the education process.
- Given the narrowing of the ETI's work to primary and post-primary work mirrored with decreasing interest in the pre-school sector (as demonstrated by the lack of CI conference for early years), we would suggest that perhaps it is time that an alternative form of external verification (aligned with well embedded self-evaluation processes) is employed within the pre-school sector.

Oral evidence to the Committee

We would welcome the opportunity to present oral evidence to the Committee and elaborate further on the key areas within this submission in order to ensure that issues surrounding current and future inspection and improvement processes adequately reflect all education levels in the development of both this inquiry and the Committee's final report.

Yours sincerely



Siobhán Fitzpatrick CBE
Chief Executive Officer

⁴ <http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEducation/MinisterialAdvisoryGroup/>

Eden Primary School

Dear Mr McCallion,

I am a serving primary school principal who conducted research into the inspection process. My research was in the form of a 100,000 word thesis, with the title being “School Inspection and School Improvement: A Case Study.” This research led to me being awarded the degree of Doctor of Education in 2003. While some aspects of the inspection process seem to have changed since this date, most notably the Inspectorate’s focus on Key Stage results instead of a focus on teaching and learning, I believe many of the findings are applicable today.

Due to the detail of a doctoral thesis, I have decided it would be more practical for me to attach the summary and conclusions of my research for your consideration.

School Inspection and School Improvement: A Case Study

Martin Victor Sheeran B.Ed. (Hons.), PG Dip.Ed., M.Ed.

Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ulster at Jordanstown

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Education

December 2003

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Acknowledgements

I am indebted to a number of people who have assisted me in my research and in the production of this thesis.

I would like to thank the Principal of Knocknagoney Primary School for his willingness to allow me to carry out the research in the school, without any restrictions being placed upon me.

I would like to thank those teachers within the school under study and the Education and Training Inspectorate's former Staff Inspector for Primary Schools, for their co-operation and generosity in undertaking the interviews which form the basis of this study.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Barry Hutchinson, Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ulster of Jordanstown, whose patience, support and guidance were indispensable throughout this study. I also thank Dr. John Dallat for his help in the latter stages of this research.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Sandra for her careful typing of this script and for her constant support and encouragement.

Summary

This study is concerned with exploring the inspection process in Northern Ireland and describing its perceived contribution to school improvement. This is achieved through a case study which sought to analyse the Focused Inspection of one Northern Irish primary school, Knocknagoney Primary, and the School Improvement Programme which emanated from it. The research provides a critique of the role performed by the Inspectorate, both historically and contemporaneously, and of the characteristics and processes implicit in school improvement. It culminates in the portrayal of teacher expectations, perceptions and actions during school inspection and school improvement processes, in order to examine the perceived value of these processes to the school. It further investigates the interaction between these processes and, subsequently, highlights those school managerial and governmental policy decisions which will be required to improve upon current arrangements.

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach to methodology, based on semi-structured interviews which focused on issues which were identified by staff and which arose as the study evolved. There was also document analysis of governmental and school publications which provided contextual information and aided understanding of the topics under discussion and their development.

The results of the study include recommendations and conclusions relating to both Knocknagoney Primary School and the inspection system in general. In particular, within the confines of current inspectorial practice, the research will draw upon the experiences gained during the Focused Inspection of Knocknagoney Primary School to consider the potential benefits of employing an alternative mode of inspection, namely the Quality Assurance Inspection. In simplistic terms, this method of inspection enables schools to work with the Inspectorate to agree upon those areas of school life to be inspected and also on the timing of the inspection. More radically, this study will argue that a re-definition of the inspection process is needed, to incorporate the views of teachers rather than to exclude them and to make inspection a learning experience for those same teachers by emphasising advice rather than judgment.

Glossary of Terms

BELB – Belfast Education and Library Board

BERA – British Educational Research Association

CASS – Curriculum, Advisory and Support Service

CCMS – Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

DE – Department of Education

DENI – Department of Education for Northern Ireland

ELBs – Educational and Library Boards

ERA – Education Reform Act 1988

ERO – Education Reform (NI) Order 1989

ETI – Education and Training Inspectorate

INSET – In-service Training

HMI – Her Majesty's Inspectorate

ISIP – International School Improvement Project

LEA – Local Education Authority

LMS – Local Management of Schools

MBW – Making Belfast Work

NIAO – Northern Ireland Audit Office

NICC – Northern Ireland Curriculum Council

NISEAC - Northern Ireland Schools Examination and Assessment Council

OECD – Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development

OFSTED – Office for Standards In Education

OHMCI – Office for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

QAI – Quality Assurance Inspection

RSSI – Raising School Standards Initiative

SBR – School Based Review

SDP – School Development Programme

Declaration

"I hereby declare that with effect from the date on which the thesis is deposited in the Library of the University of Ulster, I permit the Librarian of the University to allow the thesis to be copied in whole or in part without reference to me on the understanding that such authority applies to the provision of single copies made for study purposes or for inclusion within the stock of another Library. **This restriction does not apply to the British Library Thesis Service (which is permitted to copy the thesis on demand for loan or sale under the terms of a separate agreement) nor to the copying or publication of the title and abstract of the thesis.** IT IS A CONDITION OF USE OF THIS THESIS THAT ANYONE WHO CONSULTS IT MUST RECOGNISE THAT THE COPYRIGHT RESTS WITH THE AUTHOR AND THAT NO QUOTATION FROM THE THESIS AND NO INFORMATION DERIVED FROM IT MAY BE PUBLISHED UNLESS THE SOURCE IS PROPERLY ACKNOWLEDGED."

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

A qualitative case study, such as the Focused Inspection of Knocknagoney Primary School, is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity. As such, it offers an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences and processes occurring in that particular instance, with the aim of providing insight and discovery to both the researcher and reader. As has been shown in chapter 3, these characteristics of the qualitative case study are particularly well suited to the nature, scope and aims of this study. Of particular significance is the descriptive nature of the qualitative case study which means that the issues which have appeared during this study will become immersed in the discussion of the inspection process and its meaning for the participants involved. The aim of this chapter is not to fragment the rich and holistic account of school inspections offered in the case study. However, having looked at the participants' explanations and interpretations of events it is necessary to discern those insights which have most significance to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and improve practice.

In this section of work the 'findings' of significance which emerged from the case study and which have implications for either the school or the Inspectorate, or perhaps both organisations, will be discussed. Of most importance will be those findings where current inspectorial arrangements are regarded as problematic or contentious by educational practitioners and, in particular, those issues which display contrariness in values between those held by the school, teachers and school improvement protagonists and those espoused by the Department of Education.

In writing these conclusions, I was initially tempted into making recommendations on means by which the current system of Focused and General Inspections could be refined. Examples of this included: the Inspectorate should consider the benefits, in terms of reduction of teacher stress, to be gained from the implementation of a timetable during inspection; the inspection process could be increased by one additional day to facilitate increased professional dialogue; and schools should have an opportunity to respond to the findings of inspection, by the inclusion of a commentary by the Principal in the appendix of the written report. However, after considerable reflection I decided that this could not happen, as I regarded such a course of action to be one which merely treats the symptoms and not the causes of the inherent problems of inspection which have been outlined in the case study. The fundamental notion that school improvement must be generated internally is at variance with the top-down accountability system embodied by inspection. No tinkering or adapting with the mechanisms or processes of inspection will alter this fact, therefore one must offer alternatives to, rather than apologies for, the form of accountability which Focused and General Inspections offer. This point is not negotiable, for in any democracy it is only right and proper to hold schools, as a publicly funded service, to account.

However, in arguing for the need to consider alternative forms of accountability I will purposefully not discount the role which the Inspectorate may have to play in such arrangements. This decision results from my belief that the principles and values behind Quality Assurance Inspections would indicate that this mode of inspection may offer a different role for inspectors, and one which is, potentially, more in tune with school improvement theory. Therefore, until research is carried out into the compatibility of Quality Assurance Inspections and school improvement theory and practice, I must consider that the Inspectorate have a role to play, albeit not within the processes embodied in Focused and General Inspections.

This chapter will now analyse the individual issues which have arisen during the case study and comment on how they may be addressed. This will be followed by a holistic appraisal

of these factors to ascertain if the inspection process can be made more amenable to the needs and aspirations of teachers and schools everywhere.

1. Time notification

It has been noted that the most stressful time in the inspection of Knocknagoney Primary was the period from when the school received notice of the inspection until the inspection began. This should come as no surprise for previous studies by Brimblecombe et al. (1995) and Thomas (1996) have clearly established this fact. Undoubtedly, within Knocknagoney stress before inspection was caused by an amalgam of fear of the unknown, pre-conceived expectations of inspection and a need to prepare both organisationally and administratively, to meet both the requirements of the inspection process and the pre-conceived expectations held by teachers.

The nature of pre-inspection activity in schools has been revealed by Gray and Gardner (1999,p.466), in a survey of the impact of school inspections in Northern Ireland: "For some schools, the pre-inspection period was reported to be a frenzy of activity which left teachers exhausted, and in a few extreme instances, ill." While the extent to which teachers prepared for inspection, and one may assume their ability to cope with the resultant stress, varied from individual to individual, clearly teachers' workload in the pre-inspection period is raised significantly by the prospect of inspection; for as Hargreaves (1995,p.120) argues "Only the naive do nothing in the run-up to inspection and adopt a take-us-as-you-find-us approach." This argument is bolstered by a recent report by the NIAO (1999,p.47) which states that, on average, schools invest fifty two staff days preparing for an inspection, covering the time of Principals, department heads, teaching and support staff and governors.

When one considers the nature of pre-inspection activity in schools generally, and in Knocknagoney Primary School in particular, it is difficult to envisage how the practices described, can be reconciled either with the wish of the Staff Inspector that inspections should, as far as possible, reflect the normal life of the school (Appendix A,p.315-6), or, indeed, with Fullan's (1991) belief that successful initiation of school improvement encompasses ensuring the readiness of staff to become involved in the change effort.

The stress inherent in the pre-inspection period has led Thomas (1996,p.366) to conclude that the period of notice for inspections should be considerably reduced. On the other hand evidence supplied by Gray and Gardner (1999,p.460) suggests that 87% of Northern Ireland Principals were satisfied with the current notice of inspection. Within the case study example, it was shown that the staff of Knocknagoney Primary felt that the present notification of one month was appropriate; although it was also claimed that there is an innate difficulty for any teacher to advocate a measure such as reducing the time notification for inspection, given that such a suggestion could prove to be unpopular within the profession by apparently denying teachers sufficient time to prepare for the forthcoming event.

Clearly, one common denominator linking the findings of Thomas (1996), Gray and Gardner (1999) and the Knocknagoney staff, is that the notice of an impending inspection should not be extended. However, it is also important that no support is added to the belief that the notification of inspection should be abolished completely. Indeed, under current circumstances reducing the notice of inspection or abolishing it, even on a trial basis, would be problematic, for whilst pastoral care inspections have no notice, it would be unfair for some General or Focused Inspections to replicate this practice, for comparison with schools which received notice would be unfair, given the need for published reports. Furthermore, although there is an argument for suggesting that having inspection without notification may result in a more accurate reflection of daily practice within schools, there is no evidence to indicate that the stress generated by an unannounced inspection would be any less severe than for that with a notice.

One possible solution to the 'stress factor' of the pre-inspection period lies in the developing field of Quality Assurance Inspections. Here schools request the Inspectorate to conduct an

external quality assurance inspection of an area of school life which the school has previously identified, evaluated and reported on. The aim of this external evaluation is “To assess the rigour and fitness for purpose of its (the school’s) evaluation procedures and to verify the findings of its internal evaluation” (DENI,1998b,p.10). Agreement with the Inspectorate is reached on a provisional date for the inspection to commence. Thus the school becomes the instigator of the inspection process, being pro-active in preparing for inspection, by deciding on the areas to be inspected and negotiating the time scale for the inspection to begin. Such a policy may be a viable consideration for Knocknagoney Primary and other schools, for it permits preparation for inspection to be more natural and evolving by allowing the institution concerned to dictate its state of readiness for inspection not against an imposed deadline, but according to its developmental status.

To discover whether these potential benefits are translated into practice, research should take place to discover the impact of Quality Assurance Inspection in primary education. It is hoped that such research would reveal whether the nature of preparation in Quality Assurance Inspections differed from Focused or General Inspections and, consequently, whether this helped alleviate stress in the pre-inspection period. More importantly, the research could also ascertain whether the Quality Assurance Inspection is in keeping with the principles and practice of school improvement.

2. Hearsay and speculation

Within Knocknagoney Primary there were many examples of teachers being mis-informed about the rationale and workings of the inspection process; with rumour and speculation being identified as playing a formative role in the development of teacher expectations and perceptions. The impact of hearsay and speculation in the development of teacher expectations should not be underestimated, for within the case study example expectations clearly influenced actions. The significance of hearsay and speculation is, however, not merely confined to Knocknagoney Primary School, for in a letter to the editor of the Belfast Telegraph on 7 February 2001 a ‘Caring Professional’ who had recently undergone a General Inspection commented: “Horror stories abound in the profession of teachers being savaged by inspectors and, following our recent ordeal, I now know them to be founded in fact.”

Undoubtedly, where staff are ill-informed or lacking knowledge about the inspection process a situation of uncertainty will exist, and in a situation of uncertainty myths are easily created. For Brimblecombe et al. (1995,p.55) such a situation will have further repercussions, for they claim that fear of the unknown is a significant contributor to increased stress amongst staff. Dean (1995,p.46) further adds to the belief that uncertainty about the process of inspection will have negative consequences for staff: “Teachers felt better about the inspection when they knew what was going to happen and the criteria by which judgments were made.” Certainly, this view was supported by all the staff of Knocknagoney Primary School.

If uncertainty surrounding inspection can increase the power and influence of rumour and speculation, the challenge, therefore, must be how to overcome such a scenario.

My initial thoughts centred on how inspection documentation could be utilised to negate or minimise the influence of hearsay and speculation. Firstly I concentrated my attention at the school level where it was shown that Knocknagoney Primary utilised the DENI document ‘Evaluating Schools’ (1998a). Although this is a professional and user-friendly document, its aim is to guide schools through the process of self-evaluation rather than to provide an understanding of the inspection process. However, the DENI publication ‘The Inspection Process in Schools,’ (1998c) does offer a comprehensive insight into the purpose, nature and principles of inspection. Therefore, I considered proposing that in the advent of an impending inspection that Knocknagoney Primary and other schools should use this document to provide staff with a more enlightened understanding of the inspection process.

Furthermore, despite arguing that the DENI document ‘The Inspection Process in Schools’ is beneficial, as it offers an insight into the purpose, nature and principles of inspection, I

believed that this publication could be enhanced as it fails to provide detail of the criteria which guides inspection activity. This situation exists despite the Inspectorate maintaining detailed internal guidance for its inspectors which includes criteria for assessing strengths and weaknesses over a wide range of aspects of teaching and learning and other aspects of school life (NIAO,1999,p.18). To increase transparency and knowledge of inspections I contemplated advocating that the Inspectorate should include detail on the criteria which guides the inspection process, following OFSTED's 'Framework for the Inspection of Schools' (1994), which forms part of the 'Handbook for the Inspection of Schools' (OFSTED,1993) and, sets out the principles to which registered inspectors and their teams must adhere; a code of practice for inspectors; and the detailed schedule which specifies for every aspect inspected the criteria against which judgments should be made, the evidence required and the features on which inspectors should report (Matthews and Smith, 1995,p.25).

In addition to considering how the individual school's role in educating teachers on the inspection process could be enhanced, I also deliberated on how the role of the Inspectorate could be expanded. This involved the Inspectorate utilising CASS training days to outline the aims, methods and overall process of inspection to teachers, thereby achieving greater transparency with regard to the inspection system, while also demystifying the traditional image of the 'unapproachable inspector.' It was also thought that if this process was successful it could be extended to embrace both the programme of induction for newly qualified teachers and/or for those in teacher education institutions.

However, upon reflection, I decided that whilst these possible recommendations may serve the purposes of the current inspection system they were not in tune with school improvement theory, nor the needs of teachers. In particular, it was thought that adhering to inspectorial documentation or oratory would increase the controlling influence of inspections and would do little to embrace a process of enquiry and reflection on the part of the staff, which has been claimed to contribute to the successful initiation of change efforts (Fullan,1991), or, indeed, to recognise school improvement's re-conceptualisation of leadership where teachers and managers engage in shared decision making and risk-taking (Stoll and Fink, 1996).

In rejecting such an approach one should be prepared to offer an alternative 'solution,' for as has been noted in chapter 5b, hearsay and speculation are not conducive to the collegial and collaborative approach needed for successful school improvement (Hopkins and Lagerweij,1996). To achieve this aim, we may return to a previously made assertion by Dean (1995,p.46), namely: "Teachers felt better about the inspection when they knew what was going to happen and the criteria by which judgments were made." If the process of inspecting a school, or reviewing its operation, was changed to involve teachers considering and deciding upon the criteria on which a school is to be evaluated, and in making the subsequent judgments, then it could be plausibly argued that hearsay and speculation would no longer be issues with which a staff would have to contend.

3. Workload, stress and performance during inspection

Recent research has indicated that inspections heighten anxiety and increase stress among teachers (for example Jeffrey and Woods, 1998; Gray and Wilcox, 1995a), whilst a series of letters to the editor of the 'Belfast Telegraph' in February 2001 by serving teachers, also indicated that stress and inspection go hand-in-hand. Gray and Gardner (1995,p.461) argue that such anxiety manifests itself in physical symptoms such as agitation, tiredness, high blood pressure and loss of sleep, and in a range of emotional responses, for example, worry, fear of letting the school down, fear of the unknown, resentment and too much time spent on preparation. Within the case study example the stresses evident in the pre-inspection period continued during the act of inspection, with the manifestation of anxiety being both physical (for example tiredness) and emotional (for example anxiety, worry, excess preparation).

The Focused Inspection of Knocknagoney Primary School was shown to be a stressful event where teachers' workload significantly increased. For the school management fulfilling the requirements of the Pre-Inspection Papers and ensuring staff were prepared were

primary concerns, while for the staff producing classroom planning notes, updating record keeping, renewing wall displays and preparing lessons were the most important tasks to be undertaken. It was also shown that lesson preparation was conducted more expansively than normal, whilst teachers claimed that teaching in front of an inspector often involved a change in approach and practice. Thus, the reality of inspections runs contrary to the rhetoric of the Staff Inspector who, as previously noted, claimed that inspection should reflect the normal life of the school (Appendix A,p.315-6).

Indeed, the findings of the case study, which indicate that teachers present a front to inspectors during inspection by adopting practices which may depart from their preferred ways but which are judged to impress the Inspectorate, correspond with recent findings by Webb et al. (1998), Jeffrey and Wood (1998) and Gray and Wilcox (1995a). By adopting an approach to suit inspectors, teachers are undoubtedly creating a self-protection mechanism, perhaps understandably so, for as Pearce, (1986,p134-5) notes:

Teaching combines privacy, autonomy and immediacy to an unusual degree. No act infringes these three properties so completely as inspection by an unknown observer. Full formal inspection applies that infringement on the scale of the whole institution and does so within a limited span of time.

For Webb et al. (1998,p.547), performance during inspection can be attributed to the potentially threatening nature of the event, the desired models of practice implicit and explicit in inspectorial publications, and the adverse effects a poor report can have on individuals and schools.

The desire to impress an outsider has, of course, serious implications. Brimblecombe et al. (1995,p.57) declare that such a decision means most teachers plan their lessons with more care than normal, while many planned their lessons to be more didactic than normal. Interestingly, in this study's historical analysis it was shown that the regulatory nature of inspections often resulted in the initiative and individuality of teachers being stifled, to the detriment of their pupils. Jeffrey and Wood (1998,p.96) claim that teachers in their case study could not have continued at the pace they were working for much longer than the inspection lasted. However, most significantly Wilcox and Gray (1996), based on their research into the process and outcomes of school inspections believe that the artificial preparation and conduct of teachers questions the validity of inspection reports.

Gray and Gardner (1999,p.462) have provided recent statistical information regarding whether an inspection team invalidates its own inspection findings by intruding upon and disrupting the normal workings of the school. They claim that despite the relatively high percentages of primary and secondary-level Principals who considered inspections to be disruptive (63% and 42% respectively), the large majority of both groups (66% primary and 84% secondary level) somewhat paradoxically felt that inspection teams saw the normal working of schools. This evidence leads Gray and Gardner to the conclusion that the majority of schools feel that despite its shortcomings the inspection process does have validity. However, it is important to note that these findings were provided by Principals, most of whom would not be classroom teachers. Furthermore, the question asked of Principals: "did the inspection team see a true picture of normal working in the school?" could be interpreted very differently from a question such as "did teachers change or adapt their teaching methods during inspection?" Within the case study, staff were asked explicitly whether they conducted 'normal lessons' or whether they changed their teaching styles or methods for the inspection. All but one of the class teachers in Knocknagoney Primary School indicated that they had altered their teaching approaches for the inspector.

If one accepts the findings of this case study and of other notable authorities (Webb et al. 1998; Jeffrey and Wood, 1998; Gray and Wilcox, 1995a) then it would appear that many teachers do change their practice and approach during an inspection. At a basic level, if teachers only use methods which they believe will please the inspector, teacher innovation will be lost. More profoundly the impact of inspection on teacher development will be

curtailed as inspectors will not be able to pass comment or advice on 'normal practice,' thereby allowing the individual staff member to reflect upon their teaching or to identify areas in need of improvement. This is a crucial point, for within the context of school improvement reflection on current/normal practice is the impetus for altering beliefs and, therefore, for bringing about changes to practice. Also, the findings indicate that the pedagogical façade displayed by teachers during inspection does, as Wilcox and Gray (1996) suggest, seriously question the validity of this process. Sadly, it would appear that the current stress of Focused and General Inspections on accountability as opposed to teacher development will sustain the element of 'performance' within schools. If this is to change, then the nature and purpose of inspection must also alter.

4. The inspection did not change classroom practice

The Focused Inspection of Knocknagoney Primary School was not believed by the staff to have improved classroom practice. This viewpoint is contrary to that of DENI (1998c,p.4) which holds that "The purpose of inspection is to help to promote the highest possible standards of learning and teaching throughout the Educational System in Northern Ireland..." The belief that inspection did not improve classroom practice was due in part to an absence of suitable reporting procedures between teacher and inspector, or what has been previously referred to in this study as 'feedback.' Feedback was judged to be lacking in quality and quantity, thereby depriving the staff of opportunities to further their professional development, and creating feelings of uncertainty about teacher performance.

According to Southworth and Fielding (1994,p.176) the inspection process fails to encourage professional dialogue because it is one in which "inspectors judge and tell, and teachers receive and react." However, in this case study the main problem was that teachers could not receive, because inspectors did not tell. Research findings by NIAO (1999), Jeffrey and Wood (1998), Millet and Johnson (1998) and Gray and Wilcox (1995b) testify that the poor quality of feedback given during the Focused Inspection of Knocknagoney Primary School is not an isolated example.

Paradoxically, even though they were performing in an abnormal way, teachers feel strongly about the value of feedback and regard its absence with a sense of injustice (Dean,1995,p.49; Thomas,1996,p.363); as Brimblecombe et al. (1995,p.59) note, "Hearing what inspectors think about their teaching can cause anxiety to teachers, but not hearing is, for many, even worse." Furthermore, good feedback is deemed by Fiddler et al. (1994,p.351) to be a contributor to school development, whilst it has also been claimed that feedback affects intentions to change (Brimblecombe et al. 1996,p.351). This is a salient point, for change is, of course, central to school improvement efforts:

Now if the primary purpose of inspection is to monitor the system or even to identify failing schools, low levels of feedback at the time of observation - the point where it is most likely to be useful - is tolerable. Where the primary purpose is improvement, this rejection of dialogue is indefensible (Hargreaves,1995,p.122).

Feedback is vital for improvement. Without it little or no gains in new knowledge and insights for teachers will be achieved, and hence limited change will result to classroom practice, as evidenced during the case study of Knocknagoney Primary School. Providing feedback to all teachers, would promote the professional development of teachers, and give them the opportunity to place their work/lesson in context. It would thus help realise the developmental aspect of school improvement stressed by Hopkins and Lagerweij (1996) and the belief that classroom teachers' understanding of teaching and learning must be the precursor of educational change that affects the learning of students, as such change involves teachers acquiring new knowledge, adopting new behaviours and sometimes in modifying beliefs or values (Fullan,1991; Elliott,1998).

Hargreaves' contention that the importance of feedback depends on what is seen to be the main aim of inspection also challenges the current inspection system to choose either the path of accountability or that of improvement/development.

5. Teachers wanted the Inspectorate's role to be advisory

It has been shown in chapter 1 that historically the role of the Inspectorate was primarily as a regulator of the teaching profession, but with a limited advisory capability; and that teachers were happier when the advisory nature of inspections was increased. It is clear from the case study that these historical conclusions still hold true today. During the Focused Inspection of Knocknagoney Primary School, the staff believed that inspection was concerned with monitoring and evaluation and not with improvement. This may be contrasted with the alternative value espoused by DE (2002) in "Promoting Improvement...A Charter for Inspection," namely that, "The ultimate aim is that the inspection process should contribute to the raising of standards of learner achievement throughout the education and training sectors...."

The perception that inspection focused on monitoring and evaluation was reinforced by some of the strategies employed by the inspection team, which were judged to be too reliant on children's opinions. It was also evident during the inspection that advice given by the Inspectorate was appreciated by teachers. Unfortunately, this advice was limited in scope.

The desire within Knocknagoney Primary School that inspections should become more advisory in nature receives support from many sources, including Hamilton (1994), Jeffrey and Wood (1998) and NIAO (1999). Whilst North (1991,p.11) and McConaghie (1993) believe that advice is implicit in reports, more recent research has shown that inspections are not viewed by the majority of teachers as developmental, formative and open, but as being concerned with monitoring, policing and checking (Gray and Gardner 1999, Jeffrey and Wood,1998). For some teachers, the methods employed by the Inspectorate help to reinforce this point:

The inspector doubles back and goes forward checking statements made by a teacher with their colleagues, checks up on remarks made by the Principal with staff and, worst of all, asks the pupils for confirmations of statements made by the teacher, done of course subtly (Letter to the Editor, Belfast Telegraph 20/02/01).

Within this quotation, and also within the case study, it is evident that teachers believe it is unfair to be judged on the basis of a child's opinion. Such a practice can lead to discontentment amongst staff regarding the reliability and relevance of methods employed by the Inspectorate. As a priority for school improvement is the encouragement of a process of deliberative reflection on the part of teachers at a classroom level (Elliott,1998), staff may well question the validity and accuracy of findings which result from the use of such methods, and hence reject them.

According to Lee and Fitz (1998,p.238) the lack of advice offered to schools to help them meet the issues identified by inspection, constitutes a lacuna in the system. The NIAO (1999,p.11) has recently offered a solution to such a situation by recommending that the Inspectorate be amalgamated with the ELB Curriculum Advice and Support Services (CASS), the bodies which work with schools to initiate actions to address issues highlighted in inspection. The NIAO report (1999,p.50) argues that whilst the Inspectorate and CASS have an accurate understanding of each other's work:

...In an environment where advice and support appear to be more important for school improvement, NIAO considers that the continuum in the activities of CASS and the Inspectorate suggest that the existing separate arrangements may not be best suited to existing circumstances. The closer alignment of the two organisational structures would facilitate greater access and exchange of knowledge and expertise from one service to the other, could provide the opportunity for streamlining efficiencies and fostering a greater sense of partnership and collaboration with schools.

For the Inspectorate this would not be viable as it would place it in the “...invidious position if it were responsible for providing support and development functions and also assessing the effectiveness of its efforts” (NIAO,1999,p.12). However, an alternative argument suggests that if the Inspectorate was amalgamated with CASS the resultant organisation would be large enough to ensure that those giving advice would not be involved in the actual inspection, thereby maintaining impartiality and objectivity. Alternatively, one could advocate the retention of both bodies but with a much closer working relationship being developed. Whilst the principle of a partnership between, or an amalgamation of, the Inspectorate and CASS may have potential benefits, it does not address the fundamental question of how such structures would encourage the school improvement perspective that teachers should be the creators/designers of improvement efforts, with ownership of the improvement process, for it may be assumed that inspection would remain a top-down accountability system.

These logistical arrangements are, however, of secondary importance to the rationale underpinning them, for in making such recommendations, the NIAO has acknowledged that change must occur if the system of accountability offered by inspection is to meet the needs of teachers by developing an advisory role. However, it could be plausibly argued that the primacy of the regulatory role of inspections throughout history and continuing through to present day, may well make the change advocated for more difficult to achieve.

The need for a redefinition of the purpose and nature of all forms of inspection is upheld by this study.

6. Inspectors should be specialists

Within the case study example it was shown that if inspectors' judgments, as expressed in the written reports, are to be valued, teachers must have confidence in their individual expertise. The perception exists that this expertise is directly related not to inspectorial experience, but to relevant teaching experience by the inspector within the same educational sector as the school. During the Focused Inspection of Knocknagoney Primary School the absence of an inspector with early years experience, and also the absence of a female inspector, were cited as points of contention. This viewpoint is at variance with the opinion of the Staff Inspector (Appendix A,p.316-7), that the training received by inspectors negates the need for specialist inspectors.

The findings of several authorities (Lee,1998; Wilcox and Gray,1996; Dean,1995) correspond with those of Knocknagoney, in that what is termed ‘professional credibility’ is a key issue for schools. In particular it is believed that having relevant experience makes an inspector not simply more acceptable to schools and sympathetic to them but enables them to exercise professional judgment, even though in actuality, and somewhat paradoxically, this judgment is heavily influenced by the Department of Education's guidelines and expectations. Additionally, if the staff reject the findings/outcomes of inspection then they will probably focus on the background of the inspector as grounds for discontentment.

The challenge therefore remains as to how the ‘professional credibility’ of the Inspectorate can be maintained, or, indeed, enhanced.

The report on ‘School Inspection in Northern Ireland’ by the NIAO (1999,p.32) acknowledges that whilst the Inspectorate has taken steps to encourage schools to take responsibility for self-evaluation and improvement, through Quality Assurance Inspections and the booklet ‘Evaluating Schools,’ formal inspections are still deliberately external, in the sense that nobody with an internal knowledge of the institution forms part of the team. NIAO believes that this could result in inspection being viewed as something that is done to the school, rather than done with it, thus militating against the achievement of improvement. This conclusion has led to the NIAO (1999,p.33) supporting the Inspectorate's policy of using serving Principals as associate inspectors, particularly during Quality Assurance Inspections. This policy is soon to be extended by DENI to include other teachers as well.

The secondment of head teachers, and indeed classroom teachers, has several potential benefits, for it can bring a practitioner's perspective to the inspection team, can bolster the credibility of the inspection team by creating more specialists and can, hopefully, enhance the internal monitoring and evaluation procedures within the associate inspectors' schools when they return.

Despite such plaudits Wilcox and Gray (1996,p.136) contend that the secondment of serving teachers to inspection teams is unlikely to increase feelings of ownership in the particular school being inspected. They conclude that the only way this can happen is for someone the school 'trusts' to be given some sort of role on the inspection team. Although such a person is likely to be a member of the school's staff, an outsider could be nominated. Such a policy was considered by the NIAO (1999,pp. 32-3) which looked at the approach adopted by the Further Education Funding Council Inspectorate in Great Britain, now known as the Adult Learning Inspectorate. Here, inspections are planned in consultation with the colleges and reflect their pattern and provision. All inspection teams include a nominee from the staff of the college being inspected. They are offered preparatory training for this role and become full members of the inspection team. Nominees may accompany inspectors during observation of lessons or interviews with college staff. They also attend inspectors' meetings and contribute to discussions arising from inspection. According to the Chief Inspector of the Further Education Funding Council "...the inclusion of a college representative in inspection teams supports the Inspectorate's wish to operate openly. It has been well received by college managers as a means of enhancing the efficiency of inspections" (Melia,1995,p.40).

Such an enlightened approach was rejected by the NIAO (1999,p.33). The basis for this judgment rested with the potential problems which could exist by engaging a teacher from the staff of the school on the inspection team; for example the school representative may well adopt a defensive stance and thwart the best efforts of the inspection team. The Inspectorate told NIAO that the judgments of colleagues in OFSTED support this view. However, it should be noted that the inclusion of a staff member on an inspection team does not guarantee either a commitment or sense of ownership towards the process being developed by other teachers in that organisation, especially when the ethos of the inspection would remain, fundamentally, external. Certainly, the rhetoric of school improvement, and in particular the need for teachers to have a sense of ownership of improvement efforts (Brown et al.,1995) and to adopt a collegial and collaborative approach to change (Stoll and Fink,1996) would indicate the need for teaching staff, and not just individual members, to be the fulcrum on which future school accountability would operate.

7. The inspection was held to be too short to judge the life of the school

Brimblecombe et al. (1995,p.58) and Gray and Wilcox (1995a,1995b) have argued that teachers want the picture which inspection produces of a school to be accurate, fair and representative. They further contend that the duration of the modern inspection makes this aspiration unrealistic, and use the metaphor of the 'snapshot' to describe the Inspectorate's view of a school. Significantly, this metaphor was also used by the staff of Knocknagoney, who believe that the three day Focused Inspection of their school was insufficient to provide an in-depth insight into the school's operation. This may be contrasted with the view of the Inspectorate that a three day visit can provide a comprehensive and accurate insight into the workings of a school.

Time is always likely to be a problem, especially during an inspection. Wilcox and Gray (1996,p.163) argue that the amount of time available to inspectors in a school can affect at least two aspects of the inspection process: the social courtesies required and the credibility of the methods involved. By social courtesies they mean not only the friendly demeanor which teachers expect inspectors to display but also the opportunity of allowing teachers to explain what they are doing and to receive feedback on how they are doing. Furthermore, Wilcox and Gray (1996) suggest that if credible judgments are to be made by observing individual lessons, then it is vital that judgments are contextualised. The credibility of an inspection

will depend in part on the extent to which the evidence used to contextualise lessons will have been given proper consideration, irrespective of whether this is derived from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work or interviews. In Knocknagoney Primary School, this credibility was questioned as staff perceived the three day inspection to be inadequate not only in contextualising lessons, but in providing an accurate overview of either the school or individual. This outcome diminished teacher confidence in the inspection process.

Given these arguments, it is important to note the school improvement perspective which claims that change is a process, not an event, which requires time for teachers to participate in collaborative planning and decision making (Marsh,1988). Such collegiality takes time to develop, with the short duration and ethos of the Focused Inspection failing to engender such an approach.

The logical conclusion of this argument would appear to favour an extension of the inspection period. On the other hand, the stress factor amongst teachers evident during the Focused Inspection of Knocknagoney Primary would seem to mitigate against increasing inspection time within the classroom. This apparent dichotomy between personal and professional interest however, may not be insurmountable, for whilst inspection of teachers' classroom practice need not be extended, an additional day could be added to the inspection process to facilitate feedback to teachers.

Although this recommendation may address the issue of what Wilcox and Gray (1996,p.163) call the social courtesies of inspection it fails to deal with the perception that inspections offer a superficial insight, or a snapshot, into school life. If, as in Knocknagoney Primary School, teachers would not welcome classroom inspection being increased, then it would appear that the only viable alternative is the enhancement of the role of teachers in identifying the issues, challenges and problems facing a school. Significantly, Gray and Wilcox (1995b,p.141) believe teachers should join with inspectors to become part of a group within which "unforced agreement" on an inspection might be sought. In agreeing with the need to involve teachers, this study argues that a re-definition of the inspection process is needed, to incorporate the views of teachers rather than to exclude them and to make inspection, in whatever form it may take, a learning experience for those same teachers by emphasising advice rather than judgment. If this is done inspection, as Gray and Wilcox (1995b,p.140) argue, need not be doomed to produce at best the agreed views of an inspection team thus leaving the possibility of its acceptance by others, particularly teachers, as uncertain. This is a salient point, for as Eisner (1991,p.86) reminds us evaluation is a form of criticism and that:

...every act of criticism is a reconstruction. The reconstruction takes the form of an argued narrative, supported by evidence that is never incontestable; there will always be alternative interpretations of the 'same' play, as the history of criticism so eloquently attests.

Accordingly, this study will adopt the pragmatism which Rorty (1991,p.38) recommends more generally as a philosophic stance:

(we) can always enlarge the scope of 'us' by regarding other people, or cultures, as members of the same community of inquiry as ourselves – by treating them as part of the group among whom unforced agreement is to be sought.

For Gray and Wilcox (1995b,p.140), inspection privileges the voice of the inspectors. It is they who constitute the Rortian 'us' in the context of inspection. The 'us' should be extended, however, to include the teachers of the school. It remains to be seen whether this will involve joining with the Inspectorate to form a group within which unforced agreement might be sought.

The Inspectorate should therefore investigate methods by which it could utilise and harness the unique knowledge and skills of school staff so that self-evaluation becomes an integral element of school accountability. At present only Quality Assurance Inspections have such an ethos of school participation and development built into their rationale.

8. The written report.

The prospect of the written report being published led to teachers being generally unwilling to be open in conversation with inspectors, during the Focused Inspection of Knocknagoney Primary School. Furthermore, the Principal believed the nature of the RSSI project, where the school's openness regarding its weaknesses was vital to the improvement efforts which followed, should have resulted in the report remaining unpublished. While McConaghie (1993,p.38) states that the advice which is implicit in reporting constitutes a developmental aspect of inspection, the publication of reports is only acceptable if the primary concern of inspection is accountability. It could be argued that this is not true if one believes that the inspection process should be developmental, for there appears to be no encouragement for schools to interact with the Inspectorate or to be open regarding the weaknesses and challenges facing the schools. However, as has been stated, the publication of reports is appropriate as an accountability mechanism, and therefore it does suit the aims and purposes of the current inspection system, but not those inspections carried out as baseline assessments for school improvement projects.

The staff of Knocknagoney Primary believe that the written report was generally accurate and representative of the conditions which prevailed within the school. These findings correspond with those of the NIAO (1999,p.39) which showed that 75% of respondents in their survey were largely satisfied with the accuracy of their inspection reports; and with Gray and Gardner (1999,p.462) who found that 68% of primary school Principals felt that inspection reports gave a fair and accurate account of their schools. This evidence does not, however, mean that written reports are bereft of criticism from schools. Indeed, within the research by Gray and Gardner (1999,p.462) 21% of primary Principals felt that inspection reports did not give a fair and accurate representation of their school.

Within Knocknagoney Primary the major criticisms centred on the wording and content of certain sections of the report. At times the report was regarded as being misleading and at other times it was judged as being too vague, with teachers being unsure to which classes or individuals the report was referring. It was also felt that the written report did not fully reflect the oral report; an outcome similar to that documented by Hamilton (1994,p.37) who claims that in his case study of school inspections the praise offered in the oral report was toned down in the published report. Finally, the written report did not reveal anything new to the school, although this was deemed not to be a criticism of the Inspectorate, but to the credit of the school.

Two important points emerge from these findings. Firstly, the vagueness of certain aspects of the written report may be attributed to the staff playing no part in its formulation. Secondly, the belief highlighted, that the inspection did not reveal anything new to the school, is one that has been constantly reinforced by other studies (Webb et al.,1998; Wilcox and Gray,1996; Gray and Gardner,1999). This is a very important point, for if inspection is not a learning experience for the school, then one must question whether it is a cost effective way of generating predictable insights for teachers. As the NIAO report (1999,p.39) states "... if inspection recommendations highlight little that is not already known to the school, the improvement gains to schools may be too small to be good value for money." Certainly, as a starting point for debate on the future of inspections, it would be interesting to consider the compatibility, or otherwise, between the key issues identified through inspection and those outlined in schools' development plans in order to gauge the impact and cost effectiveness of current inspection arrangements. Furthermore, if as in the case of Knocknagoney Primary, there is a high level of compatibility between those issues identified by the school and those highlighted by the Inspectorate, then the argument made previously, that the views of staff on those issues which affect a school should be pivotal in any form of school accountability, seem to have been reinforced. Such an arrangement would also mean that findings on a school's operation would be readily acceptable to staff; a situation which must occur if inspection is to lead to improvement, for as both Brown et al. (1995) and Barber and White (1997) have recognised, one of the fundamental values underpinning school improvement is that improvement comes from within. Indeed, given the need for teacher involvement,

commitment and ownership in change efforts "...it cannot be assumed that teachers will be ready to accept...findings as an agenda handed down from on high" (Brown et al., 1995,p.9).

The staff of Knocknagoney Primary judged the oral report to be more useful than the written report, in that it gave practical advice and provided an opportunity for the school to respond to criticism. Similarly, the follow-up report was welcomed as it motivated the staff by highlighting the improvements which the school had made. It was believed by teachers within the school that this report should be published, a proposal which has since been accepted by DE. The desire of the school to have its viewpoint acknowledged and to have an opportunity to counter criticism against it would also support the belief that teachers perceive shortcomings in the current mode of reportage.

Whilst the NIAO (1999,p.22) argues for the inclusion of school action plans in the published report, the premise for this action is that it would enhance the accountability function of the inspection process. Where the desire is to encourage a more democratic or participative approach in inspection, then the school's perspective on the issues and challenges facing it must be central to findings reached.

9. School self-evaluation complemented inspection

This research has shown that self-evaluation was viewed positively by the staff in that it could reduce teacher stress and give a more comprehensive account of the strengths and weaknesses of the school than that offered by a three day visit. It was also believed that such an approach could utilise the unique expertise and experience of those within the school to provide an analysis of the school which was more accurate, reliable and relevant than that of the Inspectorate.

However, although the staff of Knocknagoney Primary School extolled the virtues of self-evaluation, perhaps it is more accurate to state that they viewed self-monitoring as a positive feature rather than self-evaluation, for the latter strategy is often set against an objective dictated by the education system and not the school.

Within the literature on school inspections the advantages of self-evaluation are well documented. According to Moore and Reid (1992,p.3) school self evaluation is "...most importantly done by and for the school not to the school for an external body." Webb et al. (1998,p.554) claim that school self-evaluation means that schools have ownership over their methods of data collection and analysis and also have a commitment to respond to evaluation findings which leads to direct and immediate change in practice. Hargreaves (1995,p.120) further claims that in an internal audit more honesty can be afforded than in an external inspection. Whilst no school will actively draw its weaknesses to the attention of the inspectors, the object of an audit is to uncover weaknesses so they can be rectified.

When one aligns the strengths of self-evaluation to the weaknesses of external inspection the argument in favour of the former appears compelling. Among the disadvantages of external inspection is the fact that it can be seen as a wholly external process, thus militating against the achievement of improvement; that it results in changes in written policies, systems and procedures but not in classroom practice (Webb et al.,1998,p.553); that it breeds apprehensiveness and encourages schools to put up something of a performance; and that its whole ethos and approach have been rejected by business and industry. Inspection is a form of quality control and the problem with quality control is that it merely monitors the failure rate or the site of the failure, but does nothing in itself to put the fault right. The success of Japanese industry is due, in part, to its decision to drop quality control in favour of quality assurance, which returns to the work force the responsibility for quality (Hargreaves, 1995,p.123). This philosophy is also appropriate to self managing schools, is compatible with most improvement strategies and is in line with the Government's philosophy of schools being responsive to clients (Murgatroyd and Morgan,1993; Sallis,1993).

The picture painted so far of the benefits of external assessment compared to self-evaluation may appear bleak, but that is because the picture is incomplete, for external inspection does offer some notable advantages. For Webb et al. (1998,p.539) school inspection can offer a whole school strategy missing in self evaluation; while for Hargreaves (1995,p.119) inspection has undoubted strengths as a form of school audit: inspectors are trained for their job and can become shrewd observers and judges; they view the schools within a wide frame of reference of policy and practice; they are detached; and they are trusted by governors and parents to be truthful.

Within the case study the alternative perspective on the school's operation offered by the Inspectorate was welcomed by the staff, and it was felt that self-evaluation should complement inspection rather than replace it. This viewpoint corresponds with that of Hargreaves (1995,p.120) who contends that the most effective audit of a school comes about by neither internal self-evaluation nor external inspection; rather some combination of both probably does the job better than either alone. While external inspection will provide regulation and accountability which the Government desires, self-evaluation can contribute significantly to the improvement process. However, whilst self-evaluation may be equated with a process of quality assurance, the current mode of Focused and General Inspections may be regarded as a form of quality control. Given such a conclusion, one must question the value to school improvement of these modes of inspection, if their major contribution is that of quality controller.

In analysing the role of school self evaluation within a process of school accountability, it is interesting to look at the work recently undertaken by the NIAO. In their report on the inspection system in Northern Ireland, the NIAO (1999,p.27) examined school inspection in the context of the broad range of review and accountability mechanisms currently in place, such as school development planning, target setting, performance information and, to a lesser extent, self-review. It concluded that the cycle of mass inspection established by the Department is essentially a 'top-down' accountability system rather than one based on the shared responsibility for education of DE, parents, public and teachers. NIAO considers that the current model of inspection could be enhanced if it takes increasing account of the importance of partnership with schools by incorporating elements of self-review and self-improvement. In particular NIAO believed that an integrated framework, combining school development planning, internal self-review and external inspection, can provide a re-defined and enhanced inspection model for the future. School development plans would contain specified improvement areas and specific measures of achievement. Performance against the goals and priorities stated in plans would be monitored by schools as a basis for an analysis of their achievements. Periodically, schools would undertake a formal self-review in which they would identify and analyse the trends apparent in their achievements. Independent verification through external inspection would be used to validate schools' achievements and facilitate agreement on the directions to be incorporated into subsequent planning. For the purposes of this study, it is interesting to note that such an approach does not exist in either Focused or General Inspections, suggesting that an alternative to these inspectorial arrangements is needed.

The NIAO report (1999,p.8) recognises that the Inspectorate has already taken steps towards embracing such an approach through its involvement with schools on the RSSI project and its piloting of Quality Assurance Inspections. For their part, the Department have stated that incorporating elements of self-review and self-improvement into the inspection process and developing partnerships with schools will form part of the Inspectorate's future strategy.

As a basis for future policy the NIAO recommendations are to be welcomed in that they formally recognise that schools can make important contributions to both the review of a school's operation and the improvement process. However, a note of caution must be sounded for the results-based focus of this scheme on measuring and evaluating the performance of a school against its intended benchmarks, could allow the wider development of pupils, in non academic areas, to be viewed as being of secondary importance. It must

be remembered that teaching and learning are ethical pursuits and are concerned with developing children holistically and with valuing, appreciating and understanding, concepts which are difficult to measure.

Undoubtedly, within the NIAO recommendations there is a vision of a convergence between the fields of school effectiveness and school improvement, with school improvement being viewed merely as improvement in effectiveness over time. It should be recognised however, that whilst school effectiveness practitioners are concerned with making schools more effective as production systems, for proponents of school improvement the emphasis is on how schools can change to become more educative institutions. Therefore, one must realise that whilst improvement strategies may enhance student outcomes, they must also strengthen the school's capacity for change.

In terms of present day policy, the NIAO report (1999,p.8) recognises that Quality Assurance Inspections can offer a current example of an integrated approach to inspection. It has already been established in this chapter that this approach has a number of potential advantages, for example, less rush in pre-inspection preparation and less staff anxiety; features readily noticeable during the case study. The process also has the potential to have closer affinity with the school's own mission, as it permits schools to be assessed to a greater extent on their own stated aims and activities (Gray and Gardner,1999,p.458).

The benefits of the Quality Assurance Inspection listed above, together with the fact that it recognises the ability of schools to self-evaluate and thereafter to address areas of concern, thus leading to improvement, would seem to constitute a redefinition of the relationship between teacher and inspector, to one which places greater faith in the professionalism of teachers to be an integral element in the inspection process. Such an innovative development in school inspection in Northern Ireland is to be welcomed and the apparent benefits inherent in it means that it demands serious consideration by all schools, including Knocknagoney Primary School.

10. The role of inspections in promoting improvement is limited

The staff of Knocknagoney Primary School viewed the role of the Focused Inspection in promoting school improvement as being limited to providing a catalyst for change and to identifying those issues which needed to be addressed. While this role may be viewed as being important, the close correspondence between the School Development Plan and the issues raised by the Inspectorate, combined with the unanimous views of the staff that no issues were identified which the school was unaware of, questions the significance of this role. This evidence is at odds with the Staff Inspector's (Appendix A,p.319) view that inspections help schools to reflect on their own practice, identify strengths and weaknesses, and thus contribute to improvement.

It would appear that the views held by the Knocknagoney staff, that the role of inspections in promoting school improvement is limited, is reflective of the wider Northern Ireland picture. The NIAO (1999,p.8) have concluded that "Data analysed by NIAO indicates that there does not appear to be any clear evidence that an inspected school will necessarily improve its examination results in subsequent years more than a school which has not been inspected." Additionally, only 48% of Principals felt that standards were improving as a result of inspection, while within the primary sector, a mere 18% of the schools inspected reported increased performance following inspection (NIAO,1999,p.39). The report does recognise that their conclusions contain certain methodological limitations, for instance the prominence that it accords to examination results in measuring the performance of schools and the time scale within which it is reasonable to expect the implementation of changes to begin to impact upon pupils' learning. Nevertheless, the emphasis upon increased pupil attainments within the report again suggests that for inspections, school improvement equates largely to improvement in effectiveness, rather than on school processes, ethos or culture, and capacity to generate future change. It is also recognised that there are practical difficulties involved in disentangling, from a range of other factors, the specific impact of inspection on school level

improvement. The view of the Inspectorate is that drawing a causal link between inspection and improved examination results is tenuous because it fails to take account of the fact that inspection may have helped schools to stabilise; and that no two consecutive year groups are identical in ability, motivation or subject choice. Interestingly, the latter objection that no two consecutive year groups are identical in ability or motivation was one put forward by the teaching profession to object to the target setting mechanism for schools which dictates that a school must improve its performance by raising targets annually. Such protestations were rejected by the Department.

The NIAO (1999,p.36) has concluded that the Inspectorate should build upon the approach of the RSSI by being as specific as possible about the issues it wishes to see addressed by the wider school community and recommending a format for response which would encourage consideration of improvement. This course of action would, however, run contrary to the school improvement rhetoric on introducing change and would still constitute a very limited role for the Inspectorate in the improvement process, begging the question as to what else could or should be done by the Inspectorate?

Firstly, if inspection is to lead to improvement then the findings on the operation of a school would need to be accepted by the staff. This implies that the staff should have a formative role in compiling the issues which need to be addressed. At present, only the Quality Assurance Inspection facilitates such an approach. Secondly, the Inspectorate as an organisation could facilitate school improvement by providing more feedback to staff and fulfilling an advisory role in the post-inspection period. This argument, however, would involve a reconceptualisation of inspection beyond its current parameters. Whilst this may prove unlikely given the accountability focus of inspection, it does not make the realisation of this goal any less desirable.

11. Inspection did have positive benefits

The most valuable aspects of the inspection process identified by the staff of Knocknagoney Primary School included: the impetus for change which the inspection provided; clarification of the areas which the school needed to develop; the alternative perspective which it offered on school performance; the reassurance that it provided to staff by validating current practices; and providing justification for co-ordinators to introduce new measures into the school. Also, the need for the school to be accountable for its practices was noted by several members of staff.

However, whilst the staff may have viewed these features of inspection as being advantageous, the process of self-reflection inherent in school improvement theory (Elliott,1998) suggests that a number of these conclusions, such as clarification of the areas which a school needed to develop and validating current practices, need to be reached by the staff themselves.

The findings from the case study are echoed by authorities including Matthews and Smith (1995), Webb et al. (1998) and Gray and Gardner (1999). Indeed, the only additional benefit to schools offered by these sources is the growth in confidence and morale amongst the staff which may result from an inspection's affirmation of a school's quality and direction.

Taken in isolation, these findings would indicate that external inspection is desirable for schools in the UK, by providing information for parents and accountability for the expenditure of public money. However, if one recognises the many draw backs of external inspection highlighted in this chapter, then it would appear more accurate to conclude that whilst teachers accept the need for accountability, the form of accountability offered by current inspections does not satisfy their expectations.

According to Elliott et al. (1981,p.xiii) there are two main views of school accountability, representing different ideas about how schools might be improved. Firstly, 'responsive accountability' involved free and open communication by schools with a variety of interest

groups such as parents, governors, representatives of local industry and the community about the aims and nature of the education it provides. The relationships through which influence is exerted are characterised by dialogue rather than power, and therefore must operate at the local rather than the more remote bureaucratised level of the state. The responsive model suggests that schools ought to be self-accounting: generating and communicating information about themselves in the light of interests and concerns expressed by local 'audiences.' Therefore for this form of accountability, schooling is more readily improved when the school retains control over decisions but becomes more responsive to those whose interests are affected by those decisions. This can be contrasted with the 'control' or 'productivity' model where the accounting is done by some external monitoring agency, and where improvement comes with greater public control over decisions about school organisation, teaching methods and the curriculum.

Clearly, the form of accountability embodied in present day Focused and General Inspections is representative of Elliott's control model. However, perhaps the responsive model should be the one adopted by the self-reflective school intent on improvement, for as we have seen in chapter 4 the very ethos of school improvement assumes that there is a multi-level perspective to change whereby although the school is the centre of change, it will work collaboratively with all its partners in the education system.

Although responsive accountability would constitute a radical departure from the current inspectorial arrangements, proponents may well argue that within schools there already exists a body, in the form of Boards of Governors, which could act as public guardians of school's development, progress and improvement. Furthermore, it could be argued that neither doctors, solicitors, social workers, nurses, nor ministers of religion are inspected. However, given this study's advocacy of the principles of the Quality Assurance Inspection, it is important to realise that the adoption by a school of responsive accountability, through which schools are self-accounting, does not necessarily mean the demise of the Inspectorate, for Halstead (1994,p.151), has noted that "Where self-accounting exists, as in the recently developed quality assurance mechanisms in higher education, it is usually subject to some form of external monitoring."

12. School improvement

School improvement was regarded as being detached from the inspection process. Whilst the literature in general and the NIAO (1999,p.45) report in particular equates improvement in school performance with increased attainment as evidenced in examination results, within the RSSI project improved outcomes were more broadly defined to include improvement in interest levels, attitude and confidence.

Generally, the literature on school improvement was informative and enlightening, with Fullan's (1991) work on implementing change providing a useful theoretical backcloth to school improvement efforts, yet one which has a resonance of practicality in it. Indeed, the insights provided by the literature regarding the possible approaches to school improvement and the potential pitfalls surrounding it, merit consultation by schools wishing to implement school improvement projects.

Finally, the improvement model proposed by inspection is a top-down model, which is deeply problematic, for these models have had a relative lack of success in engendering improvement by failing to recognise that the focus of school improvement is on whole school development and the creation of a self-developing learning organisation (Lee and Fitz,1998,p.249). Although one might argue that the Inspectorate is not directly concerned with school improvement, its publications, seminars, conferences and advice to DE are all mechanisms through which it seeks to facilitate the process of school improvement. Therefore, whilst the Inspectorate may support the ideas of school improvement in theory, in actuality the mode and processes of inspection can be seen as being out of tune with the idea of the self-developing learning organisation. The inspection process has thus

been identified as something which has been imposed on schools from the top down. It is proposed that the motivation in future should reverse that role and come from schools.

Summary of Recommendations

Within this discussion of the findings from the case study it was evident that the current system of Focused and General Inspections cannot be refined or moulded to realise the educational values held by the Knocknagoney Primary School staff and, indeed, teachers everywhere, for the ethos and principles underpinning them are at variance with the rhetoric and reality of school improvement. Indeed, as can be seen from the preceding text and from the final recommendations listed below, an alternative perspective is offered which advocates a more radical adaptation of the inspection process to reflect the needs of all schools:

1. Teachers accept the need for a form of accountability within the profession, but not that provided by the current inspection process. Therefore, teachers, both as members of individual organisations and collectively as a profession, must debate and reconsider the most suitable form of accountability which can meet the needs of pupils, staff, parents, governors and all educational partners, and which, ultimately, can facilitate improvement.
2. Research should be conducted to discover if the Quality Assurance Inspection offers a less stressful mode of inspection than Focused and General Inspections, and whether the theory it espouses is aligned to the principles and practice of school improvement. Subsequently, schools will be able to consider the prudence of employing Quality Assurance Inspections within their schools.
3. The Inspectorate should harness the unique knowledge and skills of teachers by ensuring that school self-evaluation becomes an integral element of school accountability.
4. The Inspectorate should conduct a re-appraisal of the purpose and nature of the inspection process, for it is impossible to successfully marry the system of external accountability and control embodied in the Focused and General Inspections, with one which focuses primarily on improvement and development.

At this juncture, it is necessary to state that the work reported here is an important contribution to the knowledge base as it is the first study which portrays the mode and processes of school inspection, compares and contrasts these with school improvement processes, passes judgment on the compatibility of these processes, and subsequently concludes through its findings that there is a need to align school accountability with school improvement theory and practice. In addition to the professional knowledge which has been generated this research has also contributed to personal knowledge, as it has provided me with an insight and understanding of school improvement processes and strategies which I intend to embrace in my role as Principal of a primary school.

In the context of today's inspection arrangements, the discussion of the findings of this study and the resultant recommendations indicate the possibility of schools in general, and Knocknagoney Primary School in particular, considering the Quality Assurance Inspection. This approach permits a school to dictate its readiness for inspection, not against an imposed deadline but according to its developmental status and in line with its own stated aims and activities; thus possibly alleviating stress in the pre-inspection period. The Quality Assurance Inspection allows staff to have a formative role in the monitoring and evaluation process thus developing a sense of ownership, and also stresses the importance of school self-evaluation. Furthermore, the strategy implicit in Quality Assurance Inspections facilitates a top-down, bottom-up approach to school improvement, is one of quality assurance rather than quality control, and its purpose should be to check that each school has a philosophy of continual improvement, has mechanisms for monitoring its practices, and establishes procedures for designing and implementing change in the interest of improvement.

This study, however, does not confine itself to the parameters of the inspection process as defined by DE. Accordingly, the need for a redefinition of the purpose and nature of Focused and General Inspections has already been noted. Under the current system the emphasis on accountability as opposed to development or improvement will sustain an element of performance during inspection and will stifle demands supporting increased professional dialogue between the teacher and inspector. The findings of this study also revealed that inspection did not make any new revelations to the school about its performance; did not result in any altering of classroom practice; had a limited influence on the improvement process; and was lacking in advice, much to the displeasure of staff. If this situation is to change, then the ethos and principles supporting inspection must change. Therefore, any reconceptualisation of the inspection process must go beyond that currently offered by the Department's existing Focused and General Inspections, for these models emphasise judgment at the expense of advice.

Undoubtedly, if the Inspectorate has a role to play in any future school accountability mechanism, it would appear that this should be constructed on the framework provided by Quality Assurance Inspections. This would involve working with teachers, as partners in the education system, to adopt a multi-level approach to change (Hopkins and Lagerweij, 1996); avoiding the imposition of school improvement solutions by dictating to schools the issues to be addressed, but instead allowing these to be generated internally by the school; and providing a standardisation of the quality of accountability, and not the form of accountability, in all schools. However, the duties of inspectors should also extend beyond that envisaged by Quality Assurance Inspections and should become one in which the Inspectorate adopt a more advisory role if it is to have a significant influence in the arena of school improvement. It must also incorporate a realisation that improvement in terms of achievement is more broadly defined than simple gains in test scores.

In conclusion, the function of the Inspectorate should become one which may embrace identifying good practice and offering advice and assistance but which, crucially, should support a process of deliberative reflection on the part of the teachers to reconsider personal and shared values, assumptions and goals and their practical implementation. In performing this function the Inspectorate must strive to create a system of school accountability responsive to the needs of Government, parents, teachers and pupils in the 21st century. Although the foundation for such a policy may already be in place, the challenge remains as to how and when this will be achieved.

Bibliography

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Gaelscoil na bhFál

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Assembly Education Committee Inquiry into the Education Training Inspectorate (ETI)

Submission from Gaelscoil na bhFál - 1046571

Introduction

Irish-medium education has been part of the educational landscape in Northern Ireland since the first school was founded in 1971, more than forty years ago. It has been a formal part of the grant-aided educational system since 1983.

One recurring complaint from practitioners in the Irish-medium sector is that the education authorities have not yet managed to come to terms with the implications of running what is, in effect, a bilingual education system. Many aspects of the education system appear to be run on the implicit assumption that the only language of instruction is English: provision for Irish-medium education is, more often than not, little more than a bolt-on to policies and practices which have been formulated to a monolingual template.

We believe that ETI has not yet come to terms with the complexities of Irish-medium education, and that its approach to the Irish-medium sector requires a radical overhaul.

Background information

Gaelscoil na bhFál is an Irish-medium primary school situated in Iveagh, west Belfast. The vast majority of children in Gaelscoil na bhFál have English as their first language. Gaelscoil na bhFál provides a language immersion approach to education, whereby children are educated through a language which is not the language of the home. Language immersion approaches are widely adopted throughout the world and are accepted as a significant strategy in the maintenance and revitalisation of minority languages and threatened indigenous languages. They reflect common practice in Wales and the Republic of Ireland and have an increasing presence within the education system in Scotland. Gaelscoil na bhFál is one of a number of Irish-

medium schools in Northern Ireland, of which there are ten primary schools in the greater Belfast area. Established by parents in 1987 and funded by DENI from August 1992, Gaelscoil na bhFál was the second Irish-medium school to be established in Belfast. It has an enrolment of approximately 190 pupils.

Key issues

Irish-medium immersion in Northern Ireland involves early full immersion where staff communicate with children in Irish at all times from their earliest entry to the school at nursery class. Irish-medium schools are subject to the same regulatory requirements in terms of curriculum content as all other primary schools in Northern Ireland (with Irish as an additional core subject). English is introduced as a formal subject in P4.

We wish to address two issues in this submission.

1. The quality of the evidence base on which the inspectors make their judgements;
2. Aspects of the inspection process in Irish-medium preschools and schools.

The quality of the evidence base on which the inspectors make their judgements

ETI's *Service Standards* identifies a series of principles, values and standards which include the following terms: "objectivity and consistency in making evaluations, honesty, openness, concern for accuracy, fairness". *A Common Framework for Inspection* insists that inspectors "will work towards the highest standards of ... professional expertise and credibility", and be "unbiased and consistent when making assessments".

These are worthy ideals, but school inspection is not an exact science, in spite of the Inspectorate's aspirations, and there are, in practice, significant variables within the inspection process. As a result, it is inevitable that the process is characterised by a greater or lesser degree of subjectivity and inconsistency.

Those variables include the individual and collective strengths and weaknesses of the inspection team. There can be significant variability in inspectors' competence in such areas as:

- observational skills
- communication skills, including conduct of discussions with staff
- ability to elicit information
- ability to process information
- ability to distinguish between important and minor detail
- ability to analyse information, summarise their findings effectively, and come to fair and accurate judgements

There is also a range of what could be described as styles of inspection. Whether such variables are rooted in differences in temperament or differences in the attitude

of individual inspectors to their task, such variables undoubtedly affect both the dynamic of inspections and their outcome. Some inspectors are regarded by schools they inspect as critical friends, while the criticism of other inspectors is not experienced as that of a friend. Some tend to emphasise the positive aspects of a school's work as a basis for improvement; for others, rigour appears to be synonymous with negativity. Some communicate a holistic vision of the education process, others strike those who encounter them as being essentially box-tickers and bean-counters. Some are highly intelligent; some less so.

Schools are familiar with the subjective element which comes into inspectors' reports. While their own perspectives are also to some extent subjective, they generally accept that evaluations and assessments will inevitably be, to some degree, inaccurate. At times this can actually work to a school's benefit, where an inspection team has failed to identify weaknesses. At other times an inspection team may fail to appreciate a school's achievements properly.

The perception that there is always some arbitrary, subjective element in inspection reports is reinforced when schools exchange experiences of inspections. This perception can be reinforced further by external evidence, when, for example, individual teachers, Governors or support staff have experienced inspections in more than one school, and have identified a lack of balance or consistency between inspectors' reports. While such evidence is by its nature anecdotal, it should not be dismissed, as it often comes from people whose knowledge of the schools involved is both more extensive and deeper than that available to the inspectors during their brief inspection period.

We believe that the greatest challenge of any monitoring or evaluation process is to achieve a high level of objectivity and consistency. Education is enormously complex, multi-layered and multi-faceted, and any evaluation process directed at such a complex sphere of endeavour requires an appropriately complex evaluation model. The pursuit of objectivity and consistency in evaluating the achievement of any school demands a level of sophisticated analysis that can rise to the complexity of the challenge.

As a consequence, if objectivity and consistency are to be achieved:

- An evaluation model for school inspections should include safeguards to mitigate differences or shortcomings in experience or knowledge base, core inspectoral skills, or inspectoral temperament. It must ensure commonality of approach in relation to (a) what information is gathered and (b) how the information is gathered.
- An appropriate evaluation model should also provide a robust evidence base, including documentary evidence giving a clear rationale and convincing explanations for the allocation of evaluative summative statements or descriptor bands, cross-linked to quality indicators and grade descriptions on a differentiated rating scale.

Under Freedom of Information and Data Protection Legislation, our school accessed significant ETI inspection documentation: (a) relating to the documentation created

in relation to an inspection in our own school, and (b) ETI's internal generic inspection documentation. This documentation was revealing, and, we regret, very disappointing:

- The documentation relating to our own school consisted overwhelmingly of handwritten notes – of greater or lesser legibility – jotted down on lined pages without any cross-referencing to quality indicators or grade descriptions on a differentiated rating scale.
- None of ETI's internal generic inspection documentation for guiding and recording evaluations had a mechanism for cross-referencing descriptor bands to quality indicators or grade descriptions on a differentiated rating scale.
- None of the discussion/interview templates were customised to focus specifically on curriculum areas, or had prompts for core questions and possible answers.
- None of the documentation provided demonstrated a clear rationale or a convincing explanation for the allocation of evaluative summative statements or descriptor bands allocated to the school.
- Significantly, none of ETI's internal generic inspection documentation for guiding and recording evaluations addressed any of the specific (and additional) features of Irish-medium education.

The school's Board of Governors had a meeting with senior inspectors to discuss some of these issues. During the meeting the school expressed its concerns about the process through which Inspectors made their evaluations, and queried the lack of safeguards that could mitigate variables which could undermine objectivity and consistency. The Deputy Chief Inspector who chaired the meeting responded to these concerns by saying that inspectors made their evaluations on the basis of the 'hard drive' in their heads.

We believe that the hard drive in inspectors' heads is not an adequate basis on which objective, fair and consistent judgements can be established. It is not an appropriate basis on which schools should be judged against each other. It is not an appropriate basis on which the reputation of schools or staff should depend. It is not an appropriate basis on which to put inspection reports into the public domain, where they carry significant weight in the eyes of parents, other professionals and the public. No reasonable person would accept that the reputation of schools, teachers and school managers should depend – without other evidence – on the hard drive in inspectors' heads.

On a more anecdotal level an Early Years Irish-medium support group with which our school has contact recently handled a concern raised by the supervisor of an Irish-medium voluntary playgroup. This playgroup had recently undergone an inspection, and was awarded the grade of 'very good', the second highest grade that could be awarded. The inspector told the supervisor that the pre-school had been very close to an 'outstanding' grade – the highest grade available. When the supervisor asked

what aspect of the play-group's provision had pulled it down from a possible 'outstanding' to 'very good' she was told that the preschool lacked "the wow factor". The 'wow factor' does not strike us as an objective criterion. Nor can we see how it contributes to the pursuit of consistency. The body appointed by Government to maintain standards has an enormous influence on the public reputation of all the educational providers it assesses. No educational provider should have to depend on such a clearly subjective – such an obviously inadequate – criterion as 'the wow factor'.

To summarise: on a generic level, we believe that the inspection methodology used by ETI, and the processes by which inspectors come to decisions, is deeply flawed. We believe that the inspection methodology compromises the ability of inspectors to deliver fair, accurate and consistent evaluations of schools.

In relation to the Irish-medium sector, guidance, recording or evaluative documentation, which is embedded in and informed by a monolingual template, is inappropriate for an education sector which involves the use of two languages, one of which is a fragile minority language, and usually the second language of the pupils.

The most alarming result of the failure to make documentation fit for purpose for the Irish-medium sector is that, by ignoring or downplaying the very principle which informs the ethos of Irish-medium education, it can allow a negative bias (whether conscious or unconscious) into inspections of Irish-medium settings. This negative bias is not universal, and we are not claiming that all evaluations of Irish-medium education are negative. However, by allowing inspectors to ignore or downplay, with impunity, a critical element of what they should be inspecting, it can lead to evaluations that reflect a negative and subjective bias.

Recommendations (Evidence Base)

- We recommend that all the guidance, recording and evaluative documentation which underpin inspections for English-medium education and Irish-medium education, must be reviewed to ensure fairness, accuracy and consistency.
- We recommend that all documentation for guiding and recording evaluations must have a mechanism for cross-referencing descriptor bands to quality indicators or grade descriptions on a differentiated rating scale and that schools can see a clear link between grades awarded and the evidential base.
- We recommend that all the guidance, recording and evaluative documentation which underpin inspections in Irish-medium education must be reviewed to incorporate the specifics of the Irish-medium context.

Aspects of the inspection process in Irish-medium Preschools and Schools.

We have a number of concerns relating to the inspection process in Irish-medium schools. As has already been noted, there is much commonality between good practice in Irish-medium immersion education and English-medium education. Nevertheless, the Irish language immersion learning context involves a number of specific challenges.

Language immersion education is a highly specialised area, particularly in the context of fragile minority languages. Its methodologies, priorities and value systems are complex, and while they are coherent, they can also at times be at variance with the prevailing educational orthodoxy of the day.

Our first area of concern relates to the use of inspectors without an appropriate amount of Irish.

It has been common practice for inspection teams in Irish-medium schools to include inspectors on the team without an appropriate level of Irish, at times no Irish at all, and in some cases involving a Reporting (i.e., lead) Inspector without Irish.

No English-medium school in this society would tolerate an inspection by a monoglot German-speaking, or Russian-speaking inspector. In Wales, no monolingual English-speaking inspector would be tolerated in a Welsh-medium school, and the notion of an English-speaking monoglot inspecting a French immersion school in Quebec is laughable.

It could be argued that, because of the small size of the Irish-medium sector in Northern Ireland, it is impossible to have Irish-speaking inspectors with specialisms in all areas. This argument, even after nearly thirty years of state-funded Irish-medium education, has some validity, and a case can be made for allowing, on occasion, an inspector without Irish to join an inspection team. Such an arrangement is far from ideal, and would be contingent on adequate safeguards to ensure that the inspector's lack of understanding of the language of instruction is not allowed to distort the outcome.

It is necessary to understand what an Inspector without Irish is likely to miss. There will be major gaps in what they can observe and understand. For example, the documentation in some Irish-medium schools is almost entirely in Irish, and in others there can be documentation in both languages.

However within the classroom environment, where an inspector is making judgements about the quality of teaching and learning, there is a more serious problem. An inspector without Irish can certainly observe what children are doing, and the tasks they are involved in, as well as how purposeful, engaged and on-task they appear to be. They can get a general sense of how prepared a teacher is and of their classroom management skills. They can get an idea of the children's written presentation skills. However, they are not really in a position to judge the quality of much of what is going on, for example, where an inspector is making a judgement about the quality, structure, pace and presentation of a lesson, whether or not it is pitched to the levels of the children, the quality of the communication between

teacher and children and between children, the quality of the discussion and questioning style, children's responses and what it indicates about their learning, and how the teacher builds on the lesson, elaborates, clarifies and differentiates. They are not able to judge the quality and range of the children's writing activities, or the quality of much of the children's work in classroom and corridor display.

In particular, given the pivotal role of the Reporting Inspector within the Common Framework for Inspection, and the consequent scope for a distorted outcome, there are no circumstances which justify the use of a non-Irish speaker in leading an inspection in an Irish-medium school.

A second area of concern is one of which the Inspectorate appears to be itself unaware, but one which may reflect a more general attitude to the Irish-medium sector. The guidelines for inspectors speak of the need for "sensitivity to the circumstances of the organisation" in carrying out inspections. This requirement should be extended to involve sensitivity to the circumstances of the entire Irish-medium sector. Although Irish-medium education has been established in Northern Ireland for a generation, a surprising number of inspectors display a low level of awareness of or insight into the nature of this form of education. Their ability to cope with Irish-medium education is not helped by ETI inspection guidance material, which addresses Irish-medium education in exactly the same way as it addresses English-medium education. This is another example of a deeply embedded predisposition to perceive Irish-medium educational issues through a monolingual lens.

One consequence of this lack of insight into the realities of the sector is a tendency to see the Irish language as a somewhat eccentric sideshow to the real business of education; real education being that which is conducted in English. This can manifest itself in a recurring pattern of pressure put by the inspectorate to introduce English as a language of instruction at far too early a stage. It can also involve pressure on schools to use English as the medium of instruction for a range of subjects, and can involve claims that the Irish language is holding back the children's education in mathematics, science, history, etc., or claims that the children do not understand these subjects when they receive instruction in Irish. Much of this pressure is known, to those working in the sector, to be inappropriate. Inspectors make these remarks without any justification whatsoever in terms of theory, methodology, evidence or research.

An excessive preoccupation with English can also take the form of inspectors failing to distinguish, in their evaluations, between English and Irish. Although literacy in English and Irish face very different challenges in Irish-medium schools, they can be bundled together without appropriate differentiation. Even worse, Irish language literacy can be ignored. Prior to inspection it is normal for schools to be asked to fill in a basic information sheet which gives important statistical information about the school including End of KS2 results. Until a complaint recently made by our school, ETI had not sought information from Irish-medium schools in relation to Key Stage 2 achievements in Irish. This failure was not a simple bureaucratic oversight, but was

symptomatic of an overall tendency to marginalise the language within the inspection process.

Recommendations (with particular reference to Irish-medium education)

- ETI should undertake a review of its training programme for inspectors in relation to Irish-medium education to inform them and sensitise them to the methodologies, priorities, value systems and challenges of Irish-medium education.
- We believe that this review should be undertaken through meaningful partnership with established experienced practitioners in the sector.
- ETI should terminate the practice of using Inspectors without appropriate competence in Irish to lead inspection teams in Irish-medium schools.
- ETI should make a commitment to the deployment of inspectors with appropriate levels of fluency in Irish in inspections in Irish-medium schools.
- Where inspectors without an appropriate level of Irish participate in an inspection in an Irish-medium school, there should be safeguards in place to ensure that the inspector's lack of understanding of the language of instruction does not compromise the fairness, accuracy or consistency of an inspection report.

Is mise le meas,

ÁINE ANDREWS
Secretary of Board of Governors
Gaelscoil na bhFál

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

Promoting Teacher Professionalism

Striking the Right Balance

Towards a Framework of School
Accountability for 21st Century Learning



Response to the NI Assembly Committee for Education
Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Striking the Right Balance

Towards a Framework of School Accountability
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Striking the Right Balance

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Striking the Right Balance

Preface

This submission to the Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement, has been developed by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (**GTCNI**), in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (**NITC**)

GTCNI is the professional and regulatory body for teachers, which is responsible for maintaining a register of qualified teachers; approving qualifications; promoting the highest standards of professional conduct, practice and professional development; future regulation (pending new legislation); and providing advice to the Department of Education and employing authorities 'on all matters relating to teaching'.

NITC is the teacher union side of the Teachers Negotiating Committee (TNC) and is responsible for negotiating on pay and procedures to regulate conditions of service, as well as advising on educational policy. It has representation from: the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL); the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO); the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT); the National Association of Schoolmasters/ Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT); and the Ulster Teachers' Union.

The submission is also endorsed by The Universities Council for the Education of Teachers Northern Ireland - **UCET (NI)** - which has representation from St. Mary's University College, the Open University, Queen's University, Stranmillis University College and the University of Ulster. UCET (NI) acts in collaboration with the wider UK UCET network as a forum for the discussion of matters relating to the education of teachers and professional educators, with a view to contributing to the formulation of policy in these fields.

Introduction

On behalf of the profession GTCNI, NITC and UCET (NI) warmly welcome this important inquiry and commend the Education Committee for initiating it. From the outset we wish to state categorically that as a teaching profession we fully accept that we should be accountable for the effective education of our young people and that robust monitoring and evaluation (both internally and externally) is needed to ensure school accountability and continuous improvement so that young people, parents, politicians and the public can have confidence in our schools and in our teachers. This submission is therefore not about whether there should be an evaluation service but, rather, it is about the approach to providing that service, the driving forces underpinning its approach, the basis for the construction and validity of the targets that it responds to, the nature of the statistical evidence that it uses, the manner in which it reports, the impact that it has on schools, particularly those in challenging circumstances, and whether there are other way of achieving similar (or better) outcomes.

The purpose of this submission is to draw attention to the now considerable amount of research evidence available about different approaches to school evaluation, both internal and external, and the use of a wider range of comparative measures and value-added adjustments that may provide a truer picture of performance and may better serve school improvement.

Striking the Right Balance

Our hope is that the inquiry process and outcomes will have a wider constructive impact not just on future approaches to school evaluation and quality improvement in Northern Ireland but also on the entire ethos and culture of our education system; the focus of curriculum, assessment and examinations; the measures derived from these by which schools are held accountable; how these are reported to government and parents; and how these are monitored and commented on by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and within the media.

Our aspiration is to achieve an evaluation service that is strongly linked to adequate and on-going school support and a framework for career long teacher professional development as well as to inform and influence the coherence of: Department of Education policies in relation to school improvement; future school support structures; CCEA's processes and mechanisms for assessment and examinations; and future Programme for Government Targets.

This response is structured in accordance with the following Terms of Reference which aim to:

1. Review the effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement
2. Consider particularly how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment;
3. Identify the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties;
4. Identify any gaps in terms of the ETI review process;
5. Identify any gaps in the support services provided by the Department or the Education and Library Boards;
6. Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection and alternative approaches to the assessment of value added and improvement;
7. Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process, including the need for enhanced powers; alternative measures of achievement; improved governance; and transparency.

Overview

There are a number of important caveats to be acknowledged at the outset.

ToR 1 - In order to properly and fairly **review the effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement**: a proper independent research analysis needs to be undertaken into the conduct of ETI inspections, the appropriateness of the quality indicators that are used; how (and whether or not these are consistently) applied; the nature of the report back to schools; whether or not the basis of judgements arrived at and reported are transparent and fair; and the impact of ETI inspection on long-term school im-

provement. **This response can therefore only refer to 'perceptions' about the current approach, which lack a robust evidential base.** GTCNI intends to undertake an on-line survey to explore the evidence base of these perceptions. It is also accepted that ETI's inspection processes are continuously evolving in response to circumstances and feedback.

ToR 2: In relation to how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment : It is recognised that assessing value-added is a challenging issue not only for ETI but for all schools and education systems around the world (as well as for the health service, police force; governments etc). The issues raised are therefore not issues solely for ETI (or confined to schools which have lower levels of examination attainment). Rather these are issues for all schools and the whole system. It needs to be recognised from the outset also that the Department of Education, in hand with the Assembly Education Committee, set the Programme for Government Targets by which the system is measured, apply FSME as the main accountability-value-added indicator and created Annex C of the ESaGS policy. ETI merely responds to these directives. Also, while value added may be something that all schools should be trying to measure (and only a minority do so 'effectively') this is likely to be because schools have had little training to help them do so.

ToR 4-6: In relation to identifying gaps in the ETI review process and in the support services provided by the Department or the Education and Library Boards it is recognised that the Northern Ireland education system has been undergoing a period of unprecedented change at a time of major financial constraint and that planned change has been slowed by democratic scrutiny. Thus gaps in the ETI review process may be exacerbated by gaps elsewhere which are not of their making.

ToR 6-7: In relation to Identifying alternative approaches to inspection, value added and school improvement in other jurisdictions, the range of international evidence cited is an indicator of the extent to which other countries are engaging with issues similar to those identified by the Education Committee inquiry; that this inquiry is a healthy reflection of what we need to be doing constantly in relation to major education policies; and that the recommendations offered are meant to be positive and enabling in evolving towards a system that engages all partners in a clear shared moral purpose of doing the best to support our schools and our young people. Bearing in mind these important caveats, and wishing to contribute constructively to this inquiry and the recommendations that may emerge from it:

- Section 1 reviews **perceptions of the ETI's current 'risk-based' approach to inspection**, including the potentially in-built socio-economic bias of this approach, the excessive data requirements reported in Union case-study evidence, concerns about the weighting given to numerical outcomes, evidence of minimalist written feedback and suggestions of an increasingly deficit approach, reinforced by the current proposals for changes to the Formal Intervention Process. The paper highlights the potential unintended effects of 'short-termist' approaches to school improvement that run contrary to robust evidence from international research, which stresses the length of time and support needed to bring about genuine and sustainable change in the ethos and culture of struggling schools.
- Section 2 considers **how ETI currently assesses value added** (noting that the challenges raised are not confined to ETI but to the whole education system) including: the unreliability of many of the measures used, such as free school meals; the potentially distorted picture of performance presented by a reliance on 5A* to C at GCSE; the

standard and random errors that are not reported; the lack of attention to confidence intervals; the complete lack of confidence in the numerical ('level') outcomes from statutory assessment evidenced by GTCNI's recent survey (June 2013) and by the 'Expert Panel on Assessment' (DfE 2011).

- Section 3 identifies **the key issues impacting on schools in challenging circumstances** (noting that these issues are not confined to these types of schools only) including: insufficient use of base-line measures; lack of cognisance afforded to research related to family and community factors; the peer effect and the impact of separating young people from the positive influences of their better off peer group at a vulnerable age; leading to pupil *'compliance without engagement'* (Harland et al., 2002) and student underperformance and drop out (Purvis et al., 2011).
- Section 4 identifies **Gaps in the ETI review process** including: lack of analysis of effect sizes and correction for student intake; over-estimation of the school effect which is considered to range between 5% and 18%; and conflation of the term 'effective' (a statistical term borrowed from economics) with the perception of 'good' (which is a value judgement) (MacBeath, 2012: 44).
- Section 5 identifies **Gaps in DE and ELB support** including: delays in strategy setting, for example, the decade-long delay in the Review of Teacher Education; the current gaps between policy direction and support capacity, for example the assumption of capacity within the support services to provide the level of tailored response likely to be needed as a consequence of proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process; the overall run down in provision for teacher professional development; the gap in the policy drive towards 21st Century learning *'to ensure that 21st century skills that are considered important, become valued in the education system'* (OECD, 2011: 19); and the pressing need to develop a coherent professional development framework for teachers and to consult on the shape of a future advisory and support structure.
- Section 6 identifies and analyses **alternative approaches and models of good practice** including: Finland, which does not have an Inspection Service; Scotland, which has developed a constructive model closely aligned with support; New Zealand, which uses census information to stratify schools; Hampshire, where value-added estimates for primary schools were utilised by the authority and head teachers as an unpublished 'screening device' and a 'school improvement' tool; and good practice models from a range of other settings including Hong Kong, Germany, Spain Slovakia and The Australian Capital Territory.
- Sections 7-10 considers priorities for action to **improve the approach to the school improvement process**, including **recommendations** on construction approaches to school evaluation; more sophisticated base-lining and value-added calculations; the use of alternative measures of achievement; and the need for greater coherence in educational policy and sustained career-long professional development and support.
- Section 11: In **conclusion** the submission calls for a more constructive model of accountability, underpinned by proper base-lining and value-added measures which builds teachers' confidence and commitment. The overall recommendation is that future policies should seek to **strike the right balance** - *'between holding schools to account*

Striking the Right Balance

and allowing innovation and supporting school improvement' (Perry, C., 2012, P1, NIARIS).

Summary of Evidence and Recommendations

1 The current approach to inspection/school improvement may serve to:

- 'incentivise schools to prioritise compliance... over innovation' (Perry, C., 2012);
- prioritise performance data over other factors and 'pre-judge' outcomes;
- produce a range of undesirable practices with unintended consequences;
- confirm an 'in-built' social bias which in turn fails to recognise value-added;
- feed a form of 'blame culture', holding schools to account for failure to overcome the absence of family and community cultural capital (MacBeath, 2012);
- exacerbate fear and lead to a downward spiral towards school closure.

2 The current approach to value-added is fundamentally flawed because:

- It fails to take full enough account of factors which influence variations in pupil attainment; to analyse school effect sizes and correct for student intake (Sammons, 2007);
- Statistical differences tend to conceal more than they reveal (Mc Beath, *ibid*);
- Performance indicators lose usefulness when used as objects of policy (William, 2001);
- Reducing attainment to a single figure or grade, while attractive to politicians and the public '... masks complex nuances in ability and performance'. (Gipps, 1994);
- Trying to achieve multiple objectives with a single policy instrument is not feasible (Hanushek & Raymond, 2004).

3 Key issues for schools and gaps in support include:

- The lack of solid evidence that investing in increasingly sophisticated measurement devices drives change (OECD –Scotland report -2007);
- The constant focus on measurement may serve to place intense pressure on young people (MacBeath, 2012) resulting in 'compliance without engagement' (Harland *et al*, 2002); and 'disengagement' by many (Purvis *et al.*, 2011);
- Selection exacerbates differentials by removing positive peer effects (OECD, 2011);
- The run-down of services associated with ESA has resulted in a deficit model of support; there is no coherent strategy for teacher professional development or evidence of change-management planning for a future school support strategy.

4 Alternative approaches/models that should be considered include:

- Finland, which does not have a school inspection regime at all;
- Scotland and Ireland, which emphasise a two-way collaborative approach; and
- New Zealand, which uses census and other information to stratify schools by socio-economic intake.

RECOMMENDATIONS: to improve the approach to school improvement

1. **Undertake a cost benefit analysis** of the relationship between inspection and school improvement (Whitby, K. 2010 in Perry, C., 2012, P21)
2. **Develop a supportive quality assurance model** (Finland/Scotland) which uses positive language (for example, *Very Confident, Confident, Not Confident* as in Scotland) aligned to support systems that involve more seconded teachers and principals;
3. **Stream-line future school evaluation processes** to provide clearer guidance on data requirements; permit verbal (and written) challenge; reduce reporting timescales; and improve the qualitative detail of unpublished reporting to schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS: to improve the assessment of value-added

4. **Use NISRA census information and geographic information system (GIS)** to identify school characteristics and to stratify schools by socio-economic intake to help allocate resources effectively, target social need and calculate value-added.
5. **Assess productive language (oracy) on entry to school** as a key indicator of future educational potential and as a base-line measure of school value-added.

RECOMMENDATIONS: to improve system monitoring

6. **Use light sampling** to provide robust and independent monitoring data over time, disentangling teacher assessment from accountability (*Tymms & Merrill*);
7. **Use International data** (PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA) to provide additional quantitative and qualitative information as a broader comparative measure.

RECOMMENDATIONS for alternative measures of achievement

8. **Commission international research and development** to assist CCEA in developing innovative 21st Century assessments and examinations.
9. **Separate teacher assessment from accountability** to safeguard assessment for learning.
10. **Develop wider indicators** to 'enable progress in all important learning goals to be reported' (ARG, 2008) and to broaden measurement of 'value-added'.
11. **Use standardised testing data sensitively within schools only for diagnostic**, formative and value-added purposes to prevent teaching to the test.
12. **Use pupil attitudinal and 'well-being' surveys sensitively** to gain insight into the correlation between 'motivation', 'liking' and achievement (*Sturman, 2012*).
13. **Develop 'unseen' thinking skills assessments** 'to ensure that important 21st Century skills become valued in the education system' (OECD, 2011: 19).
14. **Develop new qualifications for N. Ireland** which reflect the needs of young people, the economy and employment in the 21st Century (*CBI, 2012*).
15. **Introduce a measure to reduce the number of pupils leaving school with no qualifications** by an agreed percentage.
16. **Review Programme for Government Targets and NI Audit Office Monitoring** to reflect these recommendations, based on an understanding of supportive accountability.

RECOMMENDATIONS for additional powers, governance and transparency

17. **Ensure accurate and transparent media reporting of educational outcomes.**
18. **Require that the evidence-base for ETI judgements is open and transparent.**
19. **Ensure that all future educational policy is based on sound research.**
20. **Invest in teacher professional development and improve political and public respect for teaching as a profession:** Re-route spending on statutory assessment and evaluation systems towards teacher professional development. Develop greater political and public appreciation of the complexity of education, issues of socio-economic deprivation and equity, and the quality of the public service which teachers provide.

1: Perceptions of ETI's approach to school inspection and improvement

1.1 Perceptions: At the outset it is important to state that ETI is funded directly by government, and while independent in its management and actions, is located within the Department of Education. The general perception therefore is that ETI acts in line with policy determinations from the Department of Education which are formulated in response to Programme for Government Targets endorsed by the Education Committee. Secondly, it is important to state that, in the absence of detailed research into schools' experience of school inspection, this response can therefore only refer to 'perceptions' about the current approach, which it is accepted lacks a robust evidential base. Thirdly, it is also accepted that ETI's inspection processes are continuously evolving in response to circumstances and feedback and that recent pilot approaches seek to take greater account of schools' own self evaluation evidence. It is therefore recommended at the outset that, in order to properly and fairly review ETI's approach to school inspection and improvement a proper independent research analysis should be commissioned into:

- the conduct of ETI inspections,
- the appropriateness of the quality indicators that are used;
- how (and whether or not these are consistently) applied;
- the nature of the report back to schools;
- whether or not the basis of judgements arrived at and reported are transparent and fair; and
- the impact of ETI inspection on long-term school improvement.

In the absence of that research, GTCNI intends to undertake an on-line survey to explore the evidence base of these perceptions.

1.2 The shift towards a 'risk-based' approach to inspection: A number of literature reviews (Penzer & Allen 2011) and comparative research studies (Ozga *et al.*, 2009-13; Ehren *et al* 2011-13; WBEE/EBT *etc*) explore different modes of inspection in different countries. These comparative research studies reveal that there is no single and unchanging form of inspection. Rather '*Inspection... remains unsettled and changeable, caught up in the processes of 'hyperactive' policy making and management*' (Clarke & Ozga 2011) and influenced by specific political, cultural and institutional conditions in each country.

While no official research study has, as yet, been undertaken into the changing nature of inspection in Northern Ireland, research undertaken for the Education Committee suggests that there has been a shift towards a more '*risk-based' approach*' with performance indicators becoming '*the major determinant of when schools should be inspected*' (Perry, 2012). It is known however that a key deciding factor in prioritising schools for inspection or identifying risk is provided by District Inspector local knowledge, as opposed to performance data on its own. Whatever the source, the shift towards risk-based inspection is confirmed by recently in proposals for changes to the Formal Intervention Process (DE, June 2013). Education Committee research highlighted '*concerns around the pressures for organisations undergoing inspection and ...that evaluation can incentivise schools to prioritise*

compliance with requirements over innovation (Perry, 2012). This observation is supported by several other research studies which have highlighted the increasingly 'performative' character of the inspection process in many countries, with school staff using metaphors such as '*jumping through hoops*' and '*papering over the cracks*' (Plowright, 2007); or '*nominal compliance*' with the '*performance*' of accountability with good teaching on a '*stage managed*' basis (Case et al., 2000 in Clarke & Ozga 2011:18).

1.3 A potential inbuilt socio-economic bias: A number of critical concerns have been identified about the increasing use of school performance indicators as the major determinant of when schools should be inspected and their influence on inspection judgments.

- *The first is that performance needs to be contextualised and adjusted for the differential selection of students by schools in Northern Ireland and school examination results need to be adjusted for the intake achievements of students when they start at a school – so called 'value-added' ratings.*
- *The second issue is that the uncertainty surrounding any given ranking is very large, and in many important cases so large that no statistically meaningful comparisons can be made, nor can useful user choices be sustained (Foley & Goldstein 2012).*

It has demonstrated in the United States, for example, that '*many low-attainment schools are actually high-performing. The reverse is also true, though problems of poor performance are generally well hidden in high-attainment schools*' (Harris, 2010:3).

Analysis of inspection outcomes over the last few years suggest that schools from the least advantaged social band are four times more likely to receive an "inadequate" or "unsatisfactory" grade than those from the most advantaged intake, which are twice as likely to get an "outstanding" or "very good" inspection outcome (*Irish News*, 26 February 2013). This is substantiated by analysis in the United States which highlights that:

Attainment-based school performance measures like proficiency are systematically biased against schools serving low-attainment students. That is, by failing to account for factors affecting achievement that are outside the school's control, we systematically under-estimate the performance of low-attainment schools (Harris, 2010: 6).

It is argued that, if inspection took appropriate account of intakes characteristics, then schools in each social band should be able to achieve the same broad range of inspection grades. The following research observations will be elaborated more fully throughout this submission:

- *The first rule of accountability is that people can only be held responsible for the things over which they have control (Harris, 2010).*
- *The cause of 'differentials in performance lie largely outside schools and the classroom' (Purvis et al, 2011).*
- *The school effect is commonly agreed among researchers to be between 5 and 18 % (Chevalier, Dolton and Levacic, 2005; MacBeath, 2012: 44).*

1.4 Potentially excessive data requirements: Teacher Union case study data suggests that it is now the 'norm' in standard inspections for schools to return data in the range of

2 gigabytes (around 700 pages). C2kni guidance to schools on formatting pre-inspection reports runs to 52 pages. While the evidence which informs inspection judgements includes classroom observation, interactions with pupils, parents and staff, the perception is that pre-inspection data may serve to 'pre-judge' the actual inspection process with judgements likely to "follow the stats" (Mansell, W, 2007).

1.5 Nature of reporting: Although it is acknowledged that the oral report back which schools receive can be very detailed and helpful, written reports are described by many as lacking in detail and 'bland'. The perception – whether real or not, is that inspection reports in the past offered a richer, more rounded, picture of the school inspected.

The current practice in Scotland is to provide a short report of the DE type for publication and to provide a more detailed confidential report to schools. Schools have indicated that the lack of detail inhibits them from being able to challenge judgements that may be based on relative measures that could be 'subject to considerable margins of error' (ARG, 2008).

1.6 Consistency: Concern has been expressed about inconsistencies in the judgements made by different inspection teams, with insufficient transparent evidence provided to verify the basis of the judgements made. Representatives of the Irish-medium sector have registered particular concern about being inspected by personnel who do not speak Irish and may therefore be unable to recognise the language development of children or capture the detail and quality of the interactions and relationships between teachers and children in an Irish-medium classroom and the value-added by bi-lingual education.

1.7 An increasingly deficit approach: The perverse organisational effects of inspection have been much discussed in the research literature. Many studies point to the dislocation and distraction associated with being inspected. Some studies suggest that the impact of inspection on school performance may be neutral or even negative, with some studies reporting lowered examination performance in the 12 months following an inspection (e.g., Shaw et al, 2003; Rosenthal, 2004). Counter-balancing this view, early evidence from a current study across a number of EU countries suggests that there is a positive effect from inspection. The degree of improvement, however, is significantly related to the promotion of self-evaluation and is moderated by whether the feedback is positive or negative (Ehren et al., 2013).

Viability audits associated with school rationalisation have exacerbated fears that a poor inspection grade can lead to negative media reporting, provoking parental 'stampedes' away from schools placed in "intervention", beginning a downward spiral to potential school closure. Again, whether evidence-based or not, the general view is that the inspection process in Northern Ireland is no longer perceived by the profession as the positive and constructive experience it once was, but is increasingly characterised as more akin to a judgemental, OFSTED-inspired, model.

Current proposals for changes to the Formal Intervention Process confirm these fears. The justification offered for the proposals is that:

- a number of schools in FIP (Formal Intervention Process) are not improving sufficiently quickly, despite action plans being developed and support being provided;

- *a number of schools evaluated as 'satisfactory' have not been demonstrating any discernable signs of improvement over a number of years and would benefit from the support provided through the formal intervention process;*
- *a perception exists that schools in formal intervention evaluated as 'satisfactory' in a follow up inspection automatically exit formal intervention;*
- *there have been developments in other areas of education policy such as area planning which need to be reflected in the revised process.*

(DE, 20 June 2013).

The proposed changes to the process intend that:

- *A school in formal intervention which improves to a 'satisfactory' evaluation at the follow-up inspection, having had two years of tailored support, will have a further follow-up inspection within 12 months at which point it must have improved to at least a 'good' evaluation or further action may be considered;*
- *The timing of the follow-up inspection for a school with a 'satisfactory' evaluation will be shortened to between 12-18 months;*
- *It will be made more explicit in the FIP process that a school will not automatically exit FIP on an ETI evaluation of 'satisfactory'*
- *For any school entering formal intervention and identified as being unsustainable the Managing Authority will be required to bring forward to the Department a plan for the restructuring of education provision in the area (DE 2013).*

If implemented, the impact of these proposals will be to assign a time-limit to a 'satisfactory' judgement with the threat that, if measurable improvement is not visible within a specified period, the school will technically be considered 'unsatisfactory', even if it has managed to sustain its initial improvements. The proposals threaten the ultimate sanction that if progress is not made the school may be amalgamated or perhaps even closed down. It has been shown elsewhere that:

The practice of increased frequency of inspection for 'unsatisfactory' or even simply 'weaker than average' schools may be an effective one in some circumstances but it may have a negative side effect in tending to reinforce a notion of 'inspection as punishment' (Vass and Simmonds, 2001).

It is possible that this may increase the tendency of schools to focus on 'passing' their next inspection rather than on learning from the previous inspection and using it as a catalyst for improvement (Penzer & Allen, 2011: 10).

It is suggested that punitive measures of this kind may 'help to push good teachers out of schools serving low-performing students, as these teachers become frustrated by a system that punishes them no matter how well they perform' (Harris, 2010: 3). In these circumstances it is unlikely that energetic and effective leaders will be willing to take on challenging schools.

Counter-balancing this view is the acknowledged regard for district inspectors, who are generally viewed as acting in a supportive role, promoting an understanding that inspection is not an event but a continuing process leading to improvement. It is this type of role which emerges in the research literature as one which schools value and which

promotes and enables genuine improvement. Indeed, the view has been expressed that ETI should adopt much more of a support role, informing (and perhaps leading – as in Scotland) other support services. The view expressed by some schools is that ETI, which observes school practice on a regular basis, is in a better position to advise on the nature of improvement than CASS colleagues who do not have the benefit of observational experience.

1.8 Unintended effects of ‘short-term’ accountability pressures: While the intention is that the publication of inspection reports should have positive effects it has been shown that overly strong accountability systems can produce a range of unintended and undesirable practices and perverse ‘side effects’ that leads to excessive focus on improving performance in narrow areas, to the neglect of other important areas of schooling and to the detriment of pedagogy and learning (OECD 2012). As external pressure on teachers to meet performance targets and maximise league table rankings increases, a growth has been detected in techniques linked to ‘gaming’ the system, spoon-feeding pupils, teaching to the test, ‘nursing’ the coursework and manipulating the grade boundaries. (Wilson, Croxson and Atkinson, 2006; Wiggins and Tymms, 2002; Visscher, 2001) These studies argue that in some cases institutions become so focused on the measures and standards employed by league tables that they begin to deliberately manipulate their data or behaviour to produce the desired results, regardless of potentially adverse effects (Foley and Goldstein, 2012: 29).

- *When school performance is measured poorly it creates a variety of perverse incentives to do things that are clearly inconsistent with a school's mission (MacBeath, 2012: 22).*
- *Such a focus on ‘doing well’ could lead to distortion as a school puts its best foot, as distinct from its everyday foot, forward and may in extreme cases lead to deception (hiding known areas of weakness from inspectors). It gets in the way of inspection as a collaborative activity between professionals and encourages inspection as a competition between school and inspectors (Penzer & Allen, 2011: 10).*
- *‘The higher the stakes are for school leaders and teachers, the more these unintended /undesired effects are likely to occur’ (Hooge et al, 2012: 10)*

Smith (1995) sets out a number of means by which ‘gaming’ takes place:

- *concentrating on those students with whom most ‘profit’ can be gained to improve a school's Student Progression Information (SPI) while ignoring the needs of students at either end of the ability spectrum (This form of ‘gaming’ focus was part of the initial brief in the recent OFM/DFM initiative to employ c.270 new teachers in struggling schools to focus on Level 4 pupils at Key Stage 2 and Grade C boundary pupils at GCSE);*
- *selective student admissions and removing ‘difficult’ students (with students not being admitted into some grammar school 6th forms who have not scored a requisite number of grades at GCSE);*
- *concentrating on examination performance to the exclusion of other qualifications and teaching for the test;*

- 'creative reporting' of data; and /or depression of baseline/intake test scores to improve the value-added scores.

(Foley and Goldstein, 2012: 30)

There is evidence to suggest that the results of such practices may in some cases actually prove detrimental to overall educational standards. A variety of teachers and head teachers interviewed by Wilson, Croxson and Atkinson (2006) reported that they did tend to focus extra resources on 'borderline' pupils (those who are likely to achieve C or D grades). This was acknowledged to have consequences for others. One interviewee admitted *'the bright kids still prosper... I don't think they miss out at all. But I think the lower ability ones potentially do'* (164). Others reported that they deliberately shifted these borderline pupils to vocational qualifications (ibid: 30)

A report in the Times Educational Supplement in mid August 2013 confirmed that GCSE grade deflation can in large part be explained by significant increases in early and multiple entries. Across all subjects there was a 39 per cent rise in entries from students who were aged 15 or younger. In mathematics, the proportion of entries from under-16s increased by 49 per cent so that the total number of entries amounted to nearly twice the number of 16-year-old students. The fall in performance is partly attributed to younger candidates' attaining lower results and reveals:

'... The full extent of the tactics used by schools caught between tougher government targets and exam watchdog Ofqual's clampdown on grade inflation. As Ofqual has intensified its "comparable outcomes" clampdown on grade inflation, school leaders are concerned about the impact of the watchdog's approach on their ability to meet government GCSE targets. "Schools are constantly trying to improve outcomes for pupils, whereas Ofqual and the exam boards are geared to making sure that there is no room for improvement. "The accountability system is built around a measure that [teachers] don't trust any more." (TES magazine on 23 August 2013)

It is important in the interests of balance to acknowledge Fisher and Downes (2008) research which concluding that while the propensity to manipulate metrics can be quite high, 'the deception is usually of a low level of ethical seriousness.' Nevertheless, MacBeath observes that: *'The higher the stakes for schools the more children are placed under intense and perhaps excessive pressure from policy driven demands'* (2012, 22).

Wiggins and Tymms (2002) compared the performance-measurement culture in England with a more supportive culture in Scotland. They found that the stress of performance targets is increasingly associated with a more 'short-termist' approach among English teaching staff and, in some cases, the development of a blame culture. They concluded that *'high-stakes, single-proxy indicators...can have significant dysfunctional effects'*.

The British Academy has called for:

More research [into] the effects of performance data on institutional performance. ...This evidence should pay particular attention to 'knock-on' effects whereby resources may be reduced for some important activities in order to improve performance (Foley & Goldstein 2012: 11)

Visscher (2001) has highlighted the institutional damage done by '*naming and shaming*' persistently under-performing schools. He argues that presenting simple comparative measures will always lead to some schools performing at a relatively lower standard, but that the focus should remain on whether each school reaches the standards considered appropriate by virtue of their intake.

In addition to these educationally undesirable pressures, the current 'Formal Intervention' proposals run contrary to a wealth of research findings which point to the length of time and support needed to bring about a genuine and sustainable change in the ethos and culture of struggling schools. For example, '*it may take approximately 30 hours of focused in-school, job-embedded learning before coherent improvements in teaching and learning become obvious*' (Reeves, 2006). Engendering such fundamental change often requires changes to leadership and collegial practice and also major change in the relationships with, and aspirations of families and communities.

Ben Levin in '*How to Change 5000 Schools*' emphasises that '*improving schools is hard work*' and needs to be done '*in ways that support positive morale among educators, students and parents*' (Levin, B., 2008:2). Substantial research evidence would suggest that the current proposals for changes to the Formal Intervention Process here, which are not accompanied by related plans to reinvigorate the advisory service, under-estimate the nature of the changes and support needed to engender sustainable improvement and are likely to exacerbate perverse behaviours.

2: How ETI assesses value-added

2.1 Pre-determined policy measures: It is recognised that assessing value-added is a challenging issue not only for ETI but for all schools and education systems around the world (as well as for the health service, police force; governments etc). The issues raised are therefore not issues solely for ETI (or confined to schools which have lower levels of examination attainment). Rather these are issues for all schools and the whole system. It also needs to be clearly recognised that it is the Department of Education (DE), in hand with the Assembly Education Committee (AEC) which sets the Programme for Government Targets by which the system is measured. (It is not known on what basis these targets are derived). It is DE and the AEC who apply Free School Meal Entitlement as the main accountability-value-added indicator. It is DE which has specified the Formal Intervention Process. ETI merely responds to these directives. Also, while value added may be something that all schools should be trying to measure (and only a minority do so 'effectively') this is likely to be because schools have had little training or help to do so.

2.2 Important trade-offs: The assessment of a school's performance monitoring must navigate some very important trade-offs between:

- the accessibility and intelligibility of the information and measures used and the accuracy of that information;
- the availability of information and its validity as a performance measure;
- qualitative and quantitative measures;
- technical questions of adjustment and reliability (Bird et al., 2005, Goldstein and Spiegelhalter, 1996, Leckie and Goldstein, 2009) that limit the inferences that can be legitimately drawn, whether for the purpose of institutional accountability or for user choice.

This is not to say that these kinds of issues always occur in practice, and indeed there are a range of other dangers associated with an entirely unregulated system. However, it is vital for policymakers to remain aware of such potential problems within performance monitoring frameworks.

(Foley & Goldstein, 2012: 20).

Since inspection feedback is insufficiently detailed in relation to the basis on which qualitative judgments have been made, it is not always clear that these important trade-offs are being taken into account so that the limits of the inferences that are being drawn are both apparent and transparent.

2.2 Perceived over-emphasis on numerical value-added: ETI undertake criterion referenced inspections using 5 indicators, supported by the detailed range of indicators set out in *Together Towards Improvement*, which vary slightly by sector. The perception of schools is that a stronger emphasis is placed on numerical evidence of having met performance targets (i.e. the % of pupils achieving designated levels of attainment at specific key stages or 5A* to C at GCSE). While ETI states that the full range of indicators are applied in a balanced way to arrive at criterion referenced judgements, the perception that numerical evidence has a stronger influence than other criteria is borne out by the emphasis in inspection reports.

In the absence of more finely tuned base-line measures of a school's intake profile, reliance on numerical data primarily is an insufficiently robust basis on which to assess school quality or value-added, which is why observation of practice by the inspectorate is an extremely important dimension in judging school quality. What needs to be made more transparent is the extent to which the interpretation of data influences the inspection outcome since:

statistical data remains problematic and potentially unreliable. The agents who collect it may try to manage the representation of performance; the indicators chosen may not be adequate to the reality they are intended to convey; and performance management systems are persistently vulnerable to problems of 'gaming' as evaluated organisations and actors try to produce success. As a result, the apparent 'hardness' of statistical fact is itself an artefact (Poovey in Clarke & Ozga, 2011: 5).

Over reliance on numerical data has been challenged by a number of research studies, as the following quotations illustrate,

- *Use of assessment evidence for accountability is based on the idea that measuring itself leads to improvement....Over the last 20 years there is no solid evidence from research or practice that investing in increasingly sophisticated measurement devices drives change (OECD –Scotland report -2007, p15);*
- *Performance indicators lose their usefulness when used as objects of policy.... When used as the sole index of quality, the manipulability of these indicators destroys the relationship between the indicator and the indicated' ('Goodhart's Law' - former chief economist at the Bank of England quoted in Wiliam, 2001: 2);*
- *'...Put bluntly, the clearer you are about what you want, the more likely you are to get it, but the less likely it is to mean anything' (Wiliam, 2001: 2);*

A wide range of research has questioned the value of Levels of Attainment in particular, as a robust numeric, highlighting that:

- *Reducing attainment to a single figure or grade while attractive to politicians and the public 'as a form of shorthand' in which to report performance masks complex nuances in ability and performance (Gipps, 1994: 27);*
- *No single measure can fulfil both the formative and summative functions (Harris, 2010);*
- *Assessments should be treated as approximations, subject to unavoidable errors (Gardner, 2008);*
- *'Trying to achieve multiple objectives with a single policy instrument is not feasible' (Hanushek & Raymond, 2004).*

2.3 Unreliability of measures of deprivation, attainment and progress

Compounding the problem of an over-reliance on data is the research evidence which suggests that the various components which comprise the data set are individually unreliable. There is not space to do justice to what is a contentious and well covered issue but some issues that require further research and reflection include:

- 2.3.1 Free school meals:** The use of free school meal (FSM) data is widely prevalent in official estimates of educational disadvantage as well as in educational research reports in the UK. However, while there has been some concern expressed about the measure, there has, to our knowledge, been no systematic test of its appropriateness. Research at Bristol University has tested the use of FSM for appropriateness as a measure, taking into account the dynamics of poverty and the error that can be associated with its application in judging school performance. The research found that FSM is a coarse and unreliable indicator to judge school performance and leads to biased estimates of the effect of poverty on pupils' academic progress. Using county-wide data to assess the magnitude of error that can be introduced in estimates of the prevalence of economic disadvantage the associated error was found to be large (10%) and was also found to lead to an underestimation of the proportion of children who consistently remain below the income thresholds implied by the FSM-eligibility criteria by 50%. The research concludes that:

FSM eligibility is not just a coarse indicator of socio-economic of disadvantaged considerably... Moreover, the progress of children from very poor backgrounds early in life could also be overestimated in schools with low FSM take up rates. Finally, and most importantly these findings raise questions about the way progress in schools is 'officially' measured and raises doubts about the trust that is invested in FSM as a reliable indicator of deprivation. It also raises questions about the estimates of school effects based on models where FSM entitlement is used as a measure of disadvantage. This work questions the architecture of accountability which drives the state theory of learning in England (Lauder et al., 2006). Our findings suggest that many schools will confront far greater levels of disadvantage than what is currently measured by FSMs.... It is important not to see the problem of quantifying the poverty related educational disadvantage as just confined to measures such as FSMs (Miles & Evans, 1979). Rather, it can be argued that disadvantaged populations will always be difficult to 'capture' through single catch-all measurements from routinely collected administrative data such as FSMs
(Kounali et al, 2012).

The findings raise important policy questions about the quality of indicators used in judging school performance. Recommendation 21 of the *Independent Review of the Common Funding Scheme* advises that 'ongoing investigation into an alternative, or adjunct measures to Free School Meals should continue' (Salisbury, 2013: ix).

- 2.3.2 5 A*s to C at GCSE and A level:** It has long been acknowledged that the performance of some schools is flattered by the focus on the proportion securing 5 A*-C GCSEs. Recent detailed research from the University of Ulster (Borooah &

Knox 2013) highlights that there are schools which should be doing much better than they are given their intake.

Attainment in national tests such as Level 4 or 5 in English and Mathematics at primary schools or GCSEs in post-primary schools are a crude indicator of the value which schools add to the pupils in their classroom and hence the quality of education on offer. For example, good results in GCSEs in grammar schools attracting academically able pupils might hide the fact that teachers added little to their performance. Compare this with less good results in a secondary school attracting a large percentage of pupils from disadvantaged areas where their teachers have added significantly to the performance of pupils.

(Borooah & Knox 2013: 1)

It has also become apparent that the focus on the C threshold encourages schools to invest considerable resources at the C/D borderline which can drive perverse behaviours. It has been argued that a fairer way to judge school performance would be to measure the *attainment of all the pupils* rather than the sub-set who achieve the highest grades. In principle, this might be a step forward but, as ever with issues of assessment, it is complicated to calculate fairly. Crucially, this is still not a measure of the level of progress made by an individual or a cohort from entry to exit, which is a much more genuinely inclusive measure. That too is complicated to measure, as the education system is gently tilted back towards norm- rather than criterion-referenced assessment methods, so that not all pupils may be able to make three levels of progress. The key point is that:

'Accountability' for performance in education is complex. Developing measures which genuinely allow schools to demonstrate what they have achieved with young people is complex. Translating it into a readily understood format which can be communicated clearly is perhaps even more complex. At root, society needs clarity about what it wants to hold schools to account for: the progress made by individual pupils, in which case we should worry less about thresholds, or their ability to move all pupils to an agreed threshold, and threshold performance, or their ability to push the most able to elite levels of performance. We need to reflect on how to map the performance of all. Until we clarify that, we will struggle with inadequate measures in which we vest too much confidence" (Husbands, C. 2012)

- 2.3.3 Standard and random errors:** The results of most tests are reported using either standard scores, percentiles or grades which purport to measure and describe how a student performed on a test compared to a representative sample of students of the same age from the general population. This comparison sample or group is called a norm group. Educational tests cannot by their nature measure abilities and traits perfectly so, no matter how carefully a test is developed, it will always contain some form of error or unreliability. This error may exist for various reasons that are not always readily identifiable.

Random errors might seem innocuous because they are equally likely to arise with all teachers. But random errors are problematic because they call into question the conclusions we wish to draw from performance. Thus both systematic and random errors need to be taken into account when making decisions about performance measures (Harris, 2010:7).

2.3.4 Confidence intervals: In order to account for this error, confidence intervals can be calculated within which the student's true score is likely to fall over a certain percentage of the time. For example, if a student earned a standard score of 90 with a confidence interval of +5, it is more accurate to say that there is a 95% chance that a student's true performance on this test falls somewhere between 85 and 95.

Best practice in assessment and examining would make confidence intervals transparent; for example, New Zealand reports assessment scores to parents showing confidence intervals graphically. Similarly, confidence intervals exist in arriving at subjective judgements in inspection between the views of individual inspectors and between different teams of inspectors in different schools at different times. Therefore there needs to be greater transparency in accepting that *'assessments should be treated as approximations, subject to unavoidable errors'* (Gardner, 2008).

When making comparisons between institutions it is assumed that we are interested not merely in how they happened to perform at the time when the data were collected, but how they compare in terms of their underlying 'effectiveness'. Thus, for example, to base a comparison using just one randomly sampled student from each school would be very unreliable and hardly acceptable. The question is then to determine how many students contributing to a school's score would be adequate. By providing a range or interval for each school we can indicate the relative accuracy for different schools, with larger intervals associated with less accuracy. Judgements can then be made about whether differences can be ascribed to chance variation due to small numbers of students, or may reflect real differences. (Goldstein and Spiegelhalter (1996) provide a detailed discussion).

(Foley and Goldstein 2012: 23)

Visscher (2001) points out that even if student achievement scores have been adjusted for relevant student background characteristics *'precise school performance remains uncertain as a result of large confidence intervals'* (202). Large confidence intervals are just one of the results of the relatively small sample size constituted by the average school's yearly cohort.

In research on this problem in the United States, Kane and Staiger (2002) found that the median elementary school has only 69 students per grade (in the UK, the average primary school year group is just 40). They point out that 'the 95% confidence interval for the average fourth-grade reading or math score in a school with 69 students per grade level would extend from roughly the 25th to the 75th percentile among schools of that size (95). (ibid: 26)

2.3.5 Statutory assessment and levels of attainment: In a recent independent survey conducted by GTCNI (June 2013) which received 500 responses representing almost 50% of schools involved in end of key stage assessment, only a very small percentage of respondents considered numerical Levels were useful to:

- To Boards of Governors to understand value-added only 15%
- To parents to understand their child's progress only 10%

- To receiving schools to understand what a pupil knows only 18%
- To ELBs to understand the support a school may need only 18%
- To ETI to understand the value added by schools only 18%
- To DE and Politicians to understand system performance only 14%

The 'Expert Panel on Assessment' (DfE, 2011) advised that: *'The ways in which 'levels' are currently used to judge pupil progress, and their consequences actually inhibits performance, distorts and undermines learning and exacerbates social differentiation, rather than promoting a more inclusive approach'* (DfE, 2011).

3: Key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties

3.1 The theory of inspection leading to improvement: According to an EU project currently evaluating the impact of school inspections, the theory informing school inspections is that:

School inspection criteria and procedures and the feedback given during inspection visits are expected to enable schools and their stakeholders to align their views/beliefs and expectations of good education and good schools to the standards in the inspection framework, particularly with respect to those standards the school failed to meet during the latest inspection visit. Schools are expected to act on these views and expectations and use the inspection feedback when conducting self-evaluations and when taking improvement actions.

Stakeholders should use the inspection standards, or rather the inspection assessment of the school's functioning against these standards (as publicly reported), to take actions that will motivate the school to adapt their expectations and to improve. Self-evaluations by schools are expected to build their capacity to improve that will lead to more effective teaching and learning conditions. Likewise, improvement actions will (when successfully implemented) lead to more effective schools and teaching conditions. These conditions are expected to result in high student achievement. (Ehren et al 2012).

While the theory is that inspection will lead to improvement (and this is ETI's mission statement) extensive research suggests that external school evaluation has differing impact on schools and that certain conditions are associated with schools accepting and acting on feedback from external school evaluation.

3.2 Tensions between inspection and improvement: Evidence from across 17 countries reviewed by CfBT suggests that the conflation of 'inspection' and 'improvement' are in tension with each other. On the one hand accountability looks outward from the school (towards government and other stakeholders) and aims to be an objective process. Conversely, school improvement is focused inward and is achieved subjectively, by the particular people who work in and attend the school, with their own particular strengths, weaknesses, motivations etc. The 2010 CfBT report suggested that there is little evidence of a properly grounded, evidence-based effort to resolve the conundrum. In the real world, something more is needed to translate inspection outcomes into school improvement.

"Professionals need to be fully engaged in the change process and to feel a high degree of ownership about the outcomes. [This] requires an infrastructure for changing professional practice that ensures the profession owns and drives the change. "(Harris, 2010)

The first technical report from the current EU-project 'Impact of School Inspections on Teaching and Learning' suggests that stakeholder pressure and setting expectations do directly influence and affect improvement actions for school effectiveness which in turn is influenced by improvement in teacher cooperation transformational leadership and capacity building. The degree of improvement, however, is significantly related to the

promotion of self-evaluation and is moderated by whether the feedback is positive or negative (Ehren et al., 2013).

3.3 Styles of inspection/evaluation to promote improvement: The current EU study (Ehren et al. 2013) confirms that the way an inspection is performed and the way staff perceive it have a direct impact on the nature of their response to its outcome. Teachers' emotional reactions to inspection and its aftermath are critical to determining whether any improvements transpire. While the ultimate responsibility for staff morale rests with the school and in particular, its head, the issue of maintaining staff morale and self-esteem needs to be designed into any evaluation process as an important requirement and pre-condition to help persuade teachers to embrace the changes necessary for improvement. Researchers have identified four steps that are needed to achieve improvement:

1. *School governors, owners, management and teaching staff need to be persuaded and convinced that the conclusions of their inspection are valid, accurate and balanced, and that they encapsulate the most important issues for the school to address.*
2. *The school needs to obtain, or be given, the resources it requires in order to make whatever changes are desirable. By resources we do not mean just money, but also access to the skills and advice it needs and – if required – to training for its staff or, indeed, new staff.*
3. *Staff at all levels in the school must be motivated to alter their ways of working, and to have the self-confidence to take the risks which change and development programmes inevitably involve.*
4. *Finally, there need to be effective systems of encouragement and reward for the school as an institution and for its staff as individuals when they embark on, and successfully conclude, effective beneficial changes.[Only then might] there need to be sanctions to hand if they do not.*

(Penzer & Allen, 2011:11).

3.4 The cardinal rule of accountability is to hold people accountable for what they can control (Harris 2010). The consequences of school-level performance indicators are determined by the interaction between four broad groups of factors:

1. The nature of the information published and the validity of the measures on which the judgement is made;
2. The way in which the information is fed back to intended users, for example, whether it is accompanied by an explanation of what the data means, or whether complicated indicators are used without clear discussion;
3. the nature of the local school market and whether, for example, an alternative school exists for parents if their local school does not appear to perform well;
4. the extent to which government seek to take action to correct poorly performing schools (Visscher (2001).

The interaction of these four groups of factors can generate three categories of problems:

- technical or analytical issues around the construction and aggregation of performance indicators;

- usability issues related to the clarity, utility and comprehensibility of the data presented to service users; and
- political or societal issues, linked to the broader implications of the use of performance indicators on public service provision. We look at each of these sets of issues in turn.

(Foley & Goldstein 2012: 23).

3.5 Insufficient base-line measures: It is a well known that the cause of 'differentials in educational performance lie largely outside schools and the classroom' (Purvis *et al.*, 2011, 7) and that affecting change in schools can prove futile against the culture of the surrounding community, its attitudes, values, traditions and beliefs (Vollmer, 2010 in MacBeath, 2012: P42). Over three decades of research into school effectiveness and improvement in a range of countries (Sammons, P. 2007) highlights that the factors which most influence variations in pupil attainment are:

- Individual characteristics (age, birth weight, gender);
- Family socio-economic characteristics (particularly family structure, parental background: qualification levels, health, socio-economic status, employment/unemployment, and income level);
- Family cultural capital, (particularly the powerful impact of the child's home learning environment, especially in the early years, as a predictor of attainment);
- Community and societal characteristics (neighbourhood context, cultural expectations, social structural divisions, especially in relation to social class); and last of all, educational experiences, where teachers and schools can add value.

Of these, the two most influential factors are socio-economic status and the quality of parenting. There is complete agreement across the research field that, *the interplay of school with family, neighbourhood and community needs to be taken into account in any judgement about teaching quality and effect* (MacBeath, 2012: 45).

3.6 Insufficient account of family and community factors: Since very little account is taken of the factors that influence variations in pupil attainment, the 'blame' for failure to overcome family and community cultural capital tend to be placed at *'the door of schools and on the shoulders of teachers'* (ibid P21).

'[Children] arrive at the classroom door with vastly different early childhood experiences and levels of readiness for school. For example, at the very beginning of kindergarten, high-income children have average test scores that are 60 percent higher than low-income children. Schools cannot have caused these "starting-gate inequalities," because most students haven't set foot in a classroom before.... Yet the inequalities are so large and persistent that even effective schools cannot completely overcome them. Non-school factors continue to influence children as they progress through school. These factors are outside the control of schools and failing to account for them, as attainment measures do, amounts to violating the Cardinal Rule of Accountability' (Harris, 2010:3).

'If children are not succeeding, it is obviously the fault of teachers, their low expectations or incompetence, the malign influence of unions on teachers, or failures of leadership to raise standards... There may be a nodding acknowledgement to social and economic factors but successive governments have regarded any reference to these as excuses and insisted that background factors can be overcome

by good teachers and inspirational leaders. This ignores the growing body of evidence about the crucial influences [for example, during pregnancy of the effects of smoking, drugs and foetal alcohol syndrome, poor stimulus and bonding in the first nine months after conception and poor child care in the early years] that are beyond the repair of even the most enlightened teacher' (ibid, 21-2).

'The task facing teachers and other professionals who work with children from disadvantaged backgrounds is, for these reasons, much more challenging now than it was a generation ago'. (Alexander and Hargreaves, 2007, 3).

3.7 Insufficient account of the peer effect: The major student achievement problem in the Northern Ireland schooling system is not the overall performance of pupils, but the levels of equity within that performance. Selection and increased school choice policies are correlated with an increase in the differentiation of pupils according to social background. The consistent message arising from a decade of international comparisons is that selective systems create wider differentials of achievement by separating young people from disadvantaged backgrounds from the positive aspirations of their 'better-off' peers at a vulnerable age.

The power of the 'compositional' or peer effect has been shown to be one of the strongest determining factors of achievement and attitude... The weaker the social and intellectual capital in the family, the stronger the influences of peers, which tends to find its level at the lowest common denominator.... Dominant forces in childhood and adolescence can be ascribed to 'significant others' who shape values and character often more insidiously and powerfully than parents and teachers which play out in school and classroom life on the one hand and in street and neighbourhood culture on the other hand.
(MacBeath, 2012, 47)

Thus in Northern Ireland, a 20% underachievement problem at primary level doubles to a more serious 40% problem at post-primary level.

3.8 Pupil 'compliance without engagement': The Northern Ireland Cohort Study (1996-2002) of 3,000 pupils over 7 years revealed that very many pupils viewed school as only relevant for jumping hurdles to pass exams, but of little relevance to real life, leading to a culture, even among high-performing grammar school pupils, of 'compliance without engagement' (Harland et al, 2002). As a result of their feedback and significant consultation with teachers and wider society, the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum was introduced in 2007. Unfortunately the assessment and examination system has not been sufficiently aligned with the revised curriculum, inhibiting real changes in teaching and learning. The following quotation from Ravitch (2010) sums up the impact of the accountability agenda upon political and public perceptions of the responsibility of schools and teachers in the United States:

It would be good if our nation's education leaders recognized that teachers are not solely responsible for student test scores. Other influences matter, including the students' effort, the family's encouragement, the effects of popular culture, and the influence of poverty... Since we can't fire poverty,

we can't fire students, and we can't fire families, all that is left is to fire are teachers. (Ravitch 2010)

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Striking the Right Balance

4: Gaps in the ETI review process

4.1 Pre-determined policy measures: ETI uses performance measures that are defined within Programme for Government targets and therefore in doing so they are adhering to pre-determined DE and Education Committee policy requirements. As suggested earlier in this submission, many of the limitations of these measures have not been fully explored and a great deal more analysis needs to be undertaken of the nature and reliability of the measures themselves and of associated effect sizes to ensure that the conclusions drawn from the use of flawed measures is robust. Additionally, it is recognised that the Northern Ireland education system has been undergoing a period of unprecedented change at a time of major financial constraint and that planned change has been slowed by democratic scrutiny. Thus gaps in the ETI review process may be exacerbated by gaps elsewhere which are not of ETI's making.

4.2 Analysis of performance measures and the way in which they are used: There is currently a great deal of scepticism amongst teaching professionals about the expanding role of performance monitoring (*Wiggins and Tymms, 2002*). Teachers working in areas of high social and economic disadvantage in particular often feel that, even with more contextualised data, that performance monitoring fails to provide an accurate reflection of institutional quality. The problem they say resides not with the performance measures themselves, but with the way that these measures are often used.

4.3 Lack of analysis of effect sizes and correction for student intake: School quality is the degree to which a school scores better than other schools, corrected for student intake characteristics. An effect size is no more than a relative measure subject to considerable margins of error. Researchers are cautious about quantifying the language of effects, pointing out that statistical differences are often marginal and tend to conceal more than they reveal. This, however, has not prevented the term 'effective' (a statistical term borrowed from economics) with the perception of 'good' (which is a value judgement) (*MacBeath, 2-12: 44*).

4.4 Over-estimation of the school effect: The comparative importance of various factors in influencing pupil performance has been researched for many years and within a number of research traditions. An important categorisation is between factors internal and external to the school. The larger the sample under investigation, the smaller the influence of school factors has been found to be. There is a high degree of agreement between researchers from different traditions that approximately 85% of the variation in pupil achievement is due to factors external to the school. As a counter to the fatalism which might derive from such findings, the school improvement movement in Britain sought to identify characteristics of effective schools, on the assumption that the improvement in teaching and learning techniques would raise overall achievement. However, a review of this work by one of its most eminent practitioners (*Mortimer, 1998*) also confirmed that such internal factors were much less influential than external ones. A review of related studies (*Chevalier, Dolton and Levacic, 2005; Cassen and Kingdon, 2007*) also concluded that the variance in pupil performance due to schools ranged between 5% and 18%. The major gap in the DE policy of 'Every School a Good School' and in the ETI school review process is, therefore, the lack of analysis of effect sizes, which may be much less significant than implied, and the lack of appropriate correction for student intake.

5: Gaps in DE and ELB support

5.1 Alignment with a constructive support infrastructure: Matthews and Sammons (2004, p. 164) identify the following main conditions for the implementation of recommendations from external school evaluation:

“understanding and acceptance of the findings by the provider; leadership that can generate and implement strategy for implementing inspection outcomes, including effective action planning; identification of any resources and support needed to effect improvement; and planned external follow-up to assess the progress made”
(OECD 2013a: 390)

In order for external school evaluation to be effective therefore there needs to be a supportive infra-structure coming in alongside or behind it.

5.2 DE Strategy setting: It is recognised that the Northern Ireland education system has been undergoing a period of unprecedented change at a time of major financial constraint and that planned change has been slowed by democratic scrutiny. Nevertheless, the Department appears to be excessively engaged in short-term operational issues, tightly monitoring the performance of its Non-Departmental Public Bodies. It needs to create space to tackle more of the key strategic issues and develop a long-term strategy for education in light of foreseeable resource constraints. The development and implementation of key educational policies is too slow, for example, the Review of Teacher Education has been ongoing for over a decade. There is an urgent need for the development of a coherent professional development framework for teachers and for widespread consultation on the shape of a future advisory and support structure.

5.3 Gaps between policy direction and support capacity: ELB support is now targeted almost exclusively on schools identified by the ETI and management authorities as failing to meet the required academic standards. This approach has emerged, not as part of any strategic shift in the thinking but, rather, as a consequence of the vacancy control policy related to ESA. Schools which have not been identified as failing academically are now struggling to effect meaningful change due to shortfalls in expertise within their own staff and a shortage of finance to purchase this expertise from outside, even if it was available. Many ELB officers report that their task, post-inspection, is as much about restoring confidence and motivation after inspection trauma, as improving teaching and learning. As referred to earlier, the current consultation for changes to the Formal Intervention Process make reference ‘schools in formal intervention ... having had two years of tailored support’. The proposals go on to suggest that: ‘Any school not improving to at least a ‘good’ evaluation by the time of its follow-up inspection will be placed in formal intervention, provided with tailored support and given a further 12 months to improve to at least a ‘good’ evaluation or further action will be considered’ (DE, June 2013).

These proposals assume a capacity within the support services to prove the level of tailored support suggested. The reality of shrinkage in the CASS service and the experience of schools would suggest that policy development is at variance with planning. Indeed, evidence over the past 6 years or more would suggest that the one

consistent characteristic of Northern Ireland's approach to educational change management is that written policy directives are issued from the centre and then schools are expected to interpret and implement them without any tangible sustained support to do so.

5.4 Gaps in provision for teacher professional development: The limitations of the current narrow focus on struggling schools is already manifest. To reiterate what has been said previously, the proposals are at variance with copious research evidence which highlights the length of time, range of measures and nature and depth of support needed to bring about a genuine and sustainable change in the ethos and culture of struggling schools.

It is now accepted internationally that '*Change is based on building the expertise of the profession*' (Hayward et al, 2012) and that '*No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers*' (McKinsey Report, OECD, 2007). While there is a growing acceptance that the best professional development is school-centred and focused on the core skills of better teaching, learning and assessment, this will not happen overnight or without a proper strategy and support. The Independent Review of the Common Funding Scheme has recommended that:

The proposed regional school development service should assign a central role to supporting peer support at area and school level, providing greater opportunities for teachers to work together in sharing good practice, while also able to draw on external expert advice, where needed.

(Salisbury, 2013: viii)

Initiatives have already been established by small clusters of schools, drawing on research insights from the highly effective 'London Challenge' strategy. There is a rich opportunity to capture, support and cultivate their innovative work, and establish collaboration networks among these teachers and students to build capacity and models for practice.

5.5 Gaps in the policy drive towards 21st Century learning: Concerns are increasingly being expressed about preparing young people for what has become known as the 'knowledge era', reflecting the exponential growth, ease of access to, and speed of flow, of all kinds of knowledge via the world-wide web and social media. This knowledge revolution has had a profound impact on our access to knowledge and our potential to learn. *The Global partnership on New Pedagogies for Deep Learning* advances the proposition that our education systems need new policies, measures and evidence-based pedagogical models to enable learning relevant for the knowledge-based, globalized era.

The crisis — and there is no other word for it — in public schooling is a function of the interaction of an enormous push-pull dynamic. The push factor is that students find schooling increasingly boring as they proceed across the grades. Studies from many countries show that less than 40% of upper secondary students are intellectually engaged (Jenkins, 2013; Willms et al., 2009). And, not unrelated, signs of teacher frustration are growing. Teachers and students are psychologically if not literally being pushed out of school. Education under these terms needs to be radically re-thought (Fullan & Langworthy, 2013: 7)

A recent OECD report (2011) highlights how already high-performing countries have taken action *'to ensure that 21st century skills that are considered important become valued in the education system'* (OECD, 2011: 19). The outcomes of these changes in assessment policy are believed to be already bearing fruit a decade later (ibid.). A survey of seventeen countries (OECD, 2009) found that, while most countries refer to 21st century skills and competencies in their guidelines for compulsory education, few specific definitions of these skills and competencies exist at national or regional level and virtually no clear formative or summative assessment policies for these skills. The only evaluation regarding their teaching is often left to external inspectors as part of their whole school audits (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009: 4). Northern Ireland is an exception, having put in place definitions of these skills and competencies and valuable support materials since 2003, as well as support through for example, the Accelerating Children's Thinking Skills (ACTS) Project since 1996 (see McGuinness references). There are however, gaps in system-wide support, assessment and examination.

6. Alternative approaches in other jurisdictions

6.1 Alternative approaches: All countries want their education system to be as good as possible and school inspection, which inevitably comes at a price, should be able to demonstrate that it is worth the cost. It has the potential to deliver on two fronts, accountability and improvement. The balance between a focus on accountability and a focus on improvement varies from one country to another.

The range of international evidence cited below illustrated the extent to which other countries are engaging with issues similar to those identified by the education committee inquiry; that this inquiry is a healthy reflection of what we need to be doing constantly in relation to major education policies; and that the recommendations offered are meant to be positive and enabling in evolving towards a system that engages all partners in a clear shared moral purpose of doing the best for our young people.

6.2 Finland has been heralded as one of the world's most successful education systems ever since the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) began publishing international league tables more than a decade ago.

Prior to 2000 Finland rarely appeared on anyone's list of the world's most advanced nations, let alone education systems. Many young people were leaving the system relatively early, and Finland's performance was never better than average on five different international mathematics or science assessments of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) between 1962 and 1999. However, over the past decade Finland has been a major international leader in education. It has consistently ranked in the top tier of countries in all PISA assessments since 2000, and its performance has been notable for its remarkable consistency across schools. No other country has so little variation in outcomes between schools, and the gap within schools between the top and bottom achieving students is extraordinarily modest. Finnish schools seem to serve all students well, regardless of family background or socio-economic status. (OECD, 2012: 94)

In the mid 1990's fiscal control of schools was moved to the districts, spending was entirely devolved to municipalities and state school inspections were eliminated. Schools are accountable for spending to municipal and regional offices, who are also responsible for scrutinising a school's examination performance, although results are not usually made public (Sahlberg, 2012: 27-30) Instead of inspection, teachers undergo a yearly evaluation with the school leadership. Pupils and parents are both offered questionnaires. The Education Evaluation Council works with Government to provide schools with support to evaluate their own performance. The aim of evaluation is seen as gathering and analysis of information to develop education generally, rather than to direct improvement in individual settings—supporting the focus on a fair and balanced system, rather than on changing individual school practices. A sample-based educational evaluation system is used to help monitor the overall performance of the educational system. Feedback is given to participating schools to inform changes to teaching (the same type of system is used in Scotland) (ibid).

One of the main reasons for Finland's performance is its focus on improving equity – not achievement or results. The country has invested fairly and more heavily in schools within disadvantaged communities and insisted the best way to provide equal educa-

tional opportunities for all is through public schools. Between 1970 and 1981 a comprehensive system was introduced, which ended the previous divisions between grammar and technical and vocational schooling. All pupils of 7 - 16 years of age are educated in local schools, without any kind of streaming. The number of students in a class is also much smaller than other countries, normally between 15 and 25. Schools alone are responsible for assessing student achievement and there are no examinations until the age of 16, after which students choose to attend either general or vocational schools. A high-performing school is seen as one where all students perform beyond what would be expected based on their socio-economic background.

Finland places a very high value on education, which is supported by a very strong focus on teacher recruitment, training and development (NESC, 2012: 56). Teaching is a much-admired profession, with only around 12% of applicants being accepted for training, and there is very little central prescription. All teachers and administrators must have high academic credentials and must update their knowledge and skills continuously. Finland invests 30 times more funds in the professional development of teachers and administrators than in evaluating the performance of students and schools, including testing. (This ratio is the opposite of many countries with testing-intensive education systems, where the majority of funding goes to evaluation and standardized testing). In 2012, for example, the state allocated more than \$30 million to the professional development of teachers and administrators. Finnish teachers and administrators each spend, on average, seven days annually in professional development activities; half of that is on their personal time.

Finland also places a strong element of child well-being and care. Schools maintain strong support systems for all learners – healthful nutrition, health services, psychological counselling and student guidance are normal practice. Finland's special education system is also cited as a major reason for the country's world-class ranking. A core principle is early identification of learning difficulties before a child even starts school. Regular free assessments of the physical, mental and social development of newborn and pre-school children is provided by a network of child health clinics which are located across the country. Multi-professional teams comprising a public health nurse, medical doctor, speech therapist and a psychologist, if necessary, do the evaluations. These checks are carried out according to national guidelines that specify the timetable for child well-being checks. All schools have 'welfare boards' concerned with the broader well-being of students. Particular attention is paid to children who need more help becoming successful, compared to other students while allowing the student to remain in class with his/her peers (ibid: 28).

6.3 Scotland's inspection service increasingly emphasises a two-way collaborative approach, aiming to work with staff in a *“constructive, positive and professional manner”* (ibid). Several changes have happened over the past 2-3 years, the most significant of which is the much closer alignment of the Scottish Inspection Service with the school support service within a new amalgamated structure, under the banner of 'Education Scotland'. Revised inspection arrangements place a stronger focus on: school self-evaluation; analysis of a wider range of outcomes; and a wider range of “continuing engagement” or “improvement visits” carried out by non-HMI development officers and/or senior education officers who work within Education Scotland. (Such visits can involve HMI from time to time). This engagement aims to offer support more directly or to capture and publish innovative or creative work noted on inspection. It also includes use of: *The PRAISE self evaluation framework* which is used after each inspection to evaluate HMI performance on inspection at individual and team level; *A New Scottish*

Benchmarking approach to assessing added value which takes into account a wider range of qualifications and learning programmes, including post-school participation; and *Scottish School Improvement Partnerships* programme led by Education Scotland working with local authorities and professional associations have been set up to tackle the link between socio-economic deprivation and low educational attainment. The absence of centrally designed and monitored end of key stage standard assessments in Scotland *'has meant that data gathering and use is much less intensive within the Scottish system than in England'* (Ozga et al., 2009: 20). Data has been found to play a much less significant role in influence 'the government of education in Scotland'. Although it was important *'it was being actively used more to support self evaluation and hence self government'* (ibid. 22). A survey of almost one thousand teachers in Scotland and England found that:

'Teachers in Scotland and England are more positive about Quality Assurance processes over which they have some degree of control, rather than those that are top down; Teachers in Scotland highlight the importance of self regulation and feel less regulated 'from above' than do their English colleagues (ibid.,.)

Interestingly, however, one of the less expected findings of an earlier survey of teachers in England and Scotland (Wiggins and Tymms 2002) was that Scottish primary schools (whose results are not publicised in league tables) felt under greater pressure to meet performance targets than teachers in England. In addition, schools deemed by performance monitoring to be 'good' were just as likely to find performance indicators problematic as 'poor' schools.

There was agreement across teachers in both Scotland and England that external, standardised performance indicators were not particularly good at judging overall performance and that internal systems controlled by schools themselves would be more effective (Foley and Goldstein 2012: 29). The overwhelming impression from research in England is that *'the education system has become so demanding and so data heavy that its intelligent use is compromised'* (Ozga et al., 2009: 21). This finding endorses the Finnish approach to inspection and accountability

6.4 Singapore emphasised accountability in their inspection service in the 1980s and 1990s but found that while it contributed to the improvement of academic performance over the years, it led schools to focus too much on examination results, with little room or motivation for schools to take responsibility for bettering themselves. A new system was introduced in 2000, based on school self evaluation, with a system of rewards to encourage, motivate and reward for successful schools as an integral part of its school excellence model.

6.5 New Zealand makes use of a socio-economic 'decile system' which informs school base-lining, value added, resource allocation and other services: Census information is used to place schools into ten deciles. Student addresses are assigned to the smallest Census areas, called mesh-blocks, which contain about 50 households. The mesh-block is examined against five socio-economic factors drawn from census data, including: *parental educational qualifications; parental occupation; household occupancy; household income; and Income support.*

Schools are ranked in relation to every other school for each of the five factors. Each school receives a score according to the percentile that they fall into. The five scores for

each school are added together (without any weightings) to give a total. This total gives the overall standing of a school in relation to all other schools in the country, enabling the Ministry to place schools into ten groups, called deciles, each having the same number of schools. A school's decile rating informs resource allocation and other services.

Analogous contextual information— with the exception of household income — is available in Northern Ireland. There are potential linkages here to the recommendations contained in the Salisbury report (2013).

6.6 Hampshire (England): In an experiment in one English local authority (Hampshire) in the late 1990s, value-added estimates were introduced for primary schools and utilised by the authority and head teachers as an unpublished 'screening device' and a 'school improvement' tool. The detailed yearly scores were fed back in confidence to schools as one item of information within an inspectorial system so that it could be used alongside other information (*Yang et al., 1999 in Foley & Goldstein, 2012: 28*).

6.7 In Germany inspection reports are confidential to the inspectorate and the institution inspected and it is generally accepted that the prime responsibility for ensuring that a school provides a good standard of education rests with the school itself, and not with the inspectorate (*Penzer & Allen, 2011*).

6.8 In Hong Kong a school can decide whether or not to make its report public but, having decided to do so, it cannot reverse the decision next time it is inspected (*ibid*). Hong Kong has recently developed an External School Review approach which has been designed to be 'improvement-oriented'. The Education and Manpower Bureau of the Government of Hong Kong has produced an 'On-line Interactive Resource on Enhancing School Improvement through School Self Evaluation and External School Review' (*ibid: 12*) (*See also 7.4. below*).

6.9 In Spain inspection does not 'aspire to classify schools but [rather] to help them know themselves more deeply' (*SICI European Inspectorates' Profiles 2009: Spain*).

6.10 In Denmark 'very infrequent' inspection is regarded as all that is needed to check and to keep a school accountable or focused on the provision of excellent education *SICI European Inspectorates' Profiles: Denmark, 2009*).

6.11 In Slovakia inspectors provide in-service training for teachers.

6.12 The Australian Capital Territory is in the process of introducing a well structured periodically validated self evaluation system

7: Recommendations on approaches to school improvement

7.1 Devise a supportive stream-lined evaluation process: IA recent OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment in New Zealand (OECD 2012) highlights the need to provide a coherent framework for evaluation and assessment approaches at student, teacher, school and system level, outlining how the different elements are interrelated and describing for each individual component:

- (1) the purpose and goals of the process;
- (2) evidence-based principles of effective practice;
- (3) available tools and reference standards for implementation; and
- (4) reporting requirements and/or intended use of results.

The process of developing such a framework document of evaluation and assessment levels would provide an opportunity to analyse the various linkages between different components and identify missing links and articulations in need of strengthening.

Whatever the future process, clear guidance needs to be provided on data requirements; constructive challenge should be allowed; reporting timescales should be reduced to a maximum of 8 weeks, as in Scotland, but avoiding the OFSTED 15 day schedule (which is inadequate for appropriate reflection).

7.2: Closely align evaluation and support services: Inspection results need to be presented in ways that recognise the real constraints on action that any school faces, followed by sustained access to good professional advice and support (and improvement tools) when considering, planning and implementing the changes it needs to make over time.

Hong Kong initiated its system of self-evaluation and external review a decade ago. It was accompanied from the start by a longitudinal external evaluation and consultancy. The development of school self-evaluation (SSE) and external school review (ESR) followed the well known pattern (Rogers, 1962) of innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. The key to the diffusion of innovation was to learn from the innovators and early adopters and from how the wave of change is enabled to move through the system. Drawing on the experience and expertise of the leading-edge schools, principals and school staff were engaged as ambassadors and as conference and workshop leaders, as members of external review teams and as foci for good practice case studies. The development of an on-line interactive resource gives schools access to review tools and to testimonies from students, parents, teachers and principals discussing challenges and achievements. A revised version in 2010 included a range of classroom lessons with accompanying observation and evaluation questions to illustrate how self-evaluation can be embedded in day-to-day practice. Source: MacBeath (2009 in OEDC 2012: 104)

In Scotland, provision of such support is now fully built into the inspection system. Consideration might be given to replicating the Hong King and Scottish model.

7.3 Widen the composition of any future inspection/evaluation service:

The OECD highlights that a key factor in the effectiveness of evaluation 'on whether those who evaluate and those who use evaluation results at the different levels of the system have the appropriate competencies (OECD 2012:133). The perception of the

composition of the inspectorate is that it has insufficient complement of people with actual experience of leading schools and that the balance of background is more heavily weighted towards the grammar school sector. The recent recruitment in June 2013 of 200+ Principals and middle managers as Associate Assessors is welcomed.

To ensure that inspectors maintain credibility with schools there is a view that the number of permanent inspectors should be reduced to a smaller core team supported by serving teachers and principals seconded as Associate Assessors either for a specified number of years or on a part-time basis 2/3 days per week. In addition, it is suggested that inspectors should be seconded on a periodic basis to school management teams for significant periods to refresh their authentic experiential awareness of the challenges of the environments they evaluate. It is also felt that external school evaluation should focus less on inspectors being the arbiters of the quality of subject learning and teaching and more on the evaluation of school leadership teams as the internal arbiters of quality.

7.4 Strengthen the focus on school self-evaluation: Perceptive self evaluation is known to be the best and most secure foundation for school improvement. The requirement for each school itself to reflect on the quality of its work has great potential when it is done seriously and honestly, and it does not depend on inspection for its effectiveness. A recent OECD review (2012) recognises that: *'schools know their contexts best and allows professionals to adopt a diversity of evaluation and assessment practices, thereby creating conditions for innovation and system evolution'* (OECD 2012:133).

7.4 Strengthen the focus on school self-evaluation exemplification and tools: More guidance and case-study evidence could be offered about the documentation and evidence which schools should provide and more resources need to be allocated to strengthening and supporting robust school self-evaluation so that schools themselves are the main agents of change and improvement.

7.5 Strengthen the focus on school leadership development: At the same time it also recognises the complexity and breadth of school leaders' and teachers' responsibilities regarding evaluation and assessment, requiring a new set of skills which many may not have acquired in their initial training (Ibid).

In the context of self-management, individual schools can be relatively isolated and may have limited opportunities for learning from effective practice from across the region or the country. Continuing to build the capacity of teachers, school leaders and Boards of Trustees for effective evaluation and assessment remains a priority.

7.6 Strengthen the focus on Board of Governor training and development Boards of Governors and Trustees also play a key role in planning, reporting and self-review tasks but their preparedness and capacity to fulfil this role is highly variable. There may be a need to remunerate of Boards of Governors to attract high calibre recruits to this important role who are prepared to invest the considerable time needed to undertake this challenging role.

7.7 Research and disseminate best practice: Inspection should be influenced, at least in part, by its role as a system-wide research tool. Decisions about which schools to inspect should be determined partly by a view about which have features from which others can learn, so that insights into best practice are gathered and disseminated widely

and persuasively through in-service events and the publication of thematic insights into what has been found to work (*Prender and Allen 2011*).

The 'Sustaining Improvement Inspection' pilot work undertaken in June 2013 in primary schools, to be followed up in this autumn in special schools and in May 2014 in post primary) is to be welcomed. This work allows schools where provision previously has been evaluated as very good or outstanding to demonstrate how it has developed its capacity for further improvement. These schools are provided with the opportunity to take greater control over the inspection process by identifying priorities within the school's Development Plan where they school feel they have made advances since the baseline inspection. The potential to extend this emphasis on partnership should perhaps be an element of all inspections to allow all schools to show-case their strengths and to identify for themselves initially the areas for further development.

8: Recommendations to improve value-added calculations

8.1 Utilise socio-economic base-line data: explore the potential to use NISRA census information to calculate the socio-economic intake of schools to:

- stratify schools (into deciles) according to the socio-economic intake;
- map school/pupil catchment areas and journeys;
- allocate resources more effectively to target social need;
- calculate value-added on the basis of better base-line data (see also recommendation 2 about base-lining pupil's productive language on entry to school).

8.2 Utilise school catchment analytics: Develop a GIS system (geographic information system) to capture, store, manipulate, analyze, manage, and 'map' all types of statistical analysis and databases to produce detailed educational analytics; to compare actual with expected school catchments and to consider daily spatial moves for different groups by gender, FSM status, and social class and so on. The data could be collected through existing administrative procedures or using the 2011 Census to calculate school catchments and pupil journeys to school. Spatial information of this kind could make a useful addition to a multi-level framework that includes individual and household level information.

8.3 Utilise educational base-line data: Undertake oracy assessments (productive language on school entry) on entry to school as a key determinant of ability to learn. There are a whole range of baseline measures that might be used to assess spoken language on entry. One well-known example is The Renfrew Bus Story (RBS) - a short screening assessment of receptive and expressive oral language for young children age 3 years to 6 years 11 months. Using 'narrative re-tell', the RBS provides a quantitative and qualitative assessment of each child's oral language skills based on rich language data. It has been shown to be able to identify children with language impairments, as well as to be predictive of later language and academic skill (Stothard, Snowling, Bishop, Chipchase, & Kaplan, 1998). The assessment is quick to administer and enjoyable for children, using a technique that is familiar to most children – storytelling. Other comparable examples might be researched and trialled for suitability.

8.4 Utilise sampling for system monitoring: Politicians and DE only need to know how the system is performing generally – not at individual school or pupil level. A system relying on 'light sampling' of 10% of schools will provide stable and robust information for the purposes of accountability and policy formation. Recent advice in Scotland (Hayward et al., 2012) endorses this and suggests the potential for enhanced targeted sampling in areas where there are concerns, to provide robust and independent data.

8.5 Utilise international data critically and objectively for system monitoring: The Department already has a wealth of quantitative and qualitative sampled data from international testing, together (PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA) with detailed qualitative information on the sampled population. This needs to be properly analysed and fed back to participating schools as part of the improvement process – as well as a broader comparative measure for the whole system. Care needs to be taken in data analysis and reporting to avoid simplistic rank ordering and the tendency to misinterpret

significance and to overlook the limitations of this data, not least the difficulties of cross-cultural comparison.

8.6 Develop models of value-added: The goal is to create a measure of performance that fits the Cardinal Rule of Accountability. Value-added does this in two ways: 1) taking into account where students start when they first walk into school and 2) comparing schools that are similar in terms of measurable school resources or, more specifically, using a prediction approach that gives a reasonable head start to schools that operate with fewer resources, making more reasonable comparisons possible.

Borooah & Knox (2013) have already developed a workable model of value-added and applied it in Northern Ireland which identified those schools which add most educational value to their students.

1. *Using official data gathered through the viability audits, the Education and Library Boards and the Department of Education, we examine those **factors which best explain education performance** in primary and post primary schools.*
2. *As a result of understanding the relationships between those variables which explain education performance we derive equations (primary and post primary) which allows us to predict, within a range of significance levels, what results schools should achieve, given their circumstances. We can then examine the difference between actual results achieved against those which we can predict. This allows us to say whether a school is **'over-performing'** or **'under-performing'**.*
3. *The corollary of point 2 above is that we can estimate the **value which teachers add** to their pupils' performance through good teaching, leadership, expertise and so on. We can also compare the way in which the Department of Education currently measures school performance with our own proposals.*
4. *Given our specific interest in shared education and the educational benefits associated with its provision, this approach will also allow us to compare the quality of education performance of those **schools engaged in cross-community collaboration** with those which operate as discrete units.*

The outcomes of this model to calculate the value-added by schools in Northern Ireland makes startling and salutary reading. As policymakers move forward toward productive experimentation with value-added, they should avoid becoming over-confident in the ability of these measures to accurately distinguish performance with any degree of nuance. Value-added measures have potential, but we cannot lose sight of their limitations or of their larger purpose: measuring performance in a way that drives genuine improvement in teaching and learning. (Harris, 2010: p10)

9: Recommendations for broader measures of achievement

9.1 **Separate teacher assessment from accountability - Teacher assessment for learning only:**

The clear recommendation from assessment experts (*The Assessment Reform Group; Gipps; Tymms etc*) is that processes of teaching, learning and assessment should focus on improving learning only and should not be over-burdened with bureaucracy or exposed to potential manipulation for accountability purposes. Virtually all of the research into the use of teacher assessment (and levels of attainment in particular) advises against the use of numerical assessment outcomes for target setting and accountability purposes. Instead, it advises that school evaluation should be disentangled from accountability, and that monitoring standards over time should operate outside an accountability framework, otherwise the accountability pressures distort the processes of learning and the outcome data.

9.2 **Develop and use wider indicators:**

Experts in the field have called for the gathering of 'multiple indicators of standards by combining information of different kinds' to 'enable progress in all important learning goals to be facilitated and reported' (Assessment Reform Group, 2008: 5; Tymms and Merrill, 2007: 14; Gardner et al, 2008: 5) and, to inform decisions about expenditure, the allocation of time and resources and to provide potential 'value-added' insights.

The British Academy inquiry into school measurement has called for 'Ways to rely less on a small number of indicators [...], as well as those which cover more aspects of learning' (Foley & Goldstein, 2012: 11, *British Academy Policy Centre*). The Director of the CBI, John Cridland, in a recent speech to launch the CBI's 'First Steps' called for:

*'A rigorous and demanding accountability regime that assesses schools' performance on a **wider basis** than the narrow measure of exams. We need to define 'a new performance standard based on the whole person'...and 'a shift to new style [inspection] reports which will assess both academic rigour and the broader behaviours and attitudes that young people need to get on in life'.*

CBI First Steps Report, 2012

The following suggestions, which are not exhaustive, illustrate the potential for improving the range and quality of data that might be garnered to facilitate a more sophisticated analysis of the value-added by schools.

9.3 **Limit the use of standardised testing in schools for diagnostic and formative purposes and insights into progress:**

Assessment experts, examiners and statisticians argue that any test is only a short snapshot of a pupil's potential performance at any given time, which is subject to unavoidable errors and therefore needs to be treated with caution and sensitivity. A well-designed standardized test can, however, offer a relatively reliable way of estimating how an individual pupil has performed on a specific day, based on the population as a whole. Careful analysis of detailed feedback from such tests, over time, can help to identify individual learning difficulties or areas of misunderstanding that help teachers to target individual pupil learning needs. However, the use of such tests for summative accountability purposes runs the inevitable risk of teachers being pressurised to teach to the test and therefore corrupting the diagnostic and formative properties of the results. Sensitive analysis of pupil 'percentile ranking' or 'stanine' characteristics over time by comparison to baseline characteristics could be used to provide insight into individual progress over time, with

the caveat that pupils do not all progress at the same rate and may be subject to 'learning spurts' in the same way as they are subject to 'growth spurts'.

9.4 Develop more appropriate statistical analysis models: The recent British Academy report on 'Measuring Success' has called for:

More appropriate statistical analysis models should be used to describe institutional differences that allow for differential performance for different groups of students. In particular, there should be a shift away from the comparison of individual institutions towards research that helps to identify modifiable factors that appear to be related to good performance.

Foley, B. & Goldstein, H., (2012)

9.5 Utilise attitudinal data sensitively: Attitudinal surveys are a potential proxy for actual measurement. There is a well-established correlation (for example, in PIRLS & TIMSS 2011) between being a 'motivated or somewhat motivated reader' and between those who 'liked learning Mathematics/Like Learning Science bands' and the highest achievement in the subject. The better readers, for example, were also the more confident readers. The pupils who reported being most confident in mathematics and science were also the pupils who had higher average achievement scores. If we could teach towards motivation and enjoyment then achievement (and life-long learning dispositions) would follow. There are also a number of measures of social, emotional and personal well-being which might be investigated (for example the ACER scale) and of creativity and dispositions to learn (Bristol University and Antidote) which also could be considered in any holistic assessment of a quality education.

9.6 Maintain a proportionate focus on the 'old' literacies: The relentless focus on literacy and numeracy, while important, ignores the evidence that 80% of the school population is doing relatively well (Tymms, 2004) and that pupils are in danger of being turned off by too much drill and lack of creativity in education. The proportions of pupils in Northern Ireland who do not like reading was higher than the international mean (Sturman et al., 2012).

9.7 Increase the focus on 'new' literacies: The European Commission has highlighted that 'the key challenge for education systems in many Member States is the assessment of these competences. Assessment is one of the most powerful influences on teaching and learning but it tends to put too much emphasis on subject knowledge, and less on skills and attitudes, and to neglect altogether the increasingly important cross-curricular competences such as learning to learn or entrepreneurship. (European Commission, 2012)

There is a need for a profound shift in conceptions of learning and knowledge 'rigour' that moves away from memorisation of traditional knowledge towards more creative conceptions of learning associated with research, information management, knowledge construction and creativity across traditional subject boundaries. In other words our main educational focus should be on the Northern Ireland Framework for Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities (CCEA/DE 2006), which in turn require more complex forms of assessment that are not readily achieved through traditional examinations.

9.8 Research and develop innovative 21st Century assessment and examining:

The recently published *OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Synergies for Better Learning - An International perspective on evaluation and assessment* (April 2013) recommends that countries should 'align assessment with educational goals, designing fit-for-purpose evaluations and assessments, and ensuring a clear understanding of educational goals by school agents' (OECD, 2013).

The Global partnership on New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (2012) highlights that one of the fundamental barriers to the development of 21st Century skills is the inadequate dissemination of new pedagogical models that foster deep learning and the inadequate development of ways of measuring and assessing deep learning.

Proactive research should be commissioned, possibly from the OECD or from leading international assessment organizations (for example the Australian Council for Educational Research - ACER) to assist CCEA in identifying, trialling and evaluating innovative 21st Century assessment and examinations mechanisms to move the field forward. The opportunity should be taken in the review of GCSEs and A levels to develop new qualifications for Northern Ireland to be taken at the appropriate age (17-18) which reflect the 21st century needs of young people, the economy, employment and life-fulfilment.

9.9. Assess 21st Century thinking skills and capabilities: The European Commission has recently highlighted the key challenge for education systems in many member states, is the assessment of 21st century skills and competences. The OECD has recommended that, rather than testing the content of learning, assessment should focus on cognitive skills such as problem-solving, communicating and reasoning which would give teachers more scope to put in place innovative teaching/learning strategies. They suggest that more use need to be made of innovative assessment methods (OECD Looney, 2009: 1). 'Unseen' assessment mechanisms might be used at key Stages 2 and 3 and synoptic assessment of skills might be undertaken at GCSE/A Level (similar to Queensland) which focus on thinking skills that are central to the NI Revised Curriculum (including, information management, problem-solving, decision-making, and creativity). This would mean that assessment and examining would serve the curriculum (and the skills needs of the economy) and drive pedagogy in the right direction. If teachers were teaching to these types of 21stC tests they would at the same time be teaching towards the skills identified by the EC, the OECD and the CBI as vital to future learning. Note that an assessment of cross-curricular problem solving was in PISA 2003 and a computer based version is in PISA 2012¹. There is also a big international project on Assessing and Teaching 21st century skills, with a focus on cooperative problem solving².

9.10 Build assessment literacy: CCEA moderation processes should support the development of better assessment of literacy through supportive internal moderation and cross-sectoral agreement trails for professional development.

¹ See http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/pisa-2012-assessment-and-analytical-framework/problem-solving-framework_9789264190511-6-en

² See <http://atc21s.org/>

10 Recommendations for improved governance & transparency

10.1 Review the influence of 'governance by targets': National inspection systems in different countries can sit at various points on a spectrum, for example, being within the Government department responsible for education as is the case in Northern Ireland, Ireland and Flanders, or be totally independent of Government, as for instance in Sweden. In all cases, whether fully or partially associated with government or independent, there is a perception that inspection systems are potentially an instrument for implementing policy or achieving Government targets. Governments' desire to foster greater accountability within public services, as well as to allow wider user choice, has been central to the growth of performance indicators for schools. The key driver of inspection approaches is therefore government targets and expectations.

10.2 Review Programme for Government Educational Targets and NI Audit Office Educational Performance Monitoring

However, a number of studies have been critical of governments' lack of awareness and responsiveness to the challenges posed by league tables. Kane and Staiger (2002) highlight the tendency to 'draw unwarranted conclusions on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of policies based upon such short-term fluctuations in performance' (p. 102). This is reinforced by the findings of Leckie and Goldstein (2009), which show that past performance is poorly correlated with future performance.

A further fundamental problem that surrounds discussions of public sector performance monitoring is the lack of systematic evaluations of its effects. Hallgarten (2001) points out that:

'It should come as no surprise that targets and performance indicators change an organisation's priorities. That is precisely their purpose. The concern occurs when such indicators skew priorities to the extent that other, normally less measurable, goals are relegated or jettisoned'. (ibid: 18)

This absence of sound evidence has made targets and performance measures a highly contentious area. Smith (1995) lists a number of problems which performance monitoring may generate which are all identifiable in political and civil service circles and replicated in our schooling system. These include:

- *Tunnel vision: a focus on quantifiable phenomena at the expense of all others.*
- *Sub-optimisation: the pursuit of narrow objectives at the expense of the aims of the organisation or system as a whole.*
- *Myopia and measure fixation: a focus on measures of success rather than underlying objectives.*
- *Misrepresentation: deliberate manipulation of the data collected.*
- *Misinterpretation: accidental misreading of the data, or unawareness of its limitations.*
- *Gaming: deliberate manipulation of behaviour to maximise league table position.*
- *Ossification: organisational paralysis due to an excessively rigid system of performance management. (ibid: 20)*

The Assembly and its Education Committee needs to reconsider its whole approach to educational monitoring based on a proper understanding of the impact of targets and Goodhart's law, whether or not they promote or inhibit improvement. Similar consideration needs to be given to whether or not the Audit Office should be making judgements about educational performance based on limited and flawed statistical evidence.

Hood (2007) introduces 'the idea of **'intelligence systems'**, which gather background information on the quality of performance with the intention to improve knowledge about the factors affecting the performance of a system, without focusing on particular measures or incentives to affect [and distort] the behaviour of the actors in that system' (ibid: 16).

Since many of the factors affecting the performance of schools lie outside schools and, therefore largely outside schools' control, this would be insightful for politicians and policy makers. The British Academy inquiry into accountability and measurement advises that:

Consideration should be given to alternative ways of using quantitative information to monitor educational performance generally. This can be achieved by in-depth study of a sample of schools and students within a national database. A useful model is the Assessment of Performance Unit that was set up in the 1970s in England and discontinued in the 1980s (Gipps and Goldstein, 1983). Consideration should be given to using performance information as a screening device... accompanied by an emphasis on evaluation and inspection systems that are designed to emphasise ways of assisting schools to cope with problems rather than 'exposing' them using public rankings [reporting] (ibid: 12).

Foley & Goldstein, 2012

10.3 Review the audience 'transparency' and process of reporting: One of the basic principles of evaluation is to meet the demand for transparency. Two issues are important here – firstly transparency of the evidence used to arrive at inspection judgements and secondly the audience and purpose for which the report is written and how that affects the nature of the report. Any serious criticisms of a school should have to meet a higher evidential standard - beyond reasonable doubt – as opposed to a balance of probabilities in order to make acceptance of criticism more palatable.

Secondly, the publication of inspection reports, usually seen as highly desirable for reasons of transparency and accountability, may increase the pressure on schools to act defensively when criticised. Those countries where reports are kept in confidence between the inspectorate and the school (such as Hesse, Saxony and Rhine Palatinate in Germany) may avoid the issue (Penzer & Allen, 2011). Scotland, for example, provides two reports – a short one for publication and a more detailed one for detailed discussion with schools. Schools should also be at liberty to question those inspection judgements they disagree with. If ETI's mission is principally to 'promote improvement' then this should inform the style of reporting the clarity of its argument, the persuasiveness of the evidence it marshals and the timeliness of its publication. Timing can be an important factor – how soon after an inspection the report is finalised so as to build on any momentum established by the inspection itself.

10.4 Review the contribution of inspection systems to school improvement and the role and status of ETI:

Good evidence as to the benefits of inspection judgements in contributing to school improvement is in short supply (Foley & Goldstein 2012) given that: *'there is relatively little proof of the relationship between inspection and school improvement'* (Whitby, K., 2010 in Perry, C., 2012, P21). A study of inspection systems across 17 countries (Prenzer and Allen, 2011) found little evidence of deliberately designed systems to turn inspection into improvement. The British Academy recommends that: further consideration should be given to the role of inspection and accreditation agencies *...especially when they are perceived to be instruments of government* (ibid: 12). Any such review should take account of international research and be subject to extensive debate and consultation with stakeholders. The OECD (2013b) recommends giving a prominent role to independent evaluation agencies but also integrating evaluation and assessment frameworks and aligning these with educational goals and student learning objectives so as to secure link to the classroom and draw on teacher professionalism. One consideration might be to separate ETI from DE and link it to the CASS service, outside of ESA, as an independent evaluation and support service as in Scotland.

10.5 Implement an ethical code to govern the publication of school performance reporting:

Wherever Institutional judgements or rankings are produced they should be accompanied by clear evidence and accompanied by prominent 'health warnings'. An ethical code should be formulated (Goldstein and Myers, 1996) based on the two broad principles: *that unjustified harm to those to whom the information applies should be prevented, and that there should be no absolute publication rights for performance data* (ibid). One of the basic principles of evaluation is to meet the demand for transparency.

10.6 Ensure accurate and transparent media reporting of educational outcomes:

Despite school league tables being abolished by Ministers in Northern Ireland the media have taken initiatives to compile league tables. This has become a global activity, part of The Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) which is responsible for standardised testing, teacher accountability, school inspections and centrally imposed curricula. Critics believe that GERM is like a virus which has lowered standards, not raised them (Sahlberg 2012).

The media often fails to highlight that (1) often tables are based on results of a small group of pupils, which in itself makes the findings unreliable and (2) the missing critical factor is the background children bring to any particular school with them, negative and positive. Tables apparently showing a school high up the charts may just tell us a school takes in well-motivated and able pupils. Even the 'value-added' tables that are now produced which do take into account some of the pupils' backgrounds may not give us a reliable picture of school life, because they average over all pupils and may hide some pupils consistently doing well, others doing worse. A British Academy Inquiry advises that

The government should consider ways to prevent league tables being exploited by the media, such as ensuring that measures of uncertainty are provided around any institutional results. Associated with this there could be a campaign to better inform the public at large about the strengths and limitations of league tables, although any such attempt poses considerable challenges. Wherever league tables are published they should be accompanied with appropriate and prominent 'health warnings' highlighting their technical limitations. These should include assessments of the statistical uncertainty, often large, that may limit their usefulness. They should

also include statements about the quality of the measurements that go to make up the indicators, including the effects of aggregation. In a broader context, there is a need for a debate about whether simply making data available to citizens will encourage good use of them. In the absence of professional support and advice, data analysis can be very difficult for those with limited experience or expertise. Deliberate or unintentional misuse of statistical information should not be encouraged and there is a real danger that this could occur increasingly unless public awareness of the issues improves (Foley Goldstein, 2012)

Some countries make it an offence for newspapers to publish school outcome information. The Education Committee and DE should consider ways to prevent league tables being published or exploited by the media, by requiring that measures of uncertainty are provided in relation to all measures and institutional judgements, and challenging distortion of educational data. This may help to reduce deficit reporting and enhance understanding and respect for the important contribution which the teaching profession and schools make to the well-being and success of young people, society and the economy.

11: Conclusion

On 14th April 1970 the commander of the Apollo 13 space mission James Lovell used the phrase *'Houston we have a problem'* to calmly convey a message to mission control in Houston Texas that the space shuttle had suffered a major failure in technical design which led to a near fatal explosion that incapacitated the mission. The phrase has become synonymous with reporting any kind of critical design fault or problem. The shuttle designers immediately set about reviewing all of the steps in the design process to solve the critical problem they faced. Mission control's approach was that *'failure was not an option'*.

At the moment we seem to be facing a critical design problem in relation to the coherence of education policies. We can be assured about one thing – we are not alone in this regard. Indeed, the fact that we are asking so many questions at the moment about our education system is to be applauded. We have just had a major inquiry by the OECD into assessment which is due to report in the autumn. We are in the midst of a review of assessment and examinations. We are in the midst of a review of the school estate and are currently consulting on school funding. We have an on-going review of teacher education for some considerable time, almost as long as the review of administrative and support structures. Now we have this major inquiry into ETI and school improvement. These are all important system design issues and they are all interconnected, like the control panels on Apollo 13. A weak link in one area can destabilise the whole enterprise. That's why we need the system policy designers at mission control to stand back and join up the insights into one coherent policy that enables our schools and teachers to get on with the job that they want to do, that of improving teaching and learning.. If schools are expected to accept the challenge from inspection reports to continuously improve their policies, approaches and outcomes, then as the saying goes – what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

The evidence presented here aims to prompt discussion about the health of our education system right now, the stress being placed upon pupils, teachers and schools and the image of our education system that is being presented to the public and our politicians, and to get everyone in the system to objectively consider where we are right now; where we want to go; what we want to achieve in the future and what we need to do to get there.

Where are we now? The analysis of current and proposed accountability policies would suggest that we are now headed in the direction of hyper-accountability based on dubious measures that present a distorted view of achievement, which flatters schools with selective intakes and is patently unfair to non-selective schools in the most challenging circumstances.

The evidence presented demonstrates that schools are a reflection of the selective communities they serve, the aspirations and cultural capital of the families from which pupils are drawn, and the ethos and impact of the education policies which drive them. It illustrates the complexity of the challenge, the inadequacy and unreliability of the accountability mechanisms currently used, and the fragility of the assumptions on which they are based. It contends that there are no quick fixes, no simple solutions and no fast-track routes to sustainable success. What is instead required is a much more sophisticated approach to joined-up social and economic, health and education policies to uplift family and community circumstances and aspirations from the cradle to the grave. In the case of education, the influence also needs to be pre-natal as well as in the early years. The bottom line which politicians, civil servants and parents must understand is that schools and teachers are far from the sole cause, and certainly not the sole solution, to the challenges which face our

economy, our society and neighbourhoods. By all means hold teachers and schools to account, but recognise the communities they reflect and the things they can and cannot control, not least the impact of selection which separates many young people at a very vulnerable age from positive peer influences.

Where do we want to go? The evidence from other systems endorses a constructive and supportive model of accountability, which builds teachers' confidence and commitment (as opposed to a deficit model which engenders fear and which may encourage perverse practices and unintended outcomes to achieve compliance and avoid retribution). The clearest analogy is that of parenting a child. If you encourage and support, you create confidence and self-esteem. If you constantly criticise and sanction you create resentment and disempowerment. We need to applaud our strengths, as well as challenge our weaknesses.

To use a Scottish analogy, we can take the "High Road" or the "Low Road". The "Low Road" is characterised by systems of micro-accountability, league tables, excessive testing, bureaucratic assessment and data driven evaluation, in which teaching is treated as a low skill, low discretion craft. The "High Road" is characterised by a reflective, high skill, autonomous profession, where teachers are recognised and appreciated for their knowledge, expertise and judgement. We have sufficient evidence across the UK and worldwide to show which approach bears fruit. We need to develop a new accountability system with broader value-added measurements which can motivate and encourage schools in challenging environments and better identify need and enable resources to be channeled toward those needs.

What do we want to achieve? By virtue of our size and the talent of our teachers Northern Ireland has the potential to be, not just a good, but a great education system. We want to do that on the basis of an informed understanding of what works internationally. To progress from 'good to great' or indeed from 'great to excellent' (McKinsey, 2010) requires that policy makers support and nurture a high trust, high autonomy, high discretion profession and a broader vision of education that will develop young people with 21st century skills. We are a small place in a small geographic space, where there are no natural resources at our disposal except the ingenuity and creativity of our people. The quality, motivation and creativity of the young people that our education system produces are central to our economic survival in an increasingly competitive world. Our education system in Northern Ireland is internationally recognized as being ahead of the game, having put in place specific definitions of 21st century skills and competencies at regional level (Gallagher, Hipkins, McGuinness & Zohar, 2011). So the 'leap' now required is that these 'new literacies' find their way into the accountability system, alongside better use of socio-economic data and appropriate baselining to assess value-added, in a supportive accountability framework.

How do we get there? Reflecting on a long career in the Civil Service, Sir Gus O'Donnell recently reviewed some of the policy triumphs and failures of his period of service and summarised his reflections for how the public sector is run and how it needs to evolve in 10 commandment of good policy making. Four of these are pertinent to our current scenario.

- Thou shalt be clear about the outcomes that you want to achieve: Lack of strategic clarity, of knowing the problem you are trying to solve, is a cardinal sin.
- Thou shalt evaluate policy as objectively as possible: Be clear about how you to determine success and relate success measures to desired outcomes.
- Honour the evidence and use it to make decisions

Striking the Right Balance

- Thou shalt not kill the messenger. If you don't encourage internal debate you will learn about your mistakes from your enemies not your friends.

The range of international evidence cited illustrates the extent to which other countries are engaging with issues similar to those identified by this education committee inquiry. In offering the messages within this report, the intention is to encourage collaborative internal debate within the system towards developing joined-up supportive policies, structures and resources that enable us to put our energies into encouraging innovative teaching, learning and assessment to support 21st century skills. Supporting this we need to develop proper base-lining and value-added measures, accompanied by supportive accountability.

The bottom line is that all of us who are engaged in advising on, developing and implementing policy to support schools need to articulate a common moral purpose to inform our roles and remits and collaborative actions in support of schools and each other. GTCNI published a charter for education some years ago. A refreshed charter should perhaps emanate from the Education Committee and the Department of Education in consultation with all partners and be signed up to by all.

The evidence in this submission aims to offer constructive insights to enable our system to **strike the right balance** 'between holding schools to account and allowing innovation and supporting school improvement' (Perry, C., 2012, P1, NIARIS). The key to achieving the right balance is the development of a coherent and supportive framework of accountability that unleashes the creativity and energy of teachers, pupils and schools towards 21st century learning.

Appendix 1: GTCNI Survey of Teacher Perceptions of the usefulness and manageability of End of Key Stage Assessment Arrangements June 2013

PROFESSIONAL UPDATE

Your Views on Statutory Assessment

Purpose

The purpose of this independent GTCNI survey was to gather teachers' views about the manageability, reliability and usefulness of the end of key stage statutory assessment arrangements introduced in 2012-13.

Responses

- **One response** was invited from each school.
- **500 responses** were received, representing potentially 50% of schools involved in statutory assessment at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.
- **227 Primary School responses** were received from: 34 KS1 teachers, 51 KS2 teachers, 21 assessment co-ordinators, 45 teaching principals and 76 non-teaching principals.
- **250 Post-primary School responses** were received from 186 KS 3 teachers; 46 assessment co-ordinators; and 18 post-primary principals.
- **33 other teacher responses** did not identify a category.

Main Findings

(1) Usefulness of numerical outcomes (levels):

The great majority of respondents (between 82% and 89%) regarded numerical outcomes (Levels) to be of limited or no use to ...

	Useful %	Not Useful %	Total of Responses
• Individual pupils in informing their on-going learning	17%	83%	469
• Teachers in informing their teaching	23%	77%	469
• Board of Governors in judging value added to pupil learning	16%	84%	468
• Parents in understanding their child's progress	11%	89%	468
• Receiving schools informing them what a pupil knows	18%	82%	463
• ELBs to inform the support your school may need	18%	82%	466
• ETI in understanding school value-added to pupils	19%	81%	467
• Politicians in understanding system performance	14%	86%	467

(2) Usefulness of level statements of attainment:

The great majority of respondents (between 82% and 89%) regarded the statement of attainment to be of limited or no use in informing ...

	Useful %	Not Useful %	Total of Responses
• Teacher judgements about pupils' work	34%	66%	461
• Teacher feedback to pupils on next steps of learning	25%	75%	461
• Adjustments to teaching	27%	73%	461
• Annual Report to parents	26%	74%	456

(3) Internal moderation:

Almost 60% of respondents (268 teachers) found involvement in internal school moderation useful or very useful in informing their understanding of progression and standards of pupils' work.

4) External moderation:

While many respondents said they did not participate in external moderation, of those who did:

- Only 1 of the 459 respondents considered the process easy to manage.
- 91% considered the process burdensome or very burdensome.
- 42% of those who prepared portfolios said they prepared over 30 portfolios each.
- 51% of these included 4-6 pieces of individual pupil's work in each portfolio.
- 86% of 351 respondents considered the timeframes associated with end of key stage assessment to be inappropriate.
- 70% (310 of 437 teachers who responded to this question) considered external moderation of limited usefulness or not at all useful in informing their understanding of progression and standards of pupils' work.

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- Almost half of all respondents (246 teachers) answered an open question about the usefulness of CCEA feedback from external moderation. The majority of comments were negative. The researcher who compiled this report independently selected the following as an illustration of the views expressed:

The feedback from moderation was hugely disappointing. It undermined the professionalism of the staff concerned... The result of moderation changed the levels of pupils ... that they were now seen to be achieving a level comparable with other pupils who are known to be clearly working at lower levels. (Key Stage 3 teacher)

It was useful to see the feedback as it confirmed awarded levels and procedures. As it was the first year of this assessment this was useful in an unfamiliar area. (Key Stage 3 teacher)

The feedback was one line to say that the levels were not verified and no other attempt to give us feedback was made... found it highly unhelpful and disheartening. (Key Stage 2 teacher)

Feedback was extremely poor. It was vague and didn't give you any specific advice on how to 'fix' pupil portfolios. Overall, to have spent so much time preparing these portfolios for moderation, the feedback that was given was disgraceful. (Key Stage 2 teacher)

Our feedback was not helpful and I had to follow it up with an email. I then received a phone call which clarified things somewhat but we do not feel that we will be any more aware of how to show enough evidence next year. (Teaching Principal, Primary)

(5) Reliability of Level outcomes:

The majority of respondents considered the numerical end of key stage outcomes (levels) to be of limited reliability or not at all reliable for:

	Very Reliable	Reliable	Limited	Not at all
Their Class (430)	7%	27%	48%	18%
Their School (433)	7%	28%	47%	18%
Other Schools (433)	>1%	11%	56%	32%
NI system as a whole (437)	>1%	11%	49%	39%

This distrust of the reliability of level judgements indicates that an external moderation system, no matter how rigorous, is unlikely to be able to guarantee the reliability of end of key stage assessments, simply because teachers do not value other schools' judgements.

(6) Use of Levels for accountability purposes:

71% of respondents (313 teachers) felt that using teacher assessment for accountability purposes could distort the process. Only 8% (36 teachers) believed that this would not be the case. The comments below illustrate this:

There is no doubting the distortion within the reporting of levels. Any of the main stakeholders, ETI/ELBs/Principals will all 'off the record' admit the results are completely at odds

with reality. Why do we have to persist with this farce? Are we not a mature enough profession to stand up and call this situation as it is? (Principal Primary).

In my experience as a teacher of 24 years, I have seen how teachers can distort assessment results to match parental expectations, class results and NI outcomes. (Teaching Principal Primary).

Teachers have been assessing the end of key stage 3 levels since 1993. The teachers' involvement does not invalidate the process. It is the pointlessness of the process that negates it. This is an ill-conceived process. (Key Stage 3 teacher)

When asked if teacher assessment should be used for assessment for learning purposes only and separated from accountability, 67% said yes, 11% said 'no' and 22% were not sure. The following is an independently selected sample of the views offered by 41 respondents:

Unreliable data is being used for accountability purposes at the minute. This was never the purpose of levels or teacher assessment. (Key Stage 3 teacher)

Teachers are being put under pressure to meet targets at KS3 and then show further improvement at KS4. Assessment should be about learning and not hitting targets. (Key Stage 3 teacher)

I believe the whole system of levels is of limited use...a level means very little to a pupil but a constructive comment with clear indicators of what needs to be done to bring about improvement can help. (Assessment Co-ordinator Post-primary)

Please just let us teach! Education is being ruined by all this accountability and limiting of children's experiences. (Key Stage 1 teacher)

Insights from research

The clear recommendation from assessment experts (*The Assessment Reform Group: Gipps; Tymms etc.*)* is that the processes of teaching, learning and assessment should focus on improving learning and should not be over-burdened with bureaucracy or exposed to potential manipulation for accountability purposes. Virtually all of the research into the use of teacher assessment (and levels of attainment in particular) advises against the use of numerical assessment outcomes for target setting and accountability purposes. The following quotations give a flavour of researchers' views:

- *Reducing attainment to a single figure or grade while attractive to politicians and the public 'as a form of shorthand' in which to report performance masks complex nuances in ability and performance (Gipps, 1994)*.*
- *Trying to achieve multiple objectives with a single policy instrument is not feasible (Hanushek & Raymond, 2004)*.*
- *No single measure can fulfil both the formative and summative functions (Harris, 2010)*.*
- *Assessments should be treated as approximations, subject to unavoidable errors (Gardner, 2008)*.*
- *Use of assessment evidence for accountability is based on*

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Striking the Right Balance



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland
Promoting Teacher Professionalism

Striking the Right Balance

Towards a Framework of School
Accountability for 21st Century Learning



*Response to the NI Assembly Committee for Education
Inquiry Into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.*

Dr Carmel Gallagher

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Overview



Slide 1

1 The Importance of the Inquiry

- ETI approach is just a symptom...
- Need to explore cause & effect...

2: The overlapping contexts

- Global
- Northern Ireland
- Pupil & Community

3 Terms of Reference

4 Important messages ...

1. Joined up pupil-centred policies
2. Supportive 21st C learning culture
3. Broader measures & value-added
- 4: Invest in teacher professionalism

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Slide 2

The Global Context:

Global Education Reform Movement (GERM)



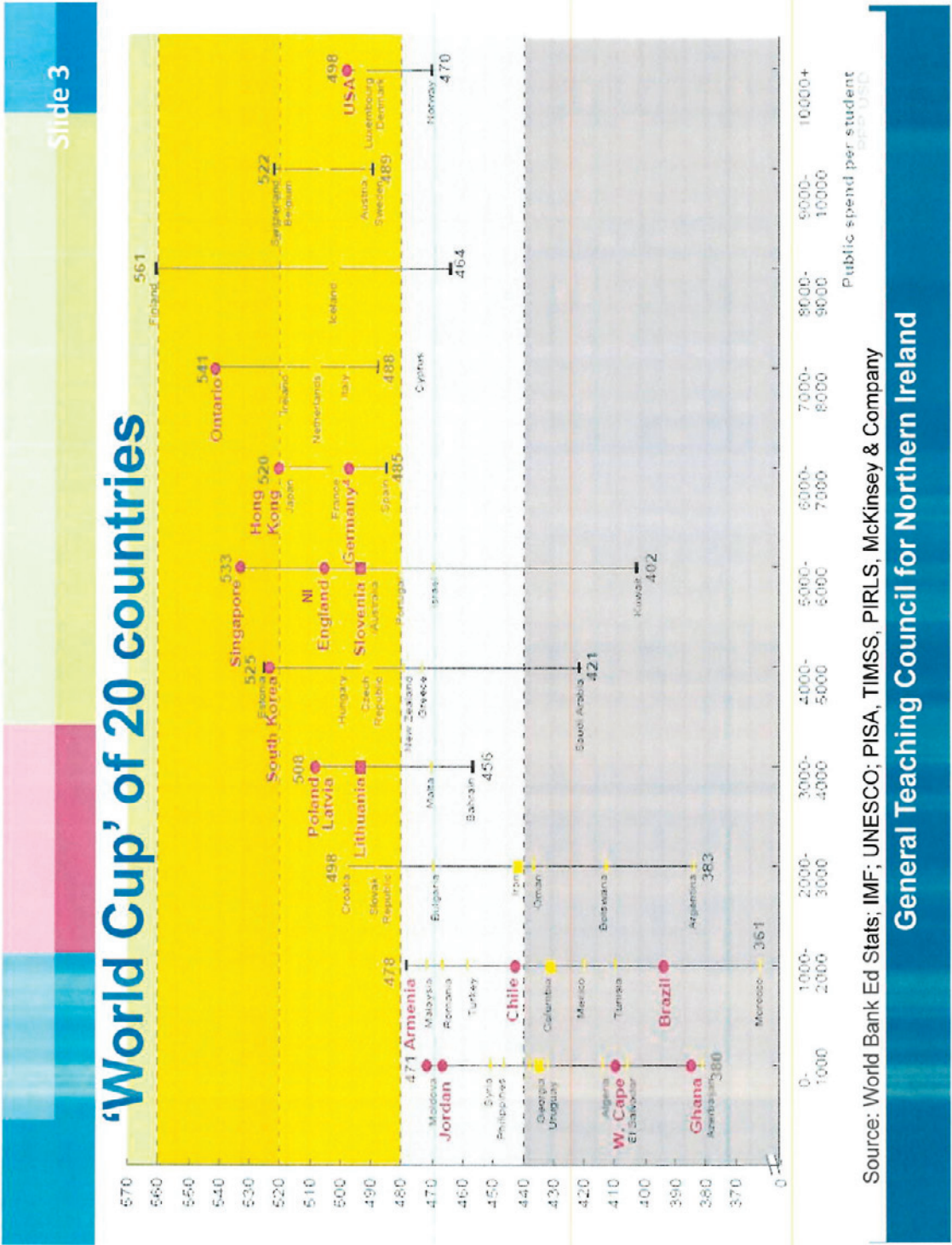
Performance in:

PIRLS TIMSS PISA
(Measure different things) =
perceived success or failure of entire
education systems

Success attributed to

- Social equity of systems
- Spend per head & ethos
- Teacher quality and training
- Quality of sustained intervention

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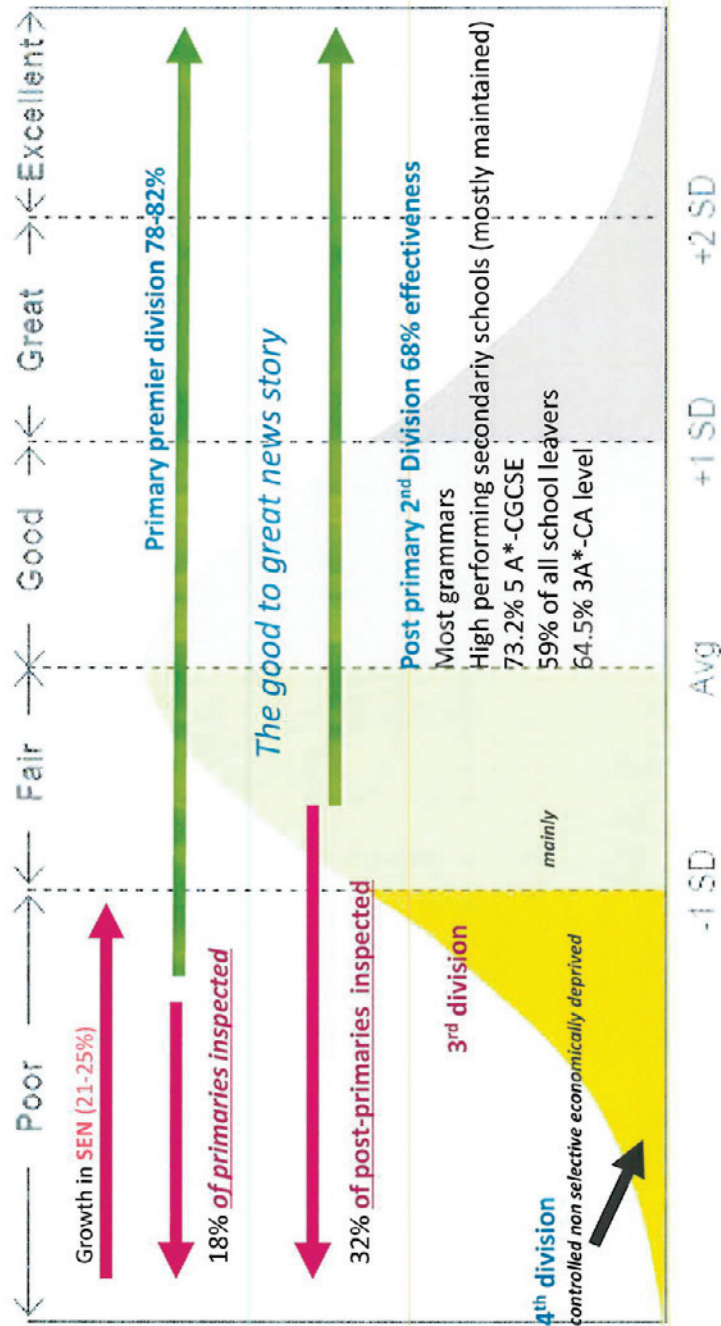


← Poor →	← Fair →	Good	Great	→ Excellent →
Score cutoffs	<440	440-480	480-520	520-560
		Japan Poland 508 UK Ireland Germany France Netherlands Italy	2. Ontario 541 3. Singapore 533 4. South Korea 525 5. Switz/Belgium 522 6. Hong-Kong 520	1. Finland 561

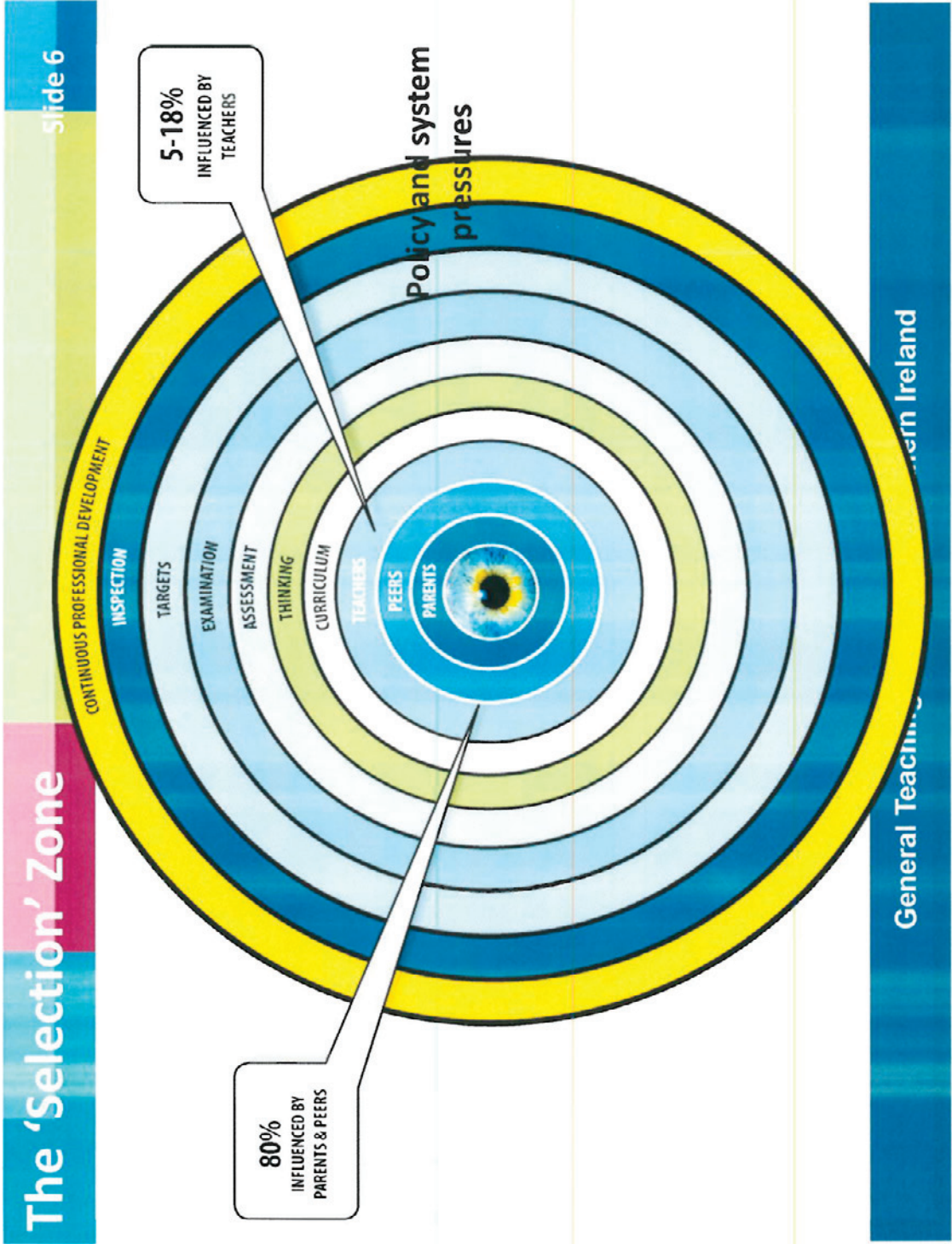
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Slide 5

Northern Ireland Primary – Post-primary ‘League’



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Slide 7

Player promotion power

◆ Largest cause of 'differentials in performance lies outside the school 'field'

- Family socio-economic status (parental background & qualifications)
- Family cultural capital (parenting in the early years)
- Community and societal characteristics (peer effect & neighbourhood context)
- Significant others and 'the lowest common denominator'
- Educational experiences 5-18% effect
- **First law of accountability**
- **Hold people accountable for factors they can control**



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Poor → Fair → Good → Excellent →

OFM/DFM initiative

The inhibitors

Promotion/Relegation 'gaming' zone

Pre-determined grade-boundary 'standards'

Regression to the mean

1. Comparability criteria

1. Ofqual 'Standards'
2. Political manipulation
3. Moderation

Always 4th division

Non selective, socio-economically deprived

If you make the target the object of accountability

will find ways to meet the target guarantee of real improvement.

are about what you want,

to get it, the less likely it is to mean anything

(Dylan William, 2001: 2)

people
without any

The clearer you

the more likely you are

Slide 9

ETI and the tensions between inspection for improvement & inspection for accountability



- The nature and scope of the data that is considered
(*no baseline*)
- The culture and context of data use
(*to make judgements – hold to account*)
- The fairness of the indicators used for comparisons
(*not an even playing field*)
- The ways data is collected, interpreted and acted upon
(*bureaucratic & burdensome*)
- The consequences attached to performance & how distributed across school cohort

Tensions resolved only when there is ...

- consensus that indicators are accurate, meaningful, fair, broad & balanced
- collaborative data collection and analysis,
- collective responsibility for improvement, including provision of resources/support.

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Terms of Reference 1

Slide 10

Current Approaches to Inspection – 1,380 school responses in 3 days!

Focus

- Risk-based
- Data-driven - narrow
- Deficit model – punitive perception
- Formal Intervention

Deficit language

- Unsatisfactory
- 'Every School A Good School'
- 'Count Read Succeed'
- 'Compliance without engagement'
- Unintended effects: - 'Gaming'
- Stress, frustration and exasperation

Aspirational language of Scotland

- Curriculum for Excellence
- 21st C focus & confidence

'Surfing' the 21st C 'knowledge-era': Information management; Problem-solving; Decision-Making Creativity; Managing Self; Working with Others (i.e. OECD/PISA /TeachMeet)



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Inadequate approach to value-added

- Absence of baseline measures
- Free school meals inadequate
- A* C GCSE unfair
- Margins of error unacknowledged
- Effect sizes ignored



Terms of Reference 3

Slide 12

It's a joined up system thing.....

- Early diagnosis & parenting
- Early Years
- Curriculum
- Assessment
- 21st C *Thinking Skills & capabilities*
- Examinations
- Inspection
- Funding
- School estate etc

Change Management Strategy

School Support Strategy

Teacher development Strategy



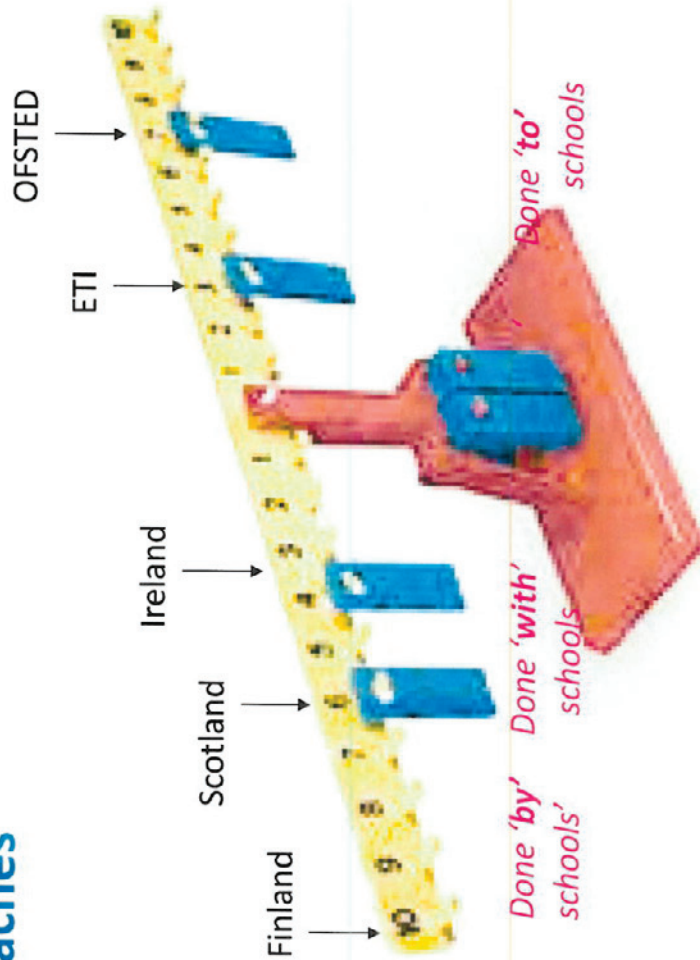
MIND THE GAP

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Alternative Approaches

'Finnish' lessons

Equity – non-selective
Early Intervention
Teachers valued & trusted
Masters profession
\$30k per annum CPD
Teacher assessment only
First exam @ 16 to choose
academic/vocational pathways
Supportive school evaluation
No inspection



(Pashy Sahlberg)

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Recommendations

Approach:

- Supportive model (Finland/Scotland)
- Stream-line processes, supportive language
- cost benefit analysis of inspection v evaluation

Base-lining:

- NISRA and GIS
- Early diagnostic assessments**
Vocabulary/oracy on entry to school

Monitoring:

- Light sampling
- International data
 - Wider measures of all important learning goals**
 - 21st century thinking skills and capabilities



Recommendations

Governance and transparency:

- Review PfG Targets
- Review NIAO Monitoring
- Ensure evidence-base judgements

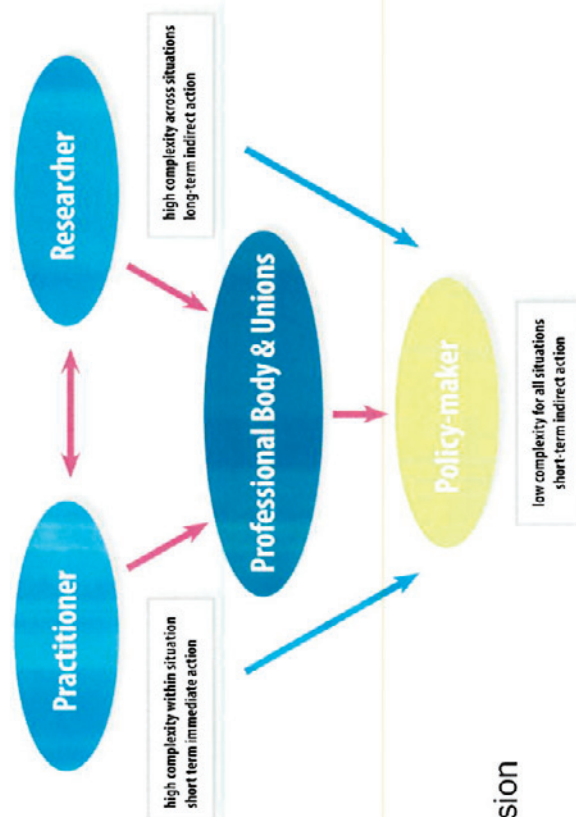
• Better reporting

• Policy based on sound research

• Supportive partnership

• Trust & collaboration with the profession

• Investing in the profession

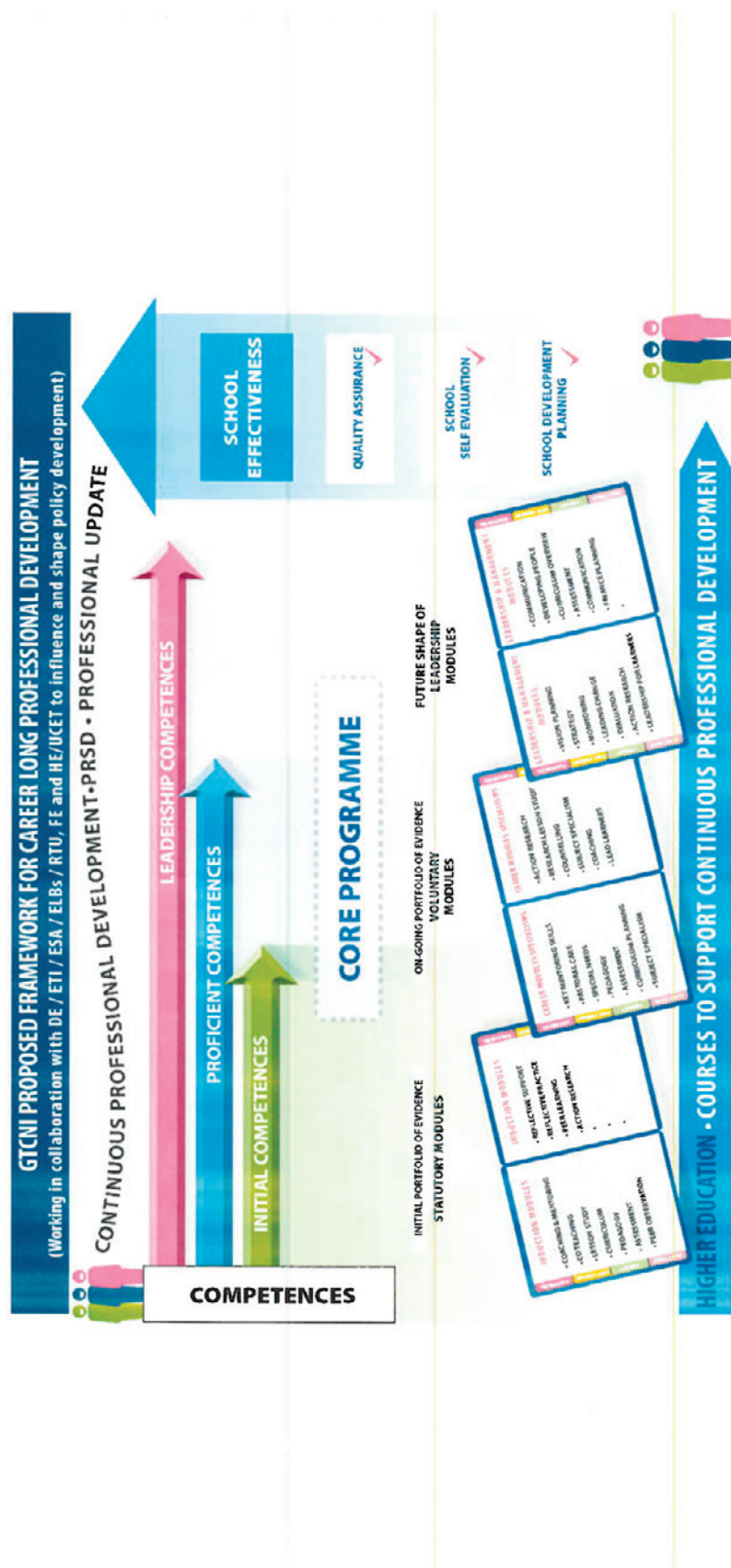


'No system can rise above the quality of its teachers' McKinsey 2010

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Slide 17

Framework Teacher Professional Development



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Summary

Slide 18

Intelligent supportive accountability

Deficit Model

- Data-driven
- Directed & monitored
- Old literacies
- Narrow targets
- Assessment
- Moderation for policing
- Systemic distrust
- *Compliance without engagement*

Growth Model


- Data Informed
- Professionally trusted
- Old +++ New Literacies
- Broader measures
- Measurement an approximation
- Moderation for capacity building
- Systemic empowerment
- Autonomous 21stC life-long learners



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Conclusion

Slide 19



Influencing a major shift in educational culture?

1. Joined up pupil-centred policies
2. Supportive 21st C learning culture
3. Broader measures & value-added
4. Invest in teacher professionalism and TRUST

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Slide 20

‘Teachers’ professional voice should lead policy’



**General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland**

Promoting Teacher Professionalism

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

Promoting Teacher Professionalism

Follow up response from General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

30th October 2013

Mr Peter McCallion
Education Committee
NI Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX

Dear Peter

Thank you for your letter of thanks following our oral presentation to the Education Committee Inquiry into ETI and School Improvement. Please pass our appreciation to Committee members for inviting us to present.

Your letter requests a copy of the GTCNI on-line questionnaire and a summary of the responses by 8 November. Because the survey remains open until 31 October, and given the volume of responses which now stand at 1670, we may not be in a position to meet your request by 8 November but will do so as soon as possible thereafter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carmel Gallagher', written in a cursive style.

Dr Carmel Gallagher
Registrar

GTCNI presentation to Education Committee 11.03.2014



GTCNI Survey into Principals' (and Teachers') Perceptions of Inspection and School Improvement

Dr Carmel Gallagher
Registrar GTCNI

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Slide 1

Purpose of Survey

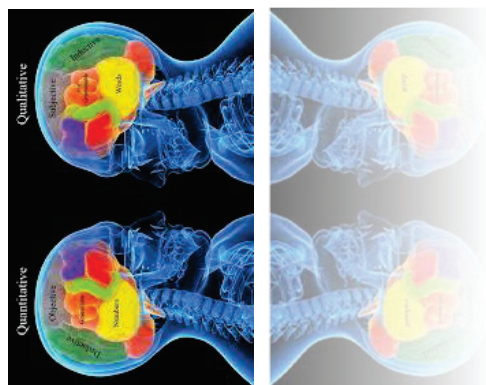
- Teacher Professional Voice
to garner perceptions of those not appearing here to feed into the Inquiry

Methodology

- On-line 'survey-monkey' email to all schools
- Request for *at least* one response per school

Caveats

- NOT a technically designed, independent survey
- 'Total sample' approach as opposed to 'stratified random sample'
- More like a 'straw poll' or a 'consultation'
- Shared with NISRA – **need to highlight for Committee the concerns expressed**
- **For Committee to judge whether representative and in line with other evidence**



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Slide 2

Representativeness– Teacher level (NISRA feedback)

1677 responses

1099 schools (therefore more than 1 per school)

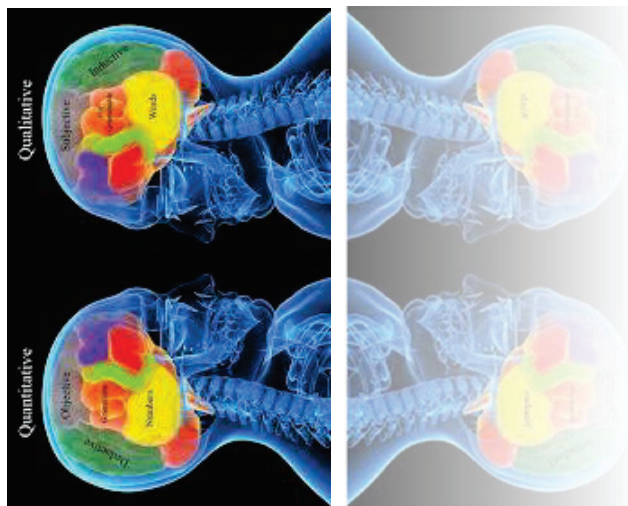
Sample judged to be at teacher rather than school level

9% sample achieved – considered ‘very low’

Less than 10% raises concern that

....“Findings (both quantitative and qualitative) are not considered a robust measure of teachers’ perceptions”

‘Unknown whether they are representative of schools’



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INSPECTED	+ 5 yrs ago	%	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Total
Nursery							
Primary		76	110	104	122	105	517
Post-primary		27	22	28	29	24	130
Special		10	5	3	6	4	28
Total schools inspected			225		292	133	675
Number of Principals responding	(170)		140		118	66	324
			=55%		=40%	=50%	=48%

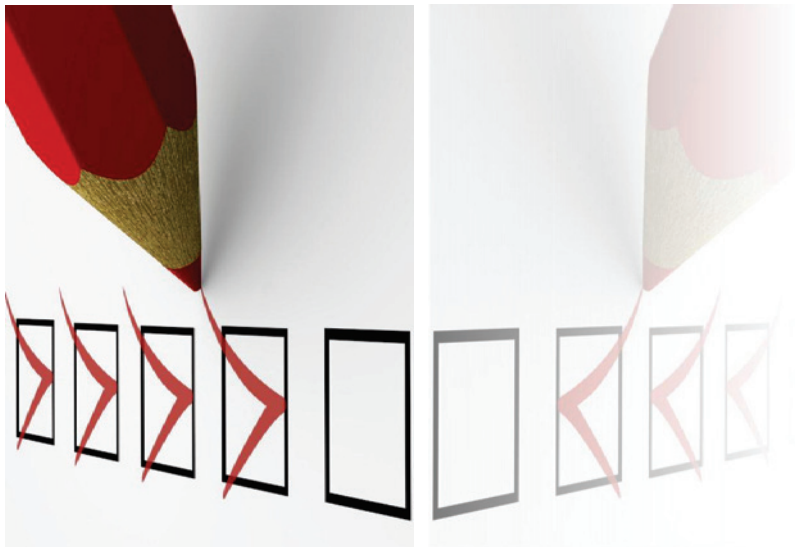
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Slide 4

Questionnaire Design

Concerns about the quantitative questions

- being potentially biased against inspection process
- lacking in objectivity
- Multiple concepts within one question
- Leading questions (reflective of Scottish approach) potentially resulting in
 - quantitative response bias
 - qualitative response bias



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Slide 9

Balance of questions	
5. The inspection process took appropriate account of our school context and intake	16. The inspection process has an 'in-built' social bias
20. The inspection process takes appropriate account of intake and value added	17. The inspection process is overly data driven
6. The inspection process took appropriate account of our own school self-evaluation	31. The inspection process should be replaced by school self evaluation supported by a critical friend / mentor process
7. The inspection process took appropriate account of the range of practice in our school	18. The emphasis on data produces undesirable practices such as 'teaching to the numbers'
8. The inspectors provided appropriate insight into the criteria against which our school was being inspected	24. The inspection process and report should take explicit account of all important wider learning goals than those which can be measured
9. The inspectors provided appropriately detailed feedback in relation to the inspection criteria	21. The inspection process holds schools to account for factors outside their control
10. The inspection process allowed us appropriate opportunity to challenge judgement with supporting evidence	26. The inspection process should include an opportunity to challenge the inspection judgement with evidence
11. The feedback provided advice in relation to next steps and how to access appropriate support	29. The inspection process should be aligned to the support services
12. The inspection has been central to later improvement	25. Inspection outcome categories should use more supportive language e.g. very confident; confident or not confident
13. The inspection process has been a valuable process	15. The inspection process encourages compliance rather than innovation
19. The inspection process drives improvement through observation and measurement	30. The inspection process should highlight areas for improvement and only report on progress against these 6-24 months later
27. The published school report should remain short and concise	28. A longer unpublished report to schools should be provided which includes more detail
14. Please add any comments you wish about your experience of the inspection process and its impact	22. Please add any comments you wish about your experience/views of the inspection process and its impact
	23. The inspection process should be undertaken primarily by practising principals and teachers with recent classroom and management experience

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Slide 6

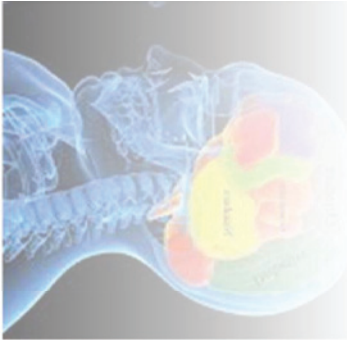
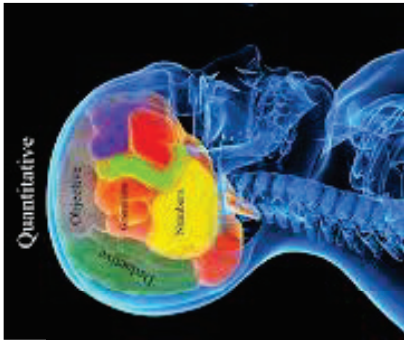
Positive Perceptions 3 in 10 totally agree / 3 -4 in 10 partially agree that

The inspection process	TOTALLY AGREE	PARTIALLY AGREE	
Q.6 considered own school self-evaluation	44%	33%	77%
Q.7 considered range of practice in our school	38%	39%	77%
Q.12 considered central to later improvement	27%	43%	70%
Q.5 considered context and intake	30%	39%	69%
Q.9 provided detailed feedback re: criteria	33%	35%	68%
Q.8 provided insight into the criteria inspected	31%	31%	62%
Q.11 provided advice on next steps & support	28%	34%	62%
Q.13 has been a valuable process	28%	34%	62%
Q.10 allowed opportunity to challenge judgement with evidence	23%	25%	48%
	Totally Disagree 11%	Disagree 31%	42%

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Challenging Perceptions:

Statement	Totally agree	Partially agree	Total
The inspection process			
Q17. is overly data driven (n=411)	45%	39%	84%
Q21. holds schools to account for factors outside their control (n=414)	28%	47%	75%
Q15. encourages compliance rather than innovation (n=417)	22%	30%	62%
Q19. drives improvement through observation and measurement (n=411)	12%	49%	61%
Q20. takes appropriate account of intake and value added (n=409)	4% 17% totally disagree	25% 35% disagree	29% 52%



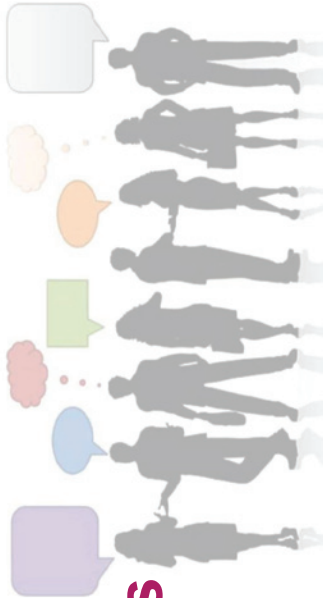
Qualitative Perceptions

Time written: 27% 5-8a.m 23% 8am-6pm c.50% 12 - 5a.m.

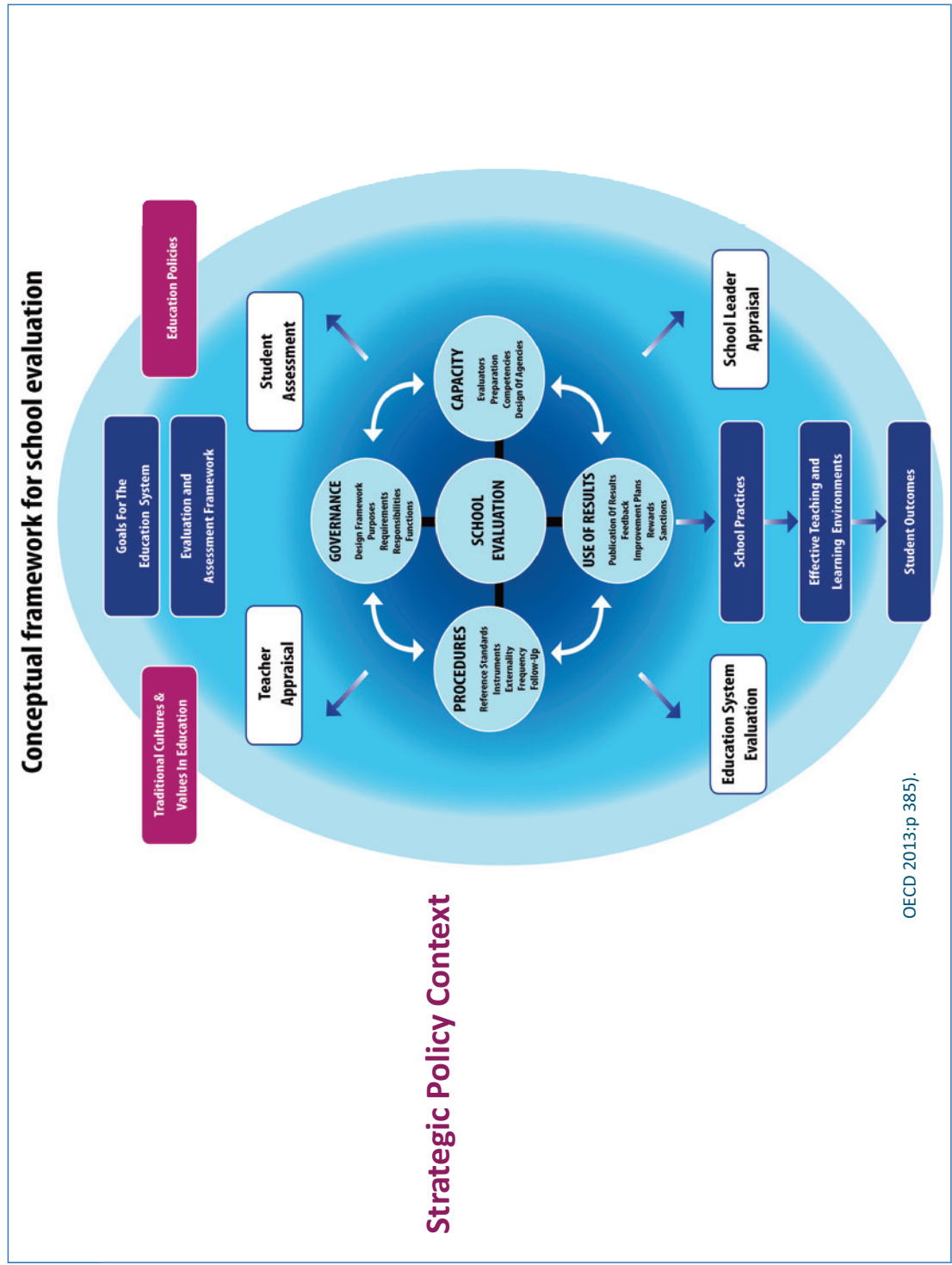


Positive perceptions = 42 comments (+ 16 with reservations)	58
Insufficient support/unfair	61
Stressful	40
Data-driven	39
Consistency	29
Feedback and challenge	27
Account of context & value-added	17
Alternative Approaches	15
General	16
Inspector Experience	5

Top 8 Recommendations



1 Should include an opportunity to challenge with evidence	78%	19%	(97%)
2. Should take explicit account of all important learning goals	71%	26%	(97%)
3. Should provide longer unpublished report with more detail	75%	19%	(94%)
4. Published report should remain short and concise	67%	23%	(90%)
5. Should use more supportive language e.g. confident not confident	57%	31%	(88%)
6. Should be aligned to the support services	57%	29%	(86%)
7. Should be undertaken primarily by practising principals and teachers	42%	43%	(85%)
8. Should highlight areas for improvement and only report on these	49%	34%	(83%)



Summary: Inspection & School Improvement

- ✓ External system evaluation
*only one of a range of **interdependent** elements contributing to school improvement*
- ✓ **School self-evaluation at centre** (build capacity)
- ✓ Broader measures of student assessment (& value-added)
- ✓ Teacher appraisal (PRSD – based on competence model)
- ✓ Leadership appraisal (PRSD – based on competence model)
- ✓ **‘Design in’** self-esteem and motivation so that those who are challenged can hear
(Ehren EU 2013)



‘Teachers’ professional voice should lead policy’

General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

GTCNI survey Principals Teachers Perceptions of Inspection

1

Report of a Survey of Principals' and Teachers' Perceptions of Approaches to Inspection and School Improvement

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Purpose
- 1.2 Approach
- 1.3 Profile of respondents
- 1.4 Representativeness at teacher level
- 1.5 Representativeness at principal level
- 1.6 Questionnaire Design and balance

2 Quantitative findings

- 2.1 Experience of inspection in the last 5 years
- 2.2 Perceptions of the Inspection Process
- 2.3 Perceptions of the impact of the inspection process
- 2.4 Proposals for Improvements to the Inspection Process

3. Qualitative findings

- 3.1 Open questions
- 3.2 Coding for Questions
- 3.3 Positive comments
- 3.4 Critical Comments
 - 3.4.1 *Stress and Damage to teachers' health*
 - 3.4.2 *Feedback and opportunity to challenge*
 - 3.4.3 *Consistency and culture*
 - 3.4.4 *Inspectors' recent school experience*
 - 3.4.5 *Bureaucracy, data, support and self-evaluation*
- 3.5 General comments

4. Summary and Conclusions

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

- Figure 1:** Percentage & number of respondents by school type
- Figure 2:** Break-down of responses by responsibility level & school phase
- Figure 3:** Illustration of potential school representation
- Figure 4:** Respondents' last school inspection
- Figure 5:** The number of schools inspected by sector 2008 - 2013 (ETI statistics)
- Figure 6:** Illustration of the balance of questions in the survey
- Figure 7:** Principals' and Teachers' views/experiences of inspection process
- Figure 8:** Respondents' views of current inspection process
- Figure 9:** Suggestions for changing/improving the inspection process
- Figure 10:** Main comment themes
- Figure 11:** Themes under 'Critical of current process' node

1

Report of a Survey of Principals' (and Teachers) Perceptions of Approaches to Inspection and School Improvement

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the opinion survey

In GTCNI's research-informed submission to the Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee 'Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process' the Council set out a number of important caveats one of which was that:

'In order to properly and fairly review the effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement: a proper independent research analysis needs to be undertaken This response can therefore only refer to 'perceptions' about the current approach, which lack a robust evidential base. GTCNI intends to undertake an on-line survey to explore the evidence base of these perceptions'.

(‘Striking the Right Balance’ GTCNI 2013: 3)

This report summarises the responses of 450 Principals to an opinion survey administered on-line during October 2013 using 'Survey Monkey' which aimed:

'to gather [teachers'] professional views and experience about approaches to school inspection and school improvement to feed into the current NI Assembly Education Committee 'Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process'.
(Intro to GTCNI survey on Inspection and School Improvement, Oct 2013)

Specifically, the opinion survey sought to explore: the extent of agreement or disagreement among the profession at large about 1) perceptions of inspection reported to the Council while drawing up its submission to the Education Committee Inquiry; and 2) potential refinements to the inspection process arising from comparative research.

1.2 Approach

A 'total sample' approach was adopted to garner the perceptions of the profession at large. An email was sent to all schools via their C2K email address (n=1,163) with the request that the survey be completed by at least one teacher from each school. The link to the survey was also accessible through the GTCNI website but the survey was not publicly advertised. The software used allowed only one response to be submitted from an individual computer terminal.

1.3 Profile of respondents

Respondents were not required to submit their school or teacher identification number but were asked to identify their school type (primary or post-primary) and the nature of their post. 55% percent of respondents identified themselves as teachers while 45% identified themselves as members of school senior management teams. Of these 27% identified

3

themselves as Principals, 6% as Vice-Principals and 12% as Senior Teachers. GTCNI is satisfied that this data together with the specialist focus of the survey and the means of notification provides satisfactory assurance of the status of respondents.

Forty percent (40%) of respondents identified themselves as belonging to the primary sector, 4% to the Special School sector and 3% to the nursery sector. Of the remaining 53%, secondary schools were represented at a rate of 33% and grammar schools 20%. A breakdown of the respondents by school type is shown below:

Answer Options	Response Percent %	Response Count
Primary	40	675
Secondary	33	551
Grammar	20	329
Special School	4	62
Nursery	3	50
<i>answered question</i>		1667
<i>skipped question</i>		10

Figure 1: Percentage and number of respondents by school type

1.4 Representativeness of the survey – at teacher level

Statistical findings are considered valid to the extent that the people in the study match those in the larger population. A return of 1,665 responses was received, representing the following range of professionals, identified by phase and responsibility level

Answer Options	Principal	Vice-Principal	Senior Teacher	Teacher	Response Percent
Nursery	36	0	4	10	3.0%
Primary	318	53	79	224	40.6%
Grammar	22	20	33	253	19.7%
Secondary	55	26	73	393	32.9%
Answer Options	Principal	Vice-Principal	Senior Teacher	Teacher	Response Percent

Figure 2: Break-down of responses by responsibility level and school phase

Since more than one response was received from some schools, NISRA's view is that the sample frame should be calculated at teacher level rather than school level. Drawing on published statistics, NISRA calculated over 19,000 teachers could have responded to the survey. Since a sample size of 10% or over is considered representative, in NISRA's view 'the achieved sample of 1,677 represents a response rate of only 9% which is considered very low. A response rate less than 10% would raise further concern that the findings are not representative of all teachers'. Accordingly it has been decided that the survey should be analysed on the basis of a sub-set of respondents, namely Principals, of which there is only one in each school.

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1.5 Representativeness of the survey at Principal level

The larger population in the case of Principals is 1,199. Returns from 450 Principals suggest that the survey may be considered to be proportionately representative of 37% of nursery principals; 37.5% of primary principals; 36% of post-primary principals and 47.5% of special school principals.

	Principals as representative of schools	% of sector
Nursery	36 (of 97)	37%
Primary	318 (of 847)	38%
Post-primary combined	77 (of 215)	36%
Special School	19 (of 40)	48%

Figure 3: Illustration of potential school representation*1 on the basis of returns from principals

Approximately 75% of respondents, representing 1243 teachers who indicated that their school had been inspected in the last 5 years. Of these 309 were received from Principals.

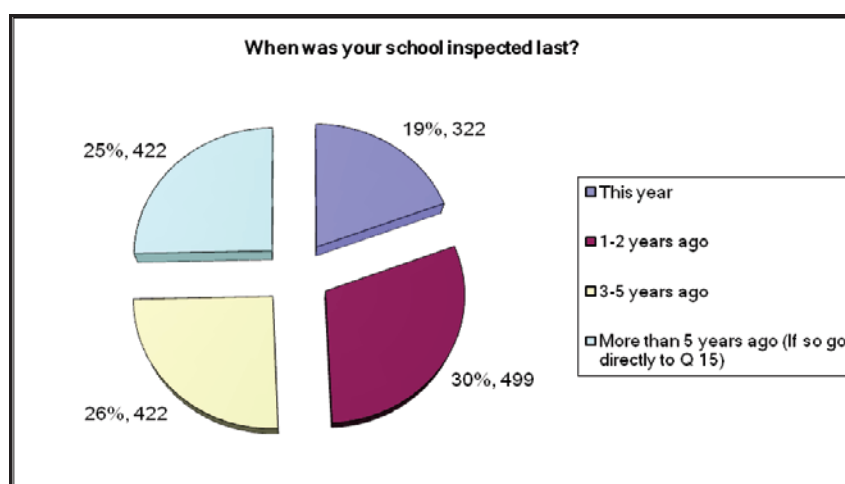


Figure 4: Respondents' last school inspection

One quarter of the respondents reported that their school was last inspected **more** than five years ago. These respondents were then asked to go directly to the third section of the questionnaire. Another quarter of respondents indicated that their school had been inspected between three and five years ago while the majority (30%) were inspected one to two years ago and only 19% had an inspection this year.

The figures below shows the number of schools inspected in the last 5 years (excluding nursery schools for which figures are not clear).

¹ The number of schools is drawn from the annual school census exercise 2012-13 conducted by DE.

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INSPECTED	+ 5 yrs ago	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Total
Nursery							
Primary		76	110	104	122	105	517
Post-primary		27	22	28	29	24	130
Special		10	5	3	6	4	28
Total schools inspected		255		292		133	675
Total number of Principals responding	(127)	140		118		66	324
Principals' responses as % of schools inspected		55%		40%		50%	48%

Figure 5: Responses from Principals of schools inspected 2008 - 2013

When the number of returns from Principals whose schools had been inspected in the last 5 years is calculated, as a percentage of the number of schools inspected in the last 5 years, the percentage representation of returns from School Principals is between 50% and 55%, which suggests that the sample – even if self-selecting - may be considered to be representative of school principals from all sectors.

1.6 Questionnaire Design

The survey comprised 4 sets of questions as follows:

- 1) Four questions to gather background information about school type, career identity of respondent, pupils' socio-economic background and time of last inspection. The profile of respondents is reported by job and school type:
- 2) Ten statements relating to different aspects of the inspection process and an open question inviting qualitative comments.
- 3) Seven statements to assess the extent of agreement or disagreement with perceptions of the current inspection process drawn from various sources:
- 4) Nine suggestions for potential future refinements to the inspection process drawn from examples of practice internationally (mainly Scotland) highlighted in the GTCNI submission to the Assembly Inquiry. The purpose was to elicit the extent of agreement or disagreement with these potential refinements.

At the end of set 2, 3 and 4 open question (q. 14, 22 and 32) provided the opportunity to offer comments. A total of 829 comments were recorded overall of which more than half (450) were made by Principals 309 of whom indicated that their school had been inspected in the last 5 years. NISRA raised concerns that some of the questions contain multiple concepts and were leading, lacked objectivity and/or were biased against the inspection process, potentially resulting in response bias. The balance of contrasting questions is illustrated in Figure 4 below.

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Balance of questions	
5. The inspection process took appropriate account of our school context and intake	16. The inspection process has an 'in-built' social bias ²
20. The inspection process takes appropriate account of intake and value added	17. The inspection process is overly data driven
6. The inspection process took appropriate account of our own school self-evaluation	31. The inspection process should be replaced by school self evaluation supported by a critical friend / mentor process
7. The inspection process took appropriate account of the range of practice in our school	18. The emphasis on data produces undesirable practices such as 'teaching to the numbers'
8. The inspectors provided appropriate insight into the criteria against which our school was being inspected	24. The inspection process and report should take explicit account of all important wider learning goals than those which can be measured
9. The inspectors provided appropriately detailed feedback in relation to the inspection criteria	21. The inspection process holds schools to account for factors outside their control
10. The inspection process allowed us appropriate opportunity to challenge judgement with supporting evidence	26. The inspection process should include an opportunity to challenge the inspection judgement with evidence
11. The feedback provided advice in relation to next steps and how to access appropriate support	29. The inspection process should be aligned to the support services
12. The inspection has been central to later improvement	25. Inspection outcome categories should use more supportive language e.g. very confident; confident or not confident
13. The Inspection process has been a valuable process	15. The inspection process encourages compliance rather than innovation
19. The inspection process drives improvement through observation and measurement	30. The inspection process should highlight areas for improvement and only report on progress against these 6 -24 months later
27. The published school report should remain short and concise	28. A longer unpublished report to schools should be provided which includes more detail
14. Please add any comments you wish about your experience of the inspection process and its impact	22. Please add any comments you wish about your experience/views of the inspection process and its impact
	23. The Inspection process should be undertaken primarily by practising principals and teachers with recent classroom and management experience

Figure 6: Illustration of the balance of questions in the survey

The wording of questions 16 and 18 were subsequently judged to contain multiple concepts and therefore responses to these questions have been omitted from the analysis.

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2 Quantitative data

2.2 Experience of inspection in the last 5 years

This section comprised 10 statements relating to different aspects of the inspection process. Only respondents whose schools had been inspected within the last five years were asked to complete this section to ensure that the views gathered represented experiences from recent inspection processes.

Approximately 75% responded, representing 1243 teachers. Of these 450 were received from Principals. The total responses are set out in table 2 below. The *n* number next to each statement indicates the number of teachers overall and the number of Principals specifically who responded to each individual statement.

Statement	Totally agree %(n)	Partially agree %(n)	Not sure %(n)	Disagree %(n)	Totally disagree %(n)
q.5 The inspection process took appropriate account of our school <u>context and intake</u> (n=1,059)	22(235)	37(389)	13(137)	19(204)	9(94)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n= 309)	30 (94)	39 (120)	6 (20)	18 (56)	6 (19)
q.6 The inspection process took appropriate account of our own school <u>self-evaluation</u> (n=1,053)	29(309)	36(377)	19(205)	12(128)	3(34)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n= 306)	44 (136)	33 (101)	8 (25)	11 (34)	3 (10)
Q.7 The inspection process took appropriate account of the <u>range of practice</u> in our school (n=1,041)	27(279)	38(396)	11(117)	20(208)	4(41)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n= 304)	38 (115)	39 (119)	7 (20)	14 (44)	2 (6)
Q.8The inspectors provided appropriate <u>insight into the criteria</u> against which our school was being inspected (n=1,026)	25(252)	32(327)	14(140)	23(234)	7(73)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n= 305)	31 (96)	31 (95)	10 (29)	21 (65)	7 (20)
Q.9 The inspectors provided appropriately detailed <u>feedback</u> in relation to the inspection criteria (n=1,034)	27(274)	35(367)	9(98)	21(221)	7(74)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n= 300)	33 (100)	35 (106)	3 (8)	22 (65)	7 (21)
Q.10 The inspection process allowed us appropriate <u>opportunity to challenge</u> judgement with supporting evidence (n=1,027)	17(174)	24(244)	17(174)	27(273)	16(162)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n =305)	23 (71)	25 (79)	9 (27)	31 (94)	11 (34)
Q.11 The feedback provided <u>advice</u> in relation to next steps and how to access appropriate support (n=1,041)	21(220)	36(375)	17(175)	19(197)	7(74)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n =301)	28 (83)	34 (102)	8 (24)	23 (70)	7 (22)
Q.12 The inspection has been <u>central to later improvement</u> (n=1,028)	26(252)	42(433)	12(120)	16(168)	5(55)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n =298)	27 (80)	43 (126)	7 (22)	17 (51)	6 (19)
Q.13 The Inspection process has been a <u>valuable</u> process (n=1,042)	18(188)	32(337)	20(213)	19(195)	10(109)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n =305)	28 (85)	34 (104)	17 (52)	15 (45)	6 (19)

Figure 7: Principals' and Teachers' views/experiences of inspection process

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2.2 Perceptions of the Inspection Process

The inspection process took appropriate account of	TOTALLY AGREE	PARTIALLY AGREE
q.5 <u>context and intake</u> (N=309)	30%	39 %
q.6 our own school <u>self-evaluation</u> (n=306)	44%	33%
Q.7 the <u>range of practice</u> in our school (n=304)	38%	39%
Q.8 provided appropriate <u>insight into the criteria</u> being inspected (n=305)	31%	31%
Q.9 provided appropriately detailed <u>feedback</u> in relation to criteria (n=300)	33%	35%
Q.10 allowed appropriate <u>opportunity to challenge</u> judgement with evidence (n=305)	23% Totally Disagree 11%	25% Disagree 31%
Q.11 feedback provided <u>advice</u> on next steps and how to access support (n=301)	28%	34%
Q.12 has been <u>central to later improvement</u> (n=298)	27%	43%
Q.13 has been a <u>valuable</u> process (n=305)	28%	34%

In general a majority of Principals totally or partially agreed that the inspection process had taken appropriate account of the range of factors listed. Of these between about 3 in 10 totally agreed with the statements, while a further 3 - 4 in 10 partially agreed with the statements. A further 2 to 3 in 10 disagreed with the statements.

There was total or partial agreement that inspection took account of school self-evaluation and the range of practice within schools (77%) and was central to later improvement (69%). Inspection also was perceived to take total or partial account of context and intake (69%); provided detailed feedback (69%); provided appropriate or partial insight into inspection criteria (63%) and advice in relation to next steps and how to access appropriate support. 28% of Principals overall considered inspection to be a valuable experience, with 34% partially agreeing and 29% disagreeing.

A minority of Principals (29%) considered that inspection takes appropriate account of value-added with only 4% considering this was the case and a majority of 51% disagreeing. While 49% of Principals agreed or partially agreed that the process allowed them to challenge judgement with evidence, 42% disagreed with this statement.

2.3 Perceptions of the impact of the inspection process

The third section of the survey comprised seven statements to assess the extent of agreement or disagreement with

- (i) the 4 most common views expressed by primary and post-primary principals at a range of meetings with GTCNI (q16, 17, 18, 21);
- (ii) a NIAR Report into inspection (q 15) ; and
- (iii) 2 positive statements added to balance the foregoing statements (q 19 & 20).

Statement	Totally agree %()	Partially agree %()	Not sure %()	Disagree %()	Totally disagree %()
Q15. The inspection process encourages compliance rather than innovation (n=1,357)	40(540)	42(571)	9(119)	8(107)	1(20)
PRINCIPALS ONLY 417	21.58% 90	30.22% 126	23.50% 98	18.23% 76	6.47% 27
Q17. The inspection process is overly data driven (n=1,359)	52(708)	33(455)	6(78)	8(103)	1(15)
PRINCIPALS ONLY	45.32% 189	38.61% 161	4.08% 17	11.03% 46	0.96% 4
Q19. The inspection process drives improvement through observation and measurement (n=1,340)	13(176)	42(563)	17(233)	23(302)	5(66)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=411)	11.92% 49	48.66% 200	17.76% 73	18.49% 76	3.16% 13
Q20. The inspection process takes appropriate account of intake and value added (n=1,337)	4(50)	24(317)	26(348)	31(414)	16(208)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=409)	4.16% 17	24.69% 101	19.56% 80	34.96% 143	16.63% 68
Q21. The inspection process holds schools to account for factors outside their control (n=1,345)	28(376)	43(584)	18(236)	10(129)	1(20)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=414)	28.02% 116	47.34% 196	12.56% 52	9.90% 41	2.17% 9

Figure 8: Respondents' views of current inspection process

As before, due to the significance of the percentage returns from Principals, attention is drawn to the statements with which Principals agreed most, as follows:

- the inspection process is overly data driven
(with 45% totally agreeing and 39 % partially agreeing)
- The inspection process holds schools to account for factors outside their control
(with 28% totally agreeing and 47% partially agreeing); and
- The inspection process drives improvement through observation and measurement
(with only 11% totally agreeing and 48% partially agreeing).

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Statement	Totally agree	Partially agree
The inspection process		
Q15. encourages compliance rather than innovation (n=417)	22%	30%
Q17. is overly data driven (n=411)	45%	39%
Q19. drives improvement through observation and measurement (n=411)	12%	49%
Q20. takes appropriate account of intake and value added (n=409)	4% Totally Disagree	25% Disagree
Q21. holds schools to account for factors outside their control (n=414)	28%	47%

2.3 Proposals for Improvements to the Inspection Process

The final set of nine statements set out suggestions for potential future refinements to the inspection process drawn from examples of practice internationally (mainly Scotland) highlighted in the GTCNI submission to the Assembly Inquiry to elicit the extent of agreement or disagreement with these potential refinements.

Approximately 78% of respondents responded to this part of the survey representing 1,315 teachers. All of these statements received overwhelming support, ranging from 66% to 97% agreement.

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Statement	Totally agree %()	Partially agree %()	Not sure %()	Disagree %()	Totally disagree %()
Q 23. The inspection process should be undertaken primarily by practising principals and teachers with recent classroom and management experience (n=1,317)	55(726)	32(421)	7(96)	5(65)	1(9)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=412)	42(174)	43 (176)	10 (40)	5 (22)	0 (0)
Q24. The inspection process and report should take explicit account of all important wider learning goals than those which can be measured (n=1,315)	72(951)	24(311)	3(45)	>1(6)	>1(2)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=413)	71 (292)	26 (107)	3 (13)	0.2 (1)	0 (0)
Q 25. Inspection outcome categories should use more supportive language e.g. very confident; confident or not confident (n=1,312)	55(721)	32(418)	10(130)	3(39)	>1(4)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=410)	57 (232)	31 (131)	9 (35)	3 (11)	0.2 (1)
Q 26. The inspection process should include an opportunity to challenge the inspection judgement with evidence (n=1,310)	75(985)	22(284)	3(33)	1(7)	>1(1)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=409)	78(321)	19 (77)	2 (9)	0.4 (2)	0 (0)
Q.27. The published school report should remain short and concise (n=1,304)	58(762)	25(329)	7(97)	7(96)	2(20)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=406)	67(270)	23 (93)	6 (24)	5 (190)	0 (0)
Q 28. A longer unpublished report to schools should be provided which includes more detail (n=1,304)	73(950)	20(258)	4(52)	3(34)	1(10)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=408)	75(304)	19 (76)	3 (14)	2 (10)	1 (4)
Q 29. The inspection process should be aligned to the support services (n=1,302)	47(612)	33(432)	19(244)	1(13)	>1(1)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=408)	57(232)	29 (120)	12 (49)	2 (7)	0 (0)
Q.30. The inspection process should highlight areas for improvement and report progress against these 6-24 months later (n=1,305)	45(589)	39(507)	12(155)	4(46)	1(8)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=407)	49(201)	34 (138)	11 (44)	5 (22)	0.5 (2)
Q 31. The inspection process should be replaced by school self evaluation supported by a critical friend / mentor process (n=1,310)	35(454)	31(403)	18(241)	14(179)	3(33)
PRINCIPALS ONLY (n=411)	33(136)	35 (145)	15 (63)	14 (59)	2 (8)

Figure 9: Suggestions for changing/improving the inspection process

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As before, due to the significance of the percentage returns from Principals, attention is drawn to the statements with which Principals agreed most. The following are the top ten statements most highly supported by Principals:

The inspection process	
1. should include an opportunity to challenge the inspection judgement with evidence	(97%)
2. should take explicit account of all important wider learning goals	(96%)
3. should provide longer unpublished report with more detail	(93%)
4. should use more supportive language e.g. confident not confident	(89%)
5. should be aligned to the support services	(86%)
6. Published report should remain short and concise	(85%)
7. Is overly data driven	(84%)
8. should be undertaken primarily by practising principals and teachers	(83%)
9. should highlight areas for improvement and only report on these	(83%)
10: holds schools to account for factors outside their control	(75%)

3. Qualitative data

3.1 Open questions

Respondents were the opportunity to offer qualitative comments; firstly, at the end of the section which was to be completed by those who had experienced an inspection process within the last 5 years (Q14) and secondly at the end of section 2 (Q22). NISRA acknowledges that information collected in qualitative research is very valuable in adding depth to the quantitative findings. In keeping with standard practice of asking for verbatim comments, these sections follow the quantitative questions.

It is accepted that the inspection process can cause stress and elicit strong emotions, and that those who offer comments are more likely to be respondents with the strongest, usually negative, views. In other words, the high number of negative comments may be due to the fact that those who were happy with the process did not feel it necessary to express those positive feelings while those who perceived their experience to be negative are more likely to express their views.

A total of 829 comments were recorded overall. Because of the similarity in wording of these two questions and to eliminate possible duplication of comments it was decided that the comments made by those respondents who responded to both these questions would be treated as one. 612 comments were made in response to questions 14 and 22 combined. All respondents were invited to express any further comments at the end of the questionnaire (Q32) while a further 217 responses were made to question 32. Overall a total of 829 comments were recorded, representing approximately 50% of respondents. Of these 100 were from Principals.

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3.2 Coding for Questions: Total sample

The open questions were analysed using the qualitative research software QSR NVivo 10. This involves coding the data in broad themes –nodes- such as ‘positive’ ‘general’ and ‘critical’ followed by further coding the larger nodes into sub-nodes. The table below summarises the main nodes and number of references under each one of them. As the amount of comments under this node was very large these were coded thematically into six further sub-nodes representing several recurring themes.

Nodes		
	Q14 & 22	Q32
Positive comments	68	9
General comments	25	42
Challenging comments	319	166

Sub-nodes	Q14 & 22 (n=319)	Q32 (n=166)	TOTAL
Inspection as a stressful, experience	122	35	157
Feedback and opportunity to challenge	81	40	127
Consistency of inspection process	76	63	130
Inspection as a data-driven process	64	16	80
Inspectors experience to inspect sectores	25	33	58
Notice and frequency of inspections	7	6	13

Figure 11: TOTAL Sample – sub- themes

3.3 Coding of sub-sample: Principals

As before, due to the significance of the percentage returns from Principals, attention is drawn to their qualitative perceptions which have been grouped and set out in detail in **Appendix 1**. A number of very clear themes emerge from the qualitative data, as follows

Sub-nodes – Principals comments only	Q14	Q22	Q32	TOTAL
Positive perceptions				
Positive with reservations				
Inspection as a stressful experience				
Inspection as a data-driven process				
Feedback and opportunity to challenge				
Account taken of school context and value-added				
Consistency and application of criteria				
Degree of support				
TOTAL				

Table 3: PRINCIPALS ONLY - sub themes

3.4. Summary of Qualitative Comments

An interesting analysis was conducted of the time of day that Principals responded to the survey. The quite alarming statistics that emerged show that:
 27% of comments (n87) were made between 5 a.m. and 8 a.m.
 23% of comments (n74) were made between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.
 49% of comments (156) were made between 11p.m. and 5.a.m.

3.4.1 Positive Comments

50 Principals out of 308 who made detailed comments expressed positive views about the current inspection process (see pages 15-18)

3.4.2 Challenging comments

258 Principals offered challenging comments, some of them in considerable detail, (see page 20 onwards). *(Short phrases have been added on the outside column to enable categorisation. These may be refined on more detailed analysis when staff and time permit).* Several strong themes were prevalent, relating to: the level of stress associated with the inspection process; dissatisfaction at the lack of detailed feedback particularly in relation to individual teacher performance; the extent to which the inspection process is considered to be data-driven; the consistency of judgements and interpretation of criteria which are regarded as insufficiently detailed by some; the view that insufficient account is being taken of context, challenge and value-added and that inspectors may not have had recent experience of the phase which they are inspecting; the perceived lack of opportunity to challenge inspection judgements; and the lack of follow up support across the system. A

3.5 Summary

Acknowledging the inherent limitations of all surveys of this kind, the outcomes of this self-selecting opinion-poll made up of a balance of teachers (55%) and senior managers (45%) into perceptions of the ETI inspection process provides valuable insights that will be of interest to all who are concerned with school improvement and value-added. To ensure that findings can be judged to be robust in terms of representativeness, a sub-sample of 450 responses from school Principals was analysed in greater detail, representing 38% of Principals overall and 48% of those who had experienced inspection on the last 5 years.

The outcomes provide a mixed and partially supportive perception of the current inspection process, with a majority totally or partially agreeing that the process takes appropriate or partial account of: context and intake; self-evaluation and the range practice within schools and provides appropriate or partial insight into inspection criteria and how to access appropriate support. On the less positive side, * of Principals consider inspection to be a valuable experience and * of respondents consider that schools are given sufficient opportunity to challenge judgements with supporting evidence.

Acknowledging the tendency for qualitative comments to be critical, a small minority of comments were positive although, even among many of those, concerns were voiced about aspects of the inspection process. The vast majority of comments offer challenging concerns about the process in terms of the level of stress it engenders, the perceived over-emphasis on data, with context and value-added insufficiently taken account of, the lack of feedback to individual teachers; the perceived inconsistency and in some case perceived unfairness of the outcomes and the lack of follow-up support. The general consensus was that schools would value an approach possibly more like an audit process, aligned to the support services, focusing on a longer unpublished which includes more detail about areas

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for improvement, with the opportunity to challenge judgements with evidence, and follow-up support for all schools.

Appendix 1: qualitative Comments grouped by them

Q14 Please add any comments you wish about your experience of the inspection process and its impact
Answered: 142 Skipped: 309 100%

1	6 We had a very good experience. The Inspectors were very professional and polite but extremely thorough and took their job very seriously. They were very courteous to all members of staff and gave everyone excellent feedback.10/24/2013 1:42 AM	
2	18. We were fully expecting that the inspection would be very data heavy but this was not our experience. There was a clear balance between data and classroom practice. The emphasis was on what we did with the data to make a difference for our children which is right and proper.10/22/2013 12:12 AM	
3	23. The process helped us to see that those areas we had noted for improvement were indeed those areas which the ETI also identified and the feedback was important in reinforcing what we already knew about our school and what we had identified as important to our setting. 10/22/2013 7:58 AM	
4	25. The inspection process reassured me as Principal that the school is moving in the right direction. It has enabled me as Principal to move forward with a staff who now understand the school improvement agenda.10/22/2013 7:11 AM	
5	56.We found the process very supportive, open and transparent. It accurately assessed where we were as a school and took into consideration the journey we had articulated. All advice was helpful and led to continued school improvement. 10/21/2013 6:40 AM	
6	38.Theinspection team in Special Education have got it right. Close contact with Spec School. Regular informal visits. Understanding and empathy. Realistic. Good relationship with Principal & balance of Team membership with past Spec school teachers just right. Well done10/21/2013 4:34 PM	
7	53.I found my team of inspectors to be sincere and approachable. 10/21/2013 7:02 AM	
8	71. Our experience of the inspection process was very positive 10/21/2013 4:48 AM	
9	73. I am a new principal (into my second year) and the Inspection gave us an excellent baseline that has aided us in setting out our plans over the next few years 10/21/2013 4:26 AM	
10	60.My last inspection was a very positive experience and I was more than happy with the process. 10/21/2013 5:53 AM	
11	63.We had a very positive inspection process. Any areas highlighted for improvement were addressed. 10/21/2013 5:48 AM	
12	64.Very Positive overall 10/21/2013 5:44 AM	
13	70. In Intervention Process - ETI this time did provide more advice and their report was focussed on positive aspects of school 10/21/2013 4:52 AM	
14	69.As professionals we should have an opportunity for validation of good practice. I found our recent inspection did just that!10/21/2013 1:48 AM	
15	78. We saw the Inspection as an opportunity to share our own self-evaluation and self-improvement and were curious as to what might emerge when another lens was applied. While Inspection engenders some anxiety for staff no matter how a Principal reassures, on the whole because of our team approach and confidence in our own professional journey we were able to view it positively.10/21/2013 3:39 AM	
16	127. The inspection this year was a positive experience and this raised the morale of the staff. The previous inspection and follow up had not been a good experience for the school and impacted negatively on the staff.10/18/2013 8:23	

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17	82.The process was fair and allowed us to verify our self-evaluation and agree a way forward 10/21/2013 3:20 AM	
18	88. We found the ETI team were very much in tune with the needs and challenges of our school. They provided sound advice and showed clearly that they were children-focused in their approach to discussions. They were highly professional in their approach and at all times offered thought provoking feedback both formally and informally. The experience was a positive one throughout.10/21/2013 2:42 AM	
19	95.I found the inspection process in Northern Ireland positive as I had taken part in several Ofsted Inspections in England which were not.10/21/2013 2:08 AM	
20	100.We found that the process was fair and useful, in that it verified what we already knew and helped us plan where to go next.10/21/2013 1:49 AM	
21	86.Reporting Inspector explained the process fully to all the staff in advance of the inspection itself which in turn gave way to a positive experience for all concerned. The school community suffered a bereavement just before the inspection with the funeral of a mother of two of our pupils taking place on the morning of the first day of the inspection. ETI was most compassionate and understanding and fell in with our plans.10/21/2013 2:56 AM	
22	87. We had a very positive inspection but still caused a lot of stress with a very hard working and dedicated staff. A lot of stress was brought on by our own worries and during the inspection we found the inspectors to be very professional and approachable.10/21/2013 2:56 AM	
23	55.The reporting inspector was very helpful and courteous and set the tone for the inspection 10/21/2013 6:47 AM	
24	104. I found our recent whole school inspection to have at its heart the process of improvement. The inspectors made accurate and insightful comments about the organisation and staff. There was a pastoral dimension to the team yet they asked difficult and challenging questions when they needed to do so. I found it to be a learning experience and one which validated practice and helped us to clarify goals for the future.10/21/2013 1:43 AM	
25	109. Our inspection process was very positive and I feel the inspectors listened to what we were doing, what we had planned and the experiences we provided for children. We had already highlighted areas we wished to improve and the inspectors agreed with our evaluation so it was good to have that confirmation10/21/2013 1:19 AM	
26	112. We found the inspection process while stressful a positive experience. 10/21/2013 12:14 AM	
27	121. As Acting Principal at the time of inspection and following a critical incident which impacted upon all stakeholders, I found the ETI process and its impact a huge part of moving the school forward during particularly turbulent times. The ETI were incredibly supportive.10/18/2013 1:03 PM	
28	122.The school was inspected in 2011 and for us it confirmed our good practice. It was a measure of the school at that point in time, reviewing practice and pupil outcomes. Schools look ahead and plan ahead constantly for improvement in practice and outcomes. Our discussions allowed a complete picture of past, present and future issues impacting upon the life of the school 10/18/2013 12:14 PM	
29	135.The ETI team is enriched by the role of an associate inspector with the right experience and majority.	
30	80.There was no negative aspect in the manner of inspection at this school. 10/18/2013 5:34 AM	
31	137.Theinspection was carried out in a professional, courteous and respectful manner. 10/18/2013 5:31 AM	
32	140. Our inspection fast tracked what we needed to do and acquire for our school 10/18/2013 4:50 AM	
33	75.The inspection came at a time of change. The Principal had retired due to ill health there had been considerable disruption in the school. The inspection	

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	process is and was very stressful at the time. However the impact has been positive and good improvements have been made. 10/21/2013 4:07 AM	
Positive with some Reservations		
1	7 Process good to focus self-evaluation prior to the visit and offer some pointers on areas for improvement. The inability of the inspection team to clearly identify teachers that underperformed during the visit and the criteria that led to their final grading were a source of frustration. If these were done the whole experience would have enriched and been more valuable.10/24/2013 12:13 AM	
2	3 We had a very positive outcome with an outstanding grade and the inspectors were positive with the staff. However I feel much of the positive nature of the process was because as the lead professional I provided details documents which were all colour coded and easy access I reported both in verbal and written form in great detail the history and ethos of the school. I heavily supported and guided the inspectors with regard to the comprehensive self evaluation which was embedded across all practice. Staff still felt under pressure because of the formal nature of the visit and the fact that they knew little to nothing about the inspectors. 10/26/2013 1:41 PM	
3	28.Theinspection process was of benefit to the school. In many ways it concurred with our own self-evaluation. I believe the inspection process could be improved through developing the role of the District Inspector. If it is improvement that we seek then the District Inspector is key as they know the school. I also believe that all teachers should receive both oral and written feedback. A copy of which should be made available to school principals.10/22/2013 3:23 AM	
4	35. The Primary was awarded very good with the nursery unit satisfactory. When challenged on the Nursery Unit ETI became very defensive and would not take into account any of the things we highlighted. Apart from this the overall experience was fairly positive although it has to be said as Principal; you must stand up to the inspectors and not simply roll over. 10/22/2013 2:02 AM	
5	37.Our inspection was very positive and so there was little advice on where to go next but a sense of affirmation that we could keep going as we had been. The last inspection showed a great improvement in the personal skills of the inspectorate who were very professional but also came across as human and very willing to engage with all staff to find out as much as they could in the little time they had. Myself and the staff felt more part of the process.10/22/2013 12:04 AM	
6	43.Inspectors were very aware of pupil background & evaluations took account of this.Do know colleagues in other schools were less fortunate!10/21/2013 12:41 PM	
7	49. I was happy with most of the inspection process but was not happy about some designations. In discussions with other principals I feel the end result is down to the reporting inspection. There are no objective criteria for us as principals to be measured against. The inspection is only a snapshot in time but the label remains!10/21/2013 7:52 AM	No objective criteria
8	54. We take a business as usual approach to inspection - keeping it in context and with a view to getting on with our everyday job of education and care in an ever changing context. At our last inspection we were deemed "outstanding" in terms of our provision and as principal I had the overall perception that we were very fairly and respectfully treated. However, the fact that our reporting inspector was an ex- nursery principal meant that she exuded real knowledge, experience and perception regarding the challenges attached to our roles and responsibilities. The socio-economic climate in which our school operates is shifting and children are increasingly faced with increasing challenges in the home life. I would be concerned that in an era of cuts and additional pressure that our circumstances might not be recognised.10/21/2013 6:52 AM	
9	67.The ETI Team were fair and professional in carrying out their work. I felt, however, that we were not given a clear enough reason why our Pastoral Care	Clarity & Transparency

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	fell into 'Very Good' whilst I felt it to be outstanding & not different from other schools nearby who achieved outstanding in their pastoral care. We had School Council in our plans for future development - it had been put on hold from the previous year- despite this knowledge, absence of School Council was cited as a reason for not giving Outstanding grade in this area. The inspection outcome is too dependent on the personality of the ETI member who walks through your school door. There is a distinct lack of clarity & transparency as to what criteria you are being judged against. 'Value Added' is not given sufficient weight in the Inspection Process. Behind every piece of data is a child with a very personal story & history- this needs to be more effectively recognised. 10/21/2013 5:24 AM	
10	91. Principal of Nursery Unit and Primary. Inspectors were friendly and good to work with – very professional. Have an issue with consistency of inspection process. Very aware of school in similar circumstances doing less than we are doing but received a higher grade. No real opportunities to challenge inspection findings with relevant data - it is a take it or leave it. Limited dialogue now to teachers and principal. Entire process needs overhauled refocused and consistency across the system in gradings. 10/21/2013 2:31 AM	Consistency
11	107. The inspection process was led fairly and openly by the reporting inspector and his team. I was appraised along the way and the one issue that was raised was dealt with satisfactorily ~ according to the oral feedback from the reporting inspector during the inspection. Our report was deemed as overall good with no follow up. However, given the amount of 'very good' given in the post inspection report, the Chairperson did ask why the overall grade wasn't a 'very good!' This question was unsatisfactorily answered and there was no opportunity to challenge this decision! Whilst we were 'happy' in one respect the issue left with the school was a relatively minor one and the inspection event did not make any significant bearing on future developments other than give us a 'grade' of where they (inspection team) saw the school. 10/21/2013 1:22 AM	
12	134. We had a positive inspection experience - however I feel this was due to the fact that we had (on request) had a couple of pastoral visits prior to the actual inspection. I was a relatively new principal at the time. However the inspection is only a snapshot and I would much prefer to have more 'spontaneous' visits. I would prefer to see the ETI as a critical friend NOT an organisation of whom we are in awe and of whom we feel we need to impress. I also would like to be 'inspected' by inspectors who have had actual classroom experience within the last 3-5 years even if only for a limited time. Often as professional people dedicated to doing a good job I feel ETI go around different schools and pick up ideas of better and best practice and then come in to another setting and expect to see all of that in the one place. We got an Outstanding in our report but had it been a bad day or the weather hadn't been as kind we may have been awarded a Very Good - I don't know but a snapshot is all that can be seen on an inspection. Sorry to be longwinded! 10/18/2013 5:51 AM	
13	79. stressful but valuable for all 10/21/2013 3:38 AM	Stressful but valuable
14	69. Questions 11 and 12 are difficult to answer. We had a lot of our good practice verified and so did not have a great deal of advice from the Inspectorate as to how to continue to improve other than keep doing what you are doing. 10/21/2013 5:08 AM	Advice

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FEEDBACK

1	15. An inspection process which does not supply feedback on individual staff performance to the Board of governors other than the performance of the principal is of very limited use in allowing Governors to challenge poor teaching standards directly with individuals whose poor performance impacts on the overall assessment of the school and yet they are able to effectively hide under a cloak of anonymity, denial and bluster. The Board of Governors should receive a ranking for each teacher as regards their individual standards of teaching as judged by the inspection team 10/23/2013 2:29 AM	Feedback
2	30. The inspection of the school will not change the nature of pupils from disadvantaged areas where there may be little emphasis in families on GCSE expectations. Unfortunately, teachers doing their best for such pupils are held accountable for their performance and there is little regard to date for parental responsibilities. If inspection of the school is to focus on the quality of Teaching and Learning, Inspectors need to provide more detailed feedback where a teacher's poor performance is an issue. The Inspectors and the School need to work in tandem to eradicate poor performance but inevitably it is left to the Principal to address. The present systems do not support management sufficiently in dealing with poor performance. In the absence of detailed feedback, all staff are tainted with any negative reporting. 10/22/2013 3:14 AM	Feedback
3	57. My own personal experience of the inspection process is this. I have found it to be both a positive and negative tool. This is definitely attributed to the individual personalities of inspectors. I actually found one inspector so intimidating that I had to say that I didn't appreciate his tone. One huge criticism I have is that at the inspection conference in the Templeton Hotel earlier this year the speakers all spoke of their wonderful experiences during their inspections and how the feedback was so constructive. The inspectorate spoke of how it was an honour to be invited into a room to watch teachers working. This is the total opposite of what we have experienced in the past. This was a very one sided view of the inspection process and most definitely didn't reflect our experience. My staff were made to feel under intense scrutiny and there was never any individual feedback on their lessons, good or bad. My teachers wish to develop professionally and would value the professional feedback of the inspectors. In some cases the inspector walked into the room late and sat for a brief part of the lesson and then left early- this to me is just bad manners. It is vital that individual feedback is provided and it must be constructive to enable individuals to reflect on their practice and set meaningful targets to enable effective and meaningful professional development. I expect the process to scrutinise and offer constructive critical advice and hope that this will be reflected in the outcomes of this survey to improve the custom and practice of the ETI. 10/21/2013 6:27 AM	Feedback
4	72. Puts too much pressure on staff, staff then do not perform well and negative feedback leaves an awful lot of support to be given by Principal who is also in need of support. We were told we were too sympathetic to our children's backgrounds and circumstances (80% coming from highly disadvantaged families. Too much of the feed-back was based on personal opinion. 10/21/2013 4:42 AM	Feedback
5	74. I would have liked to have received a breakdown re the quality of teaching viewed in each class. I asked for this but was told it couldn't be given. I would have found it helpful in moving forward. 10/21/2013 4:14 AM	Feedback
6	76. Would like if inspectors had provided feedback to all teachers 10/21/2013 4:07 AM	Feedback
7	81. Have found having two different lead inspectors a very different experience. They had different expectations and attitudes. At present we are nearing the end of a follow up which has been very stressful for the teaching staff. Detailed oral feedback to them on an individual level needs to be given by the inspector.	Stressful & Feedback

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	My school was 13 years without an inspection of any kind. Staff had not participated in much staff development before I took up post in 2008. The need for professional development and training is the key to school improvement. The inspection process has had a big impact on the quality of learning and teaching and professional development. This has been positive but the timescale has been too short and we could not sustain the current workload. 10/21/2013 3:26 AM	
8	83. We felt that the final written report did not fully reflect the oral feedback which we were given at the end of the inspection. The report was much more 'bland' in its detail and did not report on many of the strong positives which were mentioned orally 10/21/2013 3:14 AM	Feedback
9	85. The majority of our staff found the experience very challenging. It had been several years since the school had last been inspected and the school had undergone significant staff changes in that time. The inspectorate acknowledged that the school was striving to secure improvement, but reporting back needs more depth. We also wish to query the way in which staff are questioned and the language used when interviewing staff. A lot of the language used is unclear and staff are often unsure about what they are being asked and feel that guidance on this area would help coordinators etc. to answer queries appropriately and to the best advantage of the school. I have been through a number of inspections and regardless of the outcome I do not believe that the experience of an inspection is helpful. Could the language used for inspection change from one of probing and fault-finding to one of support and improvement. 10/21/2013 2:59 AM	Feedback
10	108 As a Principal in my first year I went into the Inspection process with an open mind and with the intent that it should be a transparent process. I knew very well that there were areas for improvement and had shared these with the ETI but was given no credit whatsoever for having identified these already. The Inspection process turned out to be a very negative process for us all. Our report itself was written in a very negative tone and although the ETI had said that our strengths outweighed the areas for improvement you would not be able to deem that from the report that was published. From very early on in the process I knew what the outcome was going to be for our school, but at no point was I asked my opinion or afforded the opportunity to present evidence to the contrary. We were told that our teaching ranged from inadequate to very good; however the Inspectors did not give teachers individual feedback and so everyone was lumped into that very broad category and left feeling very insecure about their own capabilities and left totally demoralised. We are doing many great things especially in the area of working with our parents and local community, but this was not even mentioned in the report. We were told beforehand that the ETI took on a supportive role in their inspection process; however I feel that the process has been anything but supportive and I have been left to pick up the pieces of a school devastated through a 3 day snippet in the life of our school. I have had to put plans on hold for our future development while the inspection findings become the central focus for the areas that need improved (Q12). I have agreed to Q13 to the inspection being a valuable process in that I will now know what to expect and make sure I am prepared to argue our case more fervently. 10/21/2013 1:20 AM	Feedback
11	124. The teachers found the lack of direct feedback to themselves disappointing. Teachers were not happy with the approach of the Associate Inspector. I feel the inspection process is neither fair nor equitable between schools. There is a wide variance between schools and the reports written. What is deemed good/very good practice in one school may be outstanding in another depending on the team of inspectors. 10/18/2013 10:24 AM	Feedback
12	90. We have always worked hard towards Community Relations and there was no comment made in the Inspection report on the innovative work which was	Feedback

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	being done in that area.10/21/2013 2:34 AM	
13	119I can't comment on many of these questions as I only assumed control of the school in September 2012 which was 2 years after the inspection had taken place. I do, however, feel that the inspection process missed some serious issues that I've since uncovered through working here; it looks like they either didn't care or else had the wool majorly pulled over their eyes! When I read the report before taking over it was pretty much useless to me. It contained very little, if any, recommendations for improvement yet the school only came out as 'good'. I would have thought a school that got this score has some areas for improvement?10/18/2013 2:30 PM	Feedback
14	126.We were pleased with the findings but would have liked individual feedback for each teacher 10/18/2013 8:44 AM	Feedback
15	129. The inspection was valuable in terms of initiating school improvement, but feedback was not useful in guiding this. School improvement has been led by school and CASS - not by feedback from inspection. 10/18/2013 6:59 AM	Feedback
16	116.When they highlighted an issue and I asked for guidance, told they were not here to do so. Also told we were young and would get there one day another comment was to stop trying to make a name for ourselves!!10/19/2013 9:26 AM	
17	132.Whilst the inspection provided indicators towards improvement the way in which it was done left a lot to be desired. There was no feedback given to any teachers the reason given that there wasn't time. As a profession we are always eager to reflect on our practice. The way in which our inspection was carried out left staff feeling very demoralised when their practice gave them no reason to be. Speaking to colleagues in other schools the criteria used in our inspection differed from the criteria by which their schools had been measured. Consistency seems to vary from inspector to inspector. There was also heavy reliance on end of key stage results the reliability of which is doubted by the vast majority of teachers. I believe our inspection was conducted with limited professional conversation and to some extent professional respect. 10/18/2013 6:27 AM	Feedback
18	141. Absolutely no areas were identified for improvement either verbally or written yet no clear information was given as to why the overall grade was very good and not outstanding.10/18/2013 4:22 AM	Feedback
19	136. The experience was very clinical overall and did not allow a professional exchange of views. The professional judgements of teachers and principal are not relevant in an exercise such as this. It is solely the view of the inspectorate with a fixed mind-set. 10/18/2013 5:33 AM	Feedback
20	128.The feedback at the session with the BOG, Principal etc was positive and emphasised a lot of strengths in the school as well as the areas identified for improvement. This was very useful and constructive, however, the written report was written in a more negative tone with the parent rep on the BOG 'astounded' at how the two reports could differ so much.10/18/2013 7:08 AM	Feedback

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1	13 INSPECTION TEAM VERY DISJOINTED - SOME STAFF GIVEN VERBAL FEEDBACK, OTHER NOT SPOKEN TO AT ALL. EITHER DO IT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. IN REPORT, WORD 'OUTSTANDING' USED 4 TIMES 'VERY GOOD' 4 TIMES 'GOOD' ONCE - SATISFACTORY NEVER MENTIONED - OVERALL 'GOOD' AS OUTCOME - RI WOULD NOT EXPLAIN WHY NOR GIVE WAY TO MOVE FORWARD. 10/23/2013 3:14 AM	Consistency & Feedback
2	39. Whilst the school did very well and was deemed to be 'outstanding' in many aspects of the provision, overall we were deemed to be 'very good.' We would have really appreciated feedback on what we would have needed to make 'outstanding.' There is not the consistency that there should be in terms of how much interaction between principal and reporting inspector which seems to vary enormously from school to school. There needs to be a move away from such a focus on end of key stage levels as we all know there is not enough consistency from school to school. These results have become far too high stakes to the point that levels given are often inaccurate which is very hard on the schools who level honestly. 10/21/2013 1:49 PM	Feedback & Consistency
3	59. Without a clear framework for inspection we will continue to have a pot luck system of inspectors who make judgments based on personal opinion, or whatever else is their mystery chosen focus for the day- usually based on something they have read but never actually put into practice themselves. There is no consistency within the inspection process and no clear guidance of how schools are to improve their gradings -or even what constitutes the grading system. One school who receives outstanding can do less than another who receives a lower grade depending on the inspector. The inspection process is not useful in any way other than to strike fear into school leaders and make them uncomfortable with their practice. We were given a very good with no points for development because things needed 'to embed'?! 10/21/2013 6:03 AM	Consistency
4	89. The process was overwhelming for a very young staff. As a self-evaluative school, we clearly were aware of the areas for development which the lead inspector confirmed. However, collecting the evidence to support the self-evaluative report before hand was so time consuming that as Principal I wasn't able to support staff in their worries about the classroom visits. Positives were it affirmed the work we are doing in self-evaluation and with a very good outcome confirmed that we were a '2' school. I challenged the numerical method of reporting 1-6 and this was taken on board as they changed to the current method after I met with a former District Inspector and reported my feelings on this system. 10/21/2013 2:39 AM	Consistency
5	99. My school has been inspected five times in the last seven years and there is no clarity in what makes a school 'good' or better. The ETI seem totally driven by examination performance despite tremendous work being done to improve the attainment of pupils at the lowest end of the academic spectrum. Unfortunately these pupils do not appear in the 5+ A*-C statistics and therefore we are seen to be failing them. 10/21/2013 1:51 AM	Consistency
6	106. While the school was evaluated as being "very good", some of the staff were left deflated by comments made to them and there was no sense of achievement at the end of the process. The "personality" of the lead inspector sets the tone for inspection and, unfortunately, there are inconsistencies in this respect. 10/21/2013 1:23 AM	Inconsistencies
7	94. The criteria was not detailed to either myself or the staff. They did meet with staff to outline the process only 10/21/2013 2:10 AM	Criteria & feedback
8	113. The problems are that there is a great variation between Inspectors. Some seem to be much more reasonable than others 10/20/2013 9:17 AM	Consistency
9	139. It appeared that very little account of our school context and intake was afforded to the process. Rather standards are assessed according to	Criteria

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	<p>measures external to the school. The criteria against which schools are inspected are unclear, not explicit enough. Inspectors personal make-ups appear to influence both approach and outcomes. There would be generally held concerns about the outcomes of challenging inspectors' findings and opinions. Requirements from inspectors could grow and develop during an inspection. Ways and contacts for accessing appropriate support was not explicit. When comments referred to issues regarding management bodies eg. Accommodation and site, no follow-up from authorities to address the same were forthcoming.</p> <p>10/18/2013 5:07 AM</p>	
10	<p>142.A short inspection of our school was carried out on 5/12/11. The inspectors failed to find the measure of our school and we had no opportunity to challenge the inspectors judgements. The governors issued a complaint against the attitude and findings of the inspectorate. Even though the complaint was followed through the three stages of the procedure it was evident that the process was fundamentally flawed and was used by the Chief Inspector to ensure that the omnipotence of the inspectorate was maintained rather than investigate the substance of the complaint. Further, the Chief Inspector published the report before the complaint had been investigated. A move which I felt was very unprofessional.</p> <p>10/18/2013 4:07 AM</p>	Challenge

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STRESSFUL

1	17. The actual Inspection which was of two days duration was a stressful, harrowing period for all and whilst it was only of two days duration it still had a majorly negative impact of those associated with the work of the school. The use of an Associate Inspector caused concern. The two accompanying members of the ETI were professional and courteous however the third member (an AA) was overly demanding, critical and lacked professional courtesy. This causes great concern and whilst this school performed extremely well in the inspection we felt as a community that it was a "brutal" experience and one which will take the school some time to recover from.10/23/2013 12:59 AM	Stressful
2	19.As a teaching principal, I found the time frame for completion of the self-evaluative pro-forma prior to inspection very short and stressful. It is an excellent idea and I found it a great way to reflect on our practice but ended up working until the early hours each night as I wanted to do it well. I feel 2 weeks notice is perfect for schools to prepare for the inspection.10/22/2013 12:11 PM	Stressful
3	20. Absolutely devastated some staff. 10/22/2013 9:50 AM	Stressful
4	22.Too much fear among staff. Added unnecessarily to stress levels and workload. Over emphasis on challenge and not enough focus on support or help to improve. 10/22/2013 8:49 AM	Stress
5	24.This was my third inspection and definitely was as by far the most stressful of the three. It was much more in-depth than previous inspections. Although we were pleased with the report comments ranging from good to outstanding I feel that as a principal I was left none the wiser as to whom my excellent practitioners were and who might need support.10/22/2013 7:20 AM	Stressful
6	26.The inspection process is a very stressful one. Many teachers are under so much pressure that they are not performing at their best while some others excel under pressure and give a false appearance. Maybe it is an idea to shorten the notice time for an inspection and lessen pressure for schools. Inspectors need to have a more realistic view of school life. Inspections in current form are very artificial in nature. 10/22/2013 5:59 AM	Stressful
7	27.The inspection shook the confidence of those teachers that really cared about the children in their care. It left a legacy of bitterness behind and diminished the learning experience of the pupils. The inspector who was most critical had a very patchy reputation in her own school. It has done nothing to enhance the teaching and learning experience in the school. The inspectors did not allow for any deviation to teaching and learning outside their strict dogma.	Stressful
8	32. I hadn't seen an inspector in almost eleven years, which I felt was totally dissatisfactory. The whole experience was extremely stressful leaving staff shattered and difficult to motivate after receiving outstanding. 10/22/2013 2:44 AM	Stressful
9	33.We had a very positive outcome but it was extremely stressful for all concerned! 10/22/2013 2:28 AM	Stressful
10	41.The whole process was driven by Key Stage targets and achievements. it was extremely stressful for all concerned. 10/21/2013 1:15 PM	Stressful
11	42.Stress. Promised help does not materialise. The School is left to carry the can, the promised support is disjointed and uncoordinated10/21/2013 12:53 PM	Stressful
12	44. The inspection was a charade as the only thing that was of interest to the inspectors was the statistic for GCSE A-C and they came with an agenda to close the school. We had 3 different inspection reports before the published one, each one more negative than the previous. Staff were poorly treated - indeed my office staff refused to bring them trays because of the attitude of the inspectors. Several parents complained about the interrogation of their	

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	daughters on pastoral issues - and when I mentioned this, I was told that 2 inspectors were present and no interrogation took place!10/21/2013 11:38 AM	
13	46.Staff were stressed but found the process better than they expected it to be. They were concerned that they did not receive more significant feedback to give them pointers or affirmation for the future. They felt this was a very important part of the process that was minimised.10/21/2013 9:58 AM	Stressful & Feedback
14	47.However we believe inspections should be unannounced to avoid stress that comes with it 10/21/2013 9:19 AM	Stressful
15	65.The inspection process was one of the most stressful times in the lives of the majority of the staff of this school 10/21/2013 5:40 AM	Stressful
16	66.Inspectors took anonymous staff surveys at face value - never investigated just laid blame at door of leadership. Feel this is very unfair.10/21/2013 5:38 AM	Unfair
17	68.The inspection made no reference to the fact that I am a teaching Principal and how diverse and demanding a role this is.10/21/2013 5:22 AM	
18	34. The process left the staff in the school feeling very flat and wondering where else they could find the energy to do things differently. Unfortunately a couple of the members of our inspection team were very unapproachable and were not at all willing to listen to our point of view. We have responded to the advice/areas for development that were identified to us as we are a very professional body of people, however the outcome was very de-motivating and it was hard to come back from the lack of enthusiasm that was shown for what we believe we do very well in our school.10/22/2013 2:15 AM	Demotivating
19	29. The impact of the inspection was a demoralised staff, damaged reputation with parents (which the school had worked hard to improve) and a drop in numbers leading to financial issues.10/22/2013 3:22 AM	Demoralised
20	50.The inspection was "done to us, rather than done with us" 10/21/2013 7:24 AM	
21	80. Had no indication what the final judgement was going to be. When asked for reasons for the grade given, it was very vague with only minor suggestions for adjustments. It was an extremely harrowing experience for all concerned and particularly for leaders. Having been through a number of inspections in my teaching career, this was the most daunting and stressful. I always felt the Inspection process confirmed good practice but also was there as a sounding board for improvement and a support mechanism - now it seems more like the name and shame scenario. Having said that, this school seems to have got off lightly compared to many. The whole purpose behind the practice now seems to be scrutiny but very little support. I also found that personnel in the inspectorate varied in their level of requirements and judgements. Equally the emphasis changes depending on what is current at the time. 10/21/2013 3:27 AM	Stressful
22	93.The inspection process is highly stressful for all-why not move to a system whereby the inspectorate are using their expertise to support and develop schools in a more collegiate manner 10/21/2013 2:25 AM	Stressful
23	98.Goalposts keep changing, at each inspection there is something new in vogue. Process much too stressful for teachers. 10/21/2013 2:06 AM	Stressful
24	15. We had a very positive inspection outcome but the whole process was extremely stressful. I think this is largely due to the public nature of the outcome. 10/22/2013 2:38 AM	Stressful
25	118. A traumatic experience for all staff. Inspectors should have an on-going advisory role. There is confusion among teachers and Board advisors about what inspectors are looking for and apparent differences in views among the inspectors themselves. 10/18/2013 3:23 PM	Traumatic
26	114.We are a reflective school and continually striving to do the best for our children and parents who are the real inspectors. The inspection process is extremely stressful for all concerned and I hope to retire before the next one even though I still enjoy my job with the children! 10/20/2013 6:58 AM	Stressful

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27	123.The actual inspection went well and was carried out in a professional manner but the stress it caused was huge10/18/2013 12:09 PM	<i>Stressful</i>
28	133. A 'satisfactory' led to a lot of soul searching amongst already hard working staff in school. High stress levels before during and after actual inspection. SMT left to pick up the pieces when ETI left. Individual ETI seemed to take 'personal delight' in negative feedback. Follow-up went well with completely different ETI personnel.10/18/2013 6:05 AM	<i>Stressful</i>
29	138.There are too many occasions, in many schools, when good teachers, Co Coordinators and Senior Staff have been left upset after inspection. This is not conducive to improvement, and I, personally, find it unforgivable. 10/18/2013 5:18 AM	<i>Upset</i>
30	102.Confrontational, unpleasant and lacking in any real empathy or insight. 10/21/2013 1:45 AM	<i>Unpleasant</i>
31	84.The anonymous questionnaires are a disgrace and allow anyone to misrepresent the truth, slander or destroy a colleague's reputation. If they are to be conducted - they should be open and transparent - named and shared with all concerned - with real integrity and accountability. 10/21/2013 3:11 AM	

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DATA-DRIVEN

1	5 We felt that the only criteria was key stage results and it did not take into account variations in class size, for example one year there were 6 children in KS2. 2 were SEN, 2 at Level 4 and 2 at Level 5. [That meant we were below the NI average and we did not feel that was taken into account because all they looked at were the statistics.10/24/2013 6:29 AM	Data driven
2	8 Only interested in end of key stage data. Not interested in our 'value added' 10/23/2013 1:34 PM	Data
3	14 Focuses too much on data with a high expectation in all schools for high scores/levels regardless of percentage SEN or percentage low ability especially when there are neither the resources, equipment or the manpower. Classes are big and there is sometimes little support from Parents. Inspectors expect you to build a mansion when sometimes all you have is sticks and string!10/23/2013 2:53 AM	Data
4	40. Inspectors seemed more interested in their preconceived and narrow focus of what constitutes good management/leadership. 10/21/2013 1:24 PM	Narrow Focus
5	45. At the time of the Inspection the Inspectors were data driven. There was an inappropriate emphasis on end of Key Stage results without taking into account the number of pupils with statements or significant special educational needs in the year group. These information had been provided along with an analysis of our results compared to the NI average and the bench marking. Just because children aren't entitled to FSM doesn't mean they can't have special educational needs! I feel that this agenda was not the fault of the Inspectors but was one they had been detailed. The school was designated a 'Good' school. The only thing we had to address was to further develop use of data. It would appear during discussion with Inspectors and Governors that if the end of KS2 results had been in a higher quartile the school would have been 'very good'. We were 'outstanding' in other areas including in teaching.10/21/2013 11:01 AM	Data Driven
6	97. The inspection process did not take into account fully the low levels of ability of pupils entering the school at Year 8 and the achievements at the end of Year 12. 10/21/2013 2:06 AM	
7	110. We have been adapting (slowly) to the emphasis on use of data but are frustrated that, on some occasions, the data seem to be ALL important. Our inspectors were highly professional and conducted themselves totally appropriately, keeping us well informed at all stages. It was, however, still a very stressful experience.10/21/2013 1:14 AM	Data Driven
8	130. Our school was given inadequate based upon end of key stage levels not on the quality of work taking place in the school. The overall grading does not fit with our report or the comments and observations made on the week of inspection. 10/18/2013 6:57 AM	Data
9	36. As a small school we sensed that the inspection was being used as a tool in 'area based planning'! 10/22/2013 1:43 AM	Context
10	11 The inspectors did not take note of the deprived background the children came from and the reason for the number of children on the special needs register.10/23/2013 3:41 AM	Context & value-added
11	101. I was only on post 2 years - children can only do their best - schools should be judged against a child's natural ability and not the fact if the child got a level 4 or not. FSM has nothing to do with academic ability. 10/21/2013 1:48 AM	Context
12	117. I still do not believe anyone can understand how difficult it is to teach in a socially deprived area when they want to see results ie End of Key Stage results. We have to be seen in improving 'small steps.' See Sims manager predicted scores 10/19/2013 2:33 AM	Context

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SUPPORT

1	4 A steep learning process left us with a lot of work to do. But in hindsight, we were inspected at a very apt time, as we received all necessary support from the Board, I do not think that half of the support would be available now. 10/25/2013 6:24 AM	Support
2	56. The support my co-ordinators and staff have received from CASS has been excellent. Having a mentor as Principal has also been invaluable. There is a need for more of this type of practice and support if all schools are to develop and improve. 10/21/2013 3:33 AM	Support
3	61. I was only in post as principal for 5 months when we were inspected - this was a year too soon. 10/21/2013 5:53 AM	Unfair
4	120. Inspection team was very aloof made us feel on edge instead of being a critical friend 10/18/2013 1:34 PM	
5	125. The Inspection process was very difficult for me as a new principal of only 6 months there had not been time for me to make the necessary changes to the school development in that short time and felt that this was not taken into account. There were many difficulties previous to my appointment and I was slowly making progress I thought had done a great job of turning the school around but previous difficulties or problems were not looked at it was what was seen at the time which was noted upon and I felt this was unfair. 10/18/2013 8:58 AM	Unfair
2	92. At the time of our inspection I had only been Principal for 11/2 years and had never been through an inspection before. I didn't challenge the inspectors about any decision that had been made about our school. 10/21/2013 2:26 AM	Unfair
7	115. The questionnaires allow staff opportunities to air grievances. They are reported back to the school at the beginning of the inspection process. This entire system needs to be reviewed. 10/20/2013 2:44 AM	Unfair
7	115. The questionnaires allow staff opportunities to air grievances. They are reported back to the school at the beginning of the inspection process. This entire system needs to be reviewed. 10/20/2013 2:44 AM	Unfair

GENERAL

1	77. I was not in post at our last inspection and am therefore unsure of some responses but I have based our most SDP and our recent improvements on new initiatives from the board and from our own self-evaluation rather than the inspection findings. 10/21/2013 3:55 AM	General
3	96. I am a new principal in this school and was not directly involved in the process - I base my comments on how school has developed since then 10/21/2013 2:07 AM	General
4	103. I am completing this as a newly appointed Principal who was not in post at the last inspection. However from reading the report and obtaining the opinions of my SMT I am answering these questions. 10/21/2013 1:45 AM	General
5	105. question 12 - it is too early to answer this question as inspection only 2 weeks ago 10/21/2013 1:38 AM	General
6	111. The inspection to which I refer was a Focus Inspection and not a full school inspection 10/21/2013 12:14 AM	General
8	131. Would prefer more regular contact (termly) with our district Inspector. 10/18/2013 6:36 AM	Approach

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Q22 Please add any comments you wish to make about your experience / views on the inspection process Answered: 85 Skipped: 366100%

46.	We had a very positive experience of the inspection process 10/21/2013 4:55 AM	Positive
56.	We learned much from the process. We appreciate that data is crucial but the emphasis was also on the other needs of children - we found it to be a warm process in which much qualitative data was gathered through observation and informal discussion with, for example, student teachers. Thankfully the process shone lights into areas we overlooked and we are thankful for that. 10/21/2013 2:46 AM	Positive
74.	Fair and supportive team 10/18/2013 11:40 AM	Positive
11.	In my experience the Inspectorate were interested in building a complete picture of the school. There was an emphasis on data but I didn't feel it was data led. We were not held responsible for factors outside our control, but that may have been more to do with our particular school experience.10/22/2013 7:12 AM	
20.	We cannot make excuses for poor teaching and it is very easy to hide behind the process of inspections and blame the outcomes rather than reflecting openly and honestly on what is happening in the classroom and throughout the school. As an associate assessor I have found the teams often to be more generous and positive than I would have expected!! 10/21/2013 1:54 PM	Positive
54.	We had been waiting for an inspection for some time and when we got notice we just embraced it. The process was not too daunting and members of staff appreciated very much, conversations between themselves and ETI during the inspection. 10/21/2013 3:09 AM	Positive
38.	I cannot complain about our own experience; however I am aware that other schools are not as happy with the process, and some of my answers have reflected this. 10/21/2013 5:56 AM	With reservations
42.	During our Inspection the verbal feedback was very helpful. I wouldn't say that the statements were measurable.10/21/2013 5:51 AM	With reservations

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	36. Extremely stressful re factors beyond our control ie unsettled child, staff absences 10/21/2013 6:03 AM	Stressful
	39. Extremely & unduly stressful. Inspectors not in touch with the reality of teaching day-to-day. 10/21/2013 5:56 AM	Stressful
	82. Stressful. 10/18/2013 5:20 AM	Stressful

	2. There was no guidance as to how to further develop the practice in the school or staff development. While the school achieved the top grading the reason I believe my school to be outstanding is that we are constantly evolving and innovative in our delivery. If I had simply gone on the inspection feedback I would have stood still for the last 4 years as no progression was suggested. No school is beyond progression and that appeared to be the attitude when you are declared outstanding. 10/26/2013 1:46 PM	Feedback
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	5. Having just finished the New Model Inspection - there was an excessive reliance on quantitative data and assessment and examinations with outcomes already decided before the visit from data sent prior inspection. Rather than an enabling process, I am left dispirited if not destroyed as a person to continue to lead a school which I would say is a good school but deemed satisfactory. The process totally ignored value-added, family and community factors, the impact of selection and the journey the school has undertaken to raise self-esteem and performance. There was no training other than what was on line informing us of the big picture -- it was hit the ground running. It is totally unacceptable process. I am personally left totally devastated and demotivated with the task to support staff!!!! 10/23/2013 3:49 AM	Data Driven
	7. The pastoral caring ethos in a school, something which requires hard work and strong leadership is not high enough up the scale as a measuring tool for a successful school. It is often used in a report as the token positive element in what may otherwise be a failed inspection 10/23/2013 3:02 AM	Data Driven
	9. The focus on our inspection was on data and its application. Not everything of value to a child's life can be measured! 10/23/2013 1:07 AM	Data Driven
	14. Inspection of End of Key Stage Data is a complete farce as schools fix their data to match so called norms for NI. Inspection must take account of individual pupils ability and progress. 10/22/2013 2:57 AM	Data Driven
	29. The ETI is 'a law unto itself'; the organisation, as I currently view it, is populated by data-driven, 'checkbox' inspectors who still - too often - have little / no direct experience of working in / leading the learning environment they are inspecting. Little account is taken of context and finance; it seems to be a 'one size fits all' approach. A visit from our District Inspector recently offered the ETI as a replacement 'helping' service in the absence of CASS. I found this patronising and disappointing, given that there is no clear strategy of maintaining contact between schools and the ETI. This school had invited the District Inspector to attend celebration events on two occasions; neither invitation was even acknowledged, let alone accepted / rejected. More recently, the service refused to provide a speaker to open a teachers' conference at which more than 150 practitioners would be present; such an approach is risible. As a professional, I have undergone inspections on five occasions; I have found them to be fair and clearly structured / managed. Recent experiences point to a much less organised and less clearly led body who have much ground to make up in terms of relationship building - more so in the light of recent evidence that the ETI is very much an extension of the Department of Education's policy. 10/21/2013 7:09 AM	Data Driven
	31. At times the process becomes overly dependent on data. The actual overall	Data Driven

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	experience of the pupils and the transformation of the pupils into mature responsible young adults I feel is missed. Education is not a product.10/21/2013 6:56 AM	
	32. I believe over the last 3 years the emphasis has shifted very much to a data driven process 10/21/2013 6:50 AM	Data Driven
	34. Inspection no longer focuses on learning and teaching but is driven purely by data and does not take account of a school's context.10/21/2013 6:11 AM	Data Driven
	40.We have very small class numbers so one weak child in a class really alters overall results – the inspectors did recognise this through the averaging of the last 3 years results. 10/21/2013 5:55 AM	Data Driven
	51.They judged this school purely on the data results that were out of date at the time - working on scores from the previous year. This school is particularly conscientious when levelling at the end of each key stage and would be quite conservative with results. This did not go well in our favour. The teaching was found to be good to outstanding in every case but the school received good because of the data. The Nursery was given Satisfactory - this, I was told, also had a bearing on the overall grade for the school yet there was a separate report and grade for each level.10/21/2013 3:33 AM	Data Driven
	52.From our experience the inspectors were totally data driven. We were too honest and found ourselves penalised. All our tests are administered under robust conditions I would question if all schools do this.10/21/2013 3:30 AM	Data Driven
	53. It is clear we are measured by certain factors irrespective of how well we are doing, or how innovative practice is - if it doesn't fit their 'spec' it is overlooked or only commented on orally! 10/21/2013 3:13 AM	Data Driven
	64. In our experience and in talking with fellow principals I am left with the impression if not the reality that the inspection process can vary according to the team inspecting. Our experience was of a reporting inspector who was keen to listen and understand the context of the school. He noted the Key stage results but was eager to learn what the school was doing in the context of its own data gathering and made due and appropriate reference to this. Perhaps because the standards set and other results achieved demonstrated improvement our experience was more positive. This does not always seem to be the case however and as a whole I am left with a real sense that we are being driven by data and the desire to produce statistical evidence which demonstrates improvement! 10/21/2013 1:28 AM	Data Driven
	67.The business of data and expectations of higher levels of achievement regardless of individual pupil differences is unrealistic. Will all the data make the children learn any better? A child who achieves level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1 but can't get past level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2 becomes a matter of failure for us in school. The reasons for the lack of a level 5 may be spurious but we are on the back foot immediately with the inspectors.10/21/2013 1:15 AM	Data Driven
	68.Data: By way of an example, a parental pre-inspection form had clearly and agenda where all of the most negative boxes were selected. (No other parent had indicated any single negative box) This was the reason stated for a very intrusive "look" into our child protection procedures which ensued. 10/21/2013 1:14 AM	Data Driven
	72.My school needed a lot of work when I took over in terms of bringing it into the 21st century. Even some major cosmetic and branding work. I have also been putting in place after-school clubs, wrap-around care and a whole revised music provision but it pains me that when I read inspection reports none of these things seem to matter. It's all about the academic data yet a school cannot provide well for its community without these things! I feel like my 1000s of hours' work are meaningless to them. 10/18/2013 2:33 PM	Data Driven
	75.Very data driven - attitude is that if data doesn't show it then it isn't good. Not all data is taken into account. Our school had some very good data analysis work done, but it wasn't what they were looking for so in their view, it didn't count! 10/18/2013 7:02 AM	Data Driven

76. We showed evidence of value added and internal data which showed how most of our children are actually over achieving but the only data of interest was end of key stage levels. 10/18/2013 6:59 AM	Data Driven
17. The inspection process provides no information about the improvements pupils make year on year ie progression, but rather about the final exam results. A more comprehensive view of achievement and progression would provide evidence of the work schools are doing, rather than patting on the back those who start from a very strong base with very able children. 10/22/2013 2:17 AM	Data & Value-added
35. We need a system of appropriate baseline assessment, starting in the nursery schools, so that progress may be observed throughout a child's school life and not just measured by end of key stage results. This would demonstrate each child's progress even if they do not meet expected (inappropriate for their community context) levels. It would also ensure smoother transitions for children between schools and settings. Teachers would have to take more notice of where a child has come from and their specific learning needs. It would also help to raise attainment as teaching would be able to move children on from where they are at and not take them backwards at the start of a school year as currently happens in some schools. 10/21/2013 6:09 AM	Value-added
28. I believe in the numbers - it is important the schools know where they are and what they are trying to achieve. I also think that the soft data also is also important. I have big issues with the amount of money wasted on CBA - which isn't really tell us much are were mostly just put into files. 10/21/2013 7:23 AM	Data driven
49. While the process is measurement driven, our experience was that the ETI looked carefully at contextual factors. My criticism would be that they view outstanding lessons before Inspections and therefore have a pre-decided view of what is outstanding. In fact, in any school, a really good introductory lesson might be all-singing, all-dancing and then be followed by a set of 6 lessons rolling out from that. I think my staff felt under pressure to be show-casing during the visit, rather than continuing on with their work, because the ETI did not necessarily view their lesson as outstanding unless they had seen the 'performance' aspect. This is a weakness. 10/21/2013 3:46 AM	Unfair & data driven
63. Once size fits all approach - driven by a political agenda 10/21/2013 1:46 AM	Data driven
69. At times the inspection grade seems to be pre-ordained e.g the percentage of children at level 4+. This nonsense is ruining education 10/20/2013 9:19 AM	Data driven
55. The inspection process needs to take more account of value added to children's lives. Under pastoral care they do take this into account but number crunching is their main aim and we must meet targets some of which are impossible given the external elements which we are dealing with. 10/21/2013 2:47 AM	Value Added
59. There needs to be a more detailed measure for Value Added 10/21/2013 2:20 AM	Value Added
62. There is no robust method of showing 'value added' in Northern Ireland Schools as there is little confidence in the accuracy of KS2 and KS3 levels. 10/21/2013 1:54 AM	Value Added

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4. Associate inspector didn't actually have the experience of the children's learning difficulties 10/23/2013 7:49 AM	context
1. There is inappropriate emphasis placed upon Value Added in the inspection process. 10/27/2013 9:00 AM	Context-value added
10. It takes no account of what we do which is supporting all children and valuing their contribution. 10/22/2013 9:52 AM	Context
3. Context definitely not taken into consideration 10/23/2013 1:36 PM	Context
30. The context of individual year groups must be taken into account when reviewing the relevant data. 10/21/2013 7:05 AM	Context
44. Schools are given the opportunity to explain their context but I'm not convinced that it is fully taken into consideration. 10/21/2013 5:29 AM	Context
71. Free School Meals is a ridiculous way to compare schools. I am appalled that we are still using FSM bandings! 10/18/2013 2:42 PM	Criteria/FSM
57. Many inspectors are totally removed from the reality of a busy working school 10/21/2013 2:43 AM	Context
61. ETI staff are out of date with the difficulties teachers are experiencing daily because the Inspectors have not taught in many years. 10/21/2013 2:02 AM	Context
66. They take account of value added if schools provide that information 10/21/2013 1:20 AM	Context
70 One of the inspectors should have taught in a socially deprived area in the last 5 years and have taught in a socially deprived area for at least 10 years. 10/19/2013 2:36 AM	Context

8. No criteria provided.....what markers are there for each grade? 10/23/2013 1:46 AM	Criteria
27. Schools' own data was not accessed by the inspection team as it would have dealt with social context, value added etc. Some data is good for the school's side of the equation, but it needs to be accepted as useful by inspectors. They seem only to use End of key Stage 2 results and make their narrative fit the results in a crude and tunnel vision sense. 10/21/2013 7:28 AM	Criteria
13. The inspection process should adopt a partnership approach to raising standards. I believe that inspection and management working together can support effective change. Teachers sometimes find it difficult to accept negative comment from some who would not be able to deliver any different outcomes if they were working in a similar situation. It often appears that schools are inspected by inspectors who have had little if any experience of teaching in areas of social deprivation. 10/22/2013 3:21 AM	Criteria

16. Again I think that school leaders must put forward the case for their school. It's hard for ETI to go against school judgements that are based on sound evaluative practices. However it is the potential difference between ETI Teams that cause the greatest issues - in conversation with colleagues there appears to be a lack of consistency within ETI. 10/22/2013 2:23 AM	Inconsistencies
78. Covered earlier - we had a positive inspection with very positive feedback and 'treatment' - however I know schools where I would consider the practice to be very good who have not had the same experience. Different ETI inspectors have different approaches and it would appear not always to be consistent. 10/18/2013 6:13 AM	Inconsistencies
85. It adds very little of value to the school improvement process. There is no consistency and it depends on 'who you get' as to the approach. Money would be much better spent on the professional development of teachers.	Inconsistencies
12. It always seems that inspectors are sent out to find fault. They have their	Criteria &

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	own agenda and are not interested in schools which have had success in areas of teaching and learning not on their agenda. Why are ex-grammar school teachers inspecting primary schools particularly since they not only have never taught in primary schools but have never taught a class in 10/20 years.10/22/2013 3:30 AM	inconsistencies experience
	43. The emphasis on FSM is over rated. I have always argued on measuring the progress of pupils within their seven years at Primary school instead of the level they leave with. For example, many of our pupils beginning in P1 could be levelled at -1 if it existed and leave at Level 2 which is a rise of 3 levels. However, many pupils entering P1 where the home learning environment is very positive are beginning school at a more advanced level and yet may only leave at level 4.10/21/2013 5:41 AM	Criteria
	65.A complete revision of school inspection is required which provides actual support to improve rather than a snapshot view based on a very narrow set of indicators. 10/21/2013 1:21 AM	Criteria
	6.Principal's view was not taken into account. 10/23/2013 3:43 AM	challenge

	21. Focus on one negative comment from parent questionnaires rather than the 99.9% positive comments.10/21/2013 1:26 PM	Unfair
	23. There are issues that one person cannot change but one is left to feel that it is One takes bad reports personally10/21/2013 12:55 PM	Unfair
	24 My BOG realised that no account of the Numeracy/Literacy/SEN scores at intake or at KS3 were taken into account by the inspectorate and asked how it was fair to judge a School's GCSE results without so doing - they were told that it was not their practice to look at these scores! They were asked to identify teachers who were in each category eg. good, satisfactory, etc and how teachers who had always been previously judged as excellent were now just deemed satisfactory and the reporting inspectors refused to answer.10/21/2013 11:46 AM	Unfair
	37.While they are supposed to be advisors it never feels that way. There is always the feeling that they arrive to find fault and no matter how hard we are trying with the very limited resources that we have due to spending cuts there is never any recognition of this fact. Their report should speak of the unfair distribution of school funding including many of the earmarked funds that have over the years been a great asset for many schools to have while others like myself get NOTHING. This unfairness is never taken into account when the school is compared to others who can provide all the extra resources that the extra money can buy.10/21/2013 6:03 AM	Unfair
	41. In my experience, value added is commented upon by the inspection team; however the school is still judged in overall terms and reported on as such, in terms of schools in advantaged areas, where schools may be very successful without any need for excellent teaching.10/21/2013 5:54 AM	Unfair
	47.The inspection process fails to measure contributions on a pastoral basis and the impact schools make on students experiencing difficulties. It is unduly biased towards performance results with unrealistic expectations in some instances, with minimal consideration also given for students with special educational needs. It would be interesting to find out how many actual ETI Inspectors have taught in Secondary schools with a high percentage of SEN and FSM? 10/21/2013 4:42 AM	Unfair
	58. Not only are schools held to account by factors outside of their control but via the parental audit schools are denied the opportunity to respond to complaints in a contextualised manner. This to me is against all natural laws of justice.10/21/2013 2:27 AM	Unfair

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60. Although I was not in post during the inspection I feel the teachers were not given a good opportunity to show what they had added to the pupils, especially in literacy and numeracy.10/21/2013 2:13 AM	Unfair
73. I feel that nursery schools are held more to account than the private sector - they have factors outside their control overlooked that nursery schools are slated for 10/18/2013 12:13 PM	Unfair
81. It was felt that some schools appeared to be favoured over others even when it is known that standards are significantly different from one school to another. This would appear to suggest that other dynamics can be at work. Base-lining children to ensure appropriate teaching is desirable but standards expected take no cognisance of the current cohort of children in any given year group. Social circumstances and factors impinging on the home appear to be ignored or minimised in the inspection process and when it comes to reporting in the public domain. The degree of influence of schools on children's performance lies around the 20% mark but this is not reflected in the process and execution of inspections. Numeracy and Literacy levels are the primary concerns of government but many other expectations are imposed and impact daily on schools; there appears to be no acknowledgement of other demands on schools that would serve to inform and temper appropriately expectations in the core area of pupils' performance. In this context the curriculum should also be reviewed to allow time to develop core skills in all children - the curriculum is too packed or 'broad' and schools often have too few RSO resources at their disposal. 10/18/2013 5:28 AM	Unfair
83. The baseline ability of the pupils entering the school is not considered in any way. The simplistic categorisation of schools in FSM bands is a flawed and misleading measure by which to judge the school context. The focus on evaluating school performance against a NI Average condemns half of all schools in the country to "failure". 10/18/2013 4:25 AM	Criteria unfair
50. The overall rating which a school receives is predicated by outcomes regardless of the progress made by pupils or the barriers to success that many schools are working hard to overcome - not a satisfactory state of affairs.10/21/2013 3:42 AM	Support
45. The Inspection process measures success on the many initiatives voiced on schools by the Department. Many of these such as Healthy Lifestyles have to educate and change parental attitudes before schools can make a difference.10/21/2013 5:12 AM	Support
19. Special Schools are quite different. Regular inspections. Excellent relationships. ETI & SP Schools would still benefit from schools supporting each other - mentoring, shadowing tutoring model where we learn from each other and support each other and monitor each other's progress/improvement targets. ETI would then provide an invaluable role in moderating procedures...including SE procedures.10/21/2013 4:40 PM	Support
77. As a former Associate Assessor I was at times perturbed by the distance between ETI members' expectations and the daily working reality of a school.10/18/2013 6:44 AM	Support
84. The lack of conversations between teachers and inspectors is very concerning. Teachers do not have enough opportunity to describe, for example how they manage their planning file. Documentation is often written at a level to satisfy the inspectorate rather than a "working" level appropriate to a professional teacher. There is a distinct lack of individual feedback which would allow for issues to be discussed rather than assumptions to be made. ETI cause stress and anxiety before they arrive, why is that? What causes the profession not to see their visits as helpful in supporting the work of the school towards further improvement? 10/18/2013 3:55 AM	Stress/Support
22. Since it has been 7 yrs since our school's last inspection I am answering the questions from our experience 7 yrs ago. The inspection process may have	General

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	changed since then. 10/21/2013 1:09 PM	
	25. The main concern about the Inspection process here is the attitude and the agenda of the Chief Inspector. Is she trying to change our system into that of OFSTED? 10/21/2013 11:05 AM	General
	26. I remember how the reporting inspector in the early years didn't say hello to the children, and was aloof from them for most of the observations. 10/21/2013 10:33 AM	General
	33. As per question 14 10/21/2013 6:27 AM	General
	48. I have come into a school that is need of updating major resources - KS2 reading scheme, play based resources etc. - and my budget has been left very tight by the outgoing principal - difficult to push for curricular improvements with this 10/21/2013 4:28 AM	General
	79. Important role of principal to put the school in context for the visiting ETI team. 10/18/2013 5:47 AM	General

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Q32 Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please use the space below if you wish to offer further comments on any of the issues raised. Answered: 97 Skipped: 354

	48. I can see the value in No.32 but I fear that this could open to abuse if it is too friendly. My experience with ETI has always been open, approachable but professional - I would not want to see this change 10/21/2013 4:30 AM	Positive
	57. I think the inspection process is valuable and allows everyone to be held to account. 10/21/2013 3:24 AM	Positive
	61. The fact that ETI acts as an external monitor on the work of schools should be valued. Schools too often oppose / reject ETI's outcomes when in the final analysis schools should remember that adults caring for children must see that the process is about children. In terms of a critical friend/mentor inspection, one would never accept that if restaurants were to adopt the same approach! People need to be real about the need for the inspection service as it stands - none of us would want children/schools to slip through a net of complacency. 10/21/2013 2:53 AM	Positive
	54. I know the anxiety that the current inspection process causes. Especially when the school has not been recognised for the excellent or good practice. The naming and shaming is a disgrace and dishonour to those who have given their whole life to the profession. If there is something to be addressed, this should be identified and support given before an inspection. The term 'inadequate' is totally unsuitable and degrading. Naming and shaming using the term inadequate has resulted in destroying the lives of some people - the harm that this can do is completely unacceptable. Some senior leaders I know who have suffered at the hands of the present inspection process, are on medication as a result. It would not surprise me if the stress caused may end in a more serious consequence! Something needs to be addressed before this happens. 10/21/2013 3:45 AM	Stressful
	85. Inspection, at best is a very negative experience, and at worst, puts genuine fear into teachers and school leaders. To my knowledge, there is no other professional body which has to put up with this level of scrutiny or stress. 10/18/2013 7:06 AM	Stressful
	50. An Inspection is a totally stressful time for all staff. It would be helpful if they were here in an advisory capacity and gave helpful suggestions for improving. A shorter period of notice might be a good idea as staff are totally stressed before the inspection begins. 10/21/2013 4:14 AM	Stressful
	20. Why is it that conscientious teachers and Principals constantly leave school with the ingrained feelings of guilt that they should be doing more - when the job eats into their family life. This system of inspection is not a healthy one when the education of children is driven by fear of failure. At present the only agenda is the attainment of 5+ GCSE including English and Mathematics. Pupils from disadvantaged areas may well ask "is there life after GCSE?" By focusing so strongly on the academic, we are limiting the achievement of many pupils in their areas of strength and interest and reinforcing their sense of failure. 10/22/2013 3:37 AM	Fear & Stress
	96. The inspection process set our school back. It was unhelpful to me as principal because it was not specific enough. Orally I was being told things that were not reflected in the report. The oral report was quite damning. The school was left demoralised and teachers were very unhappy. It was the worst experience of my life and has made relations within school difficult. Teachers could not take on board what ETI said and I was damned for being so negative. It has had a serious impact on my health and family life. The inspectors damned one key stage but this did not help as I knew who the weak links were and 3 other teachers were damned along with them. We were graded satisfactory but from what was said to me I was concerned that we would be graded inadequate.	Stressful

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	It was also reported in the community that we had had a bad report and this occurred just before Open Day so has had an impact on enrolment. I have considered resigning because of what has occurred and am now on medication for stress. This should not be what an inspection should be about. 10/18/2013 4:16 AM	
	30. Although our school received a very good rating. The Inspection process left me demoralised and undervalued. 10/21/2013 1:28 PM	Under-valued
	26.The current criteria 'reward' certain types of schools and socio economic areas, and do not identify this in the reports. There is no recognition of the progress made over a course of time to improve results, which may still be 'D' grades but are well done for a pupil with a reading age below 8. The process results in teachers feeling inadequate or poor at their job, when in fact the opposite is the case.10/22/2013 2:20 AM	Criteria
	48.We found our own process of self-reflection and audit / action plans much more beneficial than the 1.5 page document they produced which had very little substance. 10/21/2013 8:49 AM	Criteria
	51. Inspections are totally driven by Data and not pupils. An Inspection should be seen as a support mechanism and not feared 10/21/2013 4:10 AM	Criteria
	77.There should be more consistency within the Inspectorate. They should be inspecting against criteria which can be utilised in all schools and take account of context etc. 10/20/2013 2:48 AM	Criteria
	41.Publishing reports is a major issue, in that in a primary school individuals such as the principal and SENCO are clearly obvious to the reader. This information should be for private consumption by a school's Board of Governors, not published on the www for all and sundry to read. 10/21/2013 6:17 AM	Criteria
	86. It is misleading for parents that a school should be evaluated exclusively on data and measurable outcomes. Whilst teachers and principals welcome the challenge of raising standards and improving the life chances of young people it is demotivating to feel that so much of our pastoral work is at best subsidiary and at worst irrelevant when inspection teams come to call. 10/18/2013 6:52 AM	Data Driven
	49.As a school that received v.good overall I believe that we have now moved towards outstanding as a result of ETI challenging some of our practice. It would have been even more helpful had the feedback been a little more specific. None the less inspection is a crucial part of the school improvement agenda and any proposal to have it replaced by self-evaluation supported by a critical friend would hinder the improvement agenda. Schools that are below average would I think, become even less effective if ETI did not exist. Monitoring and evaluating by a robust body is essential.10/21/2013 4:22 AM	Feedback
	55. Schools should receive a more detailed report which identifies exactly where and what good practice was identified and also, exactly where practice which was less than good was observed /identified. All inspection teams should include at least one member with recent classroom experience and at least one inspector who has experience at VP or Principal level. 10/21/2013 3:43 AM	Feedback
	84. The inspectors tend to be individuals who have never had to be vice principals or principals and have no experience of the pressures involved in these posts. The lack of written feedback puts principals in difficult positions. Inspectors will not provide written feedback on teachers who are not satisfactory and the principal is left to deal with them without evidence from ETI and leads to claims of bullying or harassment. 10/18/2013 9:41 AM	Feedback
	87.The documentation/evidence requested by ETI for recent nursery inspection was excessive especially as I am a 1 unit teaching principal with no assistant teacher to help prepare. No cognizance of the fact that one individual is expected to collate all the necessary information in 10 working days plus teach until 1.30pm on each of those days is taken. The burden is exceptional! A longer	Feedback

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	<p>period of notice should be given or a reduction in documentary evidence requested in the first instance. A medium sized primary school would have the same amount of materials to collate, and the staff size greatly exceeds that of a one unit nursery. The published report was not as complimentary as the verbal feedback, 3 areas outstanding in verbal feedback which translated into the word 'outstanding' being used once in the written report. A dilution of the verbal feedback appears to take place when inspectors write the final report....why might this be? My governors were concerned at this dumbing down of the verbal report into a very sober written report. Hyperbolic statements from inspectors - witnessed by BELB board members, Governors and staff at verbal feedback being translated into a written statement that does not reflect what has been said - results in a demotivated and deflated staff even if the overall outcome was 'Very Good'. This dichotomy is replicated in many schools. I welcome this opportunity to highlight inconsistencies within ETI's inspection process.</p> <p>10/18/2013 6:18 AM</p>	
	<p>89. The Scottish example is good, schools should be given deadline to find improvement, if ETI are to come back then staff should be given date by which they will be in again. Currently aware of a school inspected in April 2012 still waiting for follow up, is that fair on the staff? I feel the amount of feedback and getting it to the right people in school who need to hear the message is important. ETI are under pressure to get reports into DENI but we need to support and encourage the staff about the many, many good things that are going on in classrooms. The schools can self-evaluate but we still need an outside opinion to tell us this is good or why do you not try this. If after encouragement it is not improving then DENI has right and responsibility to take over and enforce change, why? For the good of the pupils and reputation of the Northern Ireland teaching profession.</p> <p>10/18/2013 5:55 AM</p>	Feedback
	<p>68. Our school was inspected 10 years prior to the last inspection which happened in 2010. Not only does that mean a generation of children at our school were bypassed in this process but it also meant all staff had no fresh experience of the process and some of them had none at all! The inspection lasted 3 days and apart from the report back to the Chairperson, senior staff and myself we have had no contact from the inspectorate since! I blame the system for this as I am in no doubt their schedule does not allow for pastoral visits and I even think my district inspector may have been moved on to another area! I would favour a self-evaluative approach with an on-going pastoral relationship with the inspectorate. Inspectoral teams could be smaller and not necessarily include the district inspector to provide an impartial view. These may take place more regularly 2 - 4 years and provide feedback in line with the schools evaluative process. Pointers for future development could form part of the feedback to offer guidance for the school. It would be vital that the school is given opportunity to challenge the report before it is published and to argue its case should it feel it has been misrepresented. Experience would suggest that reports, even when challenged under the present system, are rarely changed and the impact can be devastating for individuals and a school as a whole. I accept that there are times when harder messages need to be delivered and that performance is below par but I wonder if we were to treat pupils the way the inspection process appears to deal with schools would it be regarded as a professional process!</p> <p>10/21/2013 1:48 AM</p>	Feedback

	25. I do feel there may be a better way. However if ETI were to see itself in a more supportive role for schools as opposed to the more 'aggressive' one taken at present things would improve. It's really where ETI sees itself - is it more important than the schools or does it serve schools? Surely it should be the latter. This could be said of DE as well! 10/22/2013 2:32 AM	Support
	28. I would support a system with both inspection and more regular support from a critical friend/mentor. I also feel frustrated that support is aligned to the inspection process only for those who do not do very well. Our school would like support to improve areas that are not weak but that we would like to make even better but there is no support out there. 10/22/2013 12:12 AM	Support
	62. We need a robust and accessible support system to aid schools in the development process – what a wonderful phrase 'capacity building' has become. The entire profession needs to move with the complex changes in society and learning but needs the proper structures and time to enable this on-going professional development to continuously take place. Lack of clarity, continuous policy change, stagnation in the work force and on-going industrial action by Unions have had a negative impact on school development from my perspective. 10/21/2013 2:27 AM	Support
	34. I think we need to also look at what support services are in place before agreeing to have them aligned to inspection.10/21/2013 11:48 AM	Support
	72. There is a case for the inspection process being more supportive. The "them" and "us" scenario is very unhealthy and is of no benefit to schools. The formal nature of inspection is alien to many schools which operate within a warm, open and transparent ethos. While this school had a very good recent inspection, there was no atmosphere of celebration and achievement at the end of the process.10/21/2013 1:32 AM	Support
	73. A new model is needed which assigns an agreed 'mentor' to a school for 3-5 years during which time ETI could be involved in QA alongside the school SLT and Mentor. This supportive / critical friend approach is more likely to secure improvement and build capacity. 10/21/2013 1:25 AM	Support
	21. Greater support is needed signposting areas for improvement and good practice from ETI. More awareness of how a school achieves very good / outstanding. My school was inspected last year and it was a positive experience but an area of improvement would be aa and ETI inspectors sharing their knowledge and years of observation as to good practice and highlighting centres of good practice. Practical/operational steps to effect greater change and improvement are much needed. Greater clarity on what should be in the data room. We filled it with information folders and were not sure all the material was looked at. 10/22/2013 9:23 AM	Support
	59. We all agree with the need for assessment and utilising data to aid improvement, but please let us get on with teaching and trust us to use our own judgement regarding the children in front of us and how we can best help them achieve their full potential. Support us as a critical friend - we all want the same thing. 10/21/2013 3:07 AM	Support
	80. The Inspection Process is the most stressful time for school staff 10/18/2013 2:04 PM	Support
	83. There is a place for external moderation however this should be carried out in a more supportive, informed and relevant way. Genuine knowledgeable feedback/guidance should be provided to assist schools. The process should be carried out by practicing or seconded Principals, Vice Principals or Co-ordinators. Thus providing the service with a 'work force' who are current, knowledgeable, successful at what they do and are respected by their colleagues. To ensure sufficient and specialist help is available this process needs to be linked to and	Support

	provided by support services eg an appropriate CASS service. 10/18/2013 10:38 AM	
	81. It is essential that inspectors are recent principals who have knowledge and experience of current classroom practice. Inspections should be more supportive and inspectors should be critical friends. To hear that district inspectors are not to be part of inspection teams in their schools is just ridiculous particularly given the knowledge they have of work going on in the school. To have complete strangers judges a school on two or three false days is totally unacceptable. Inspection should be an on-going supportive system designed to help and support a school as it continually strives to improve. 10/18/2013 1:40 PM	Support
	90.The culture of this process is one of fear among teachers. This is not a caring and supportive process and the set up does not encourage this. The inspectorate has too much central power with a very rigid set of norms. The process of self-evaluation should be in clusters of schools whereby the Principals take the lead in being evaluators and critical colleagues. As well as critical colleagues, they should be supportive contributors. To extend this further, a Principal from a different area of Northern Ireland should verify the evaluation process among a cluster of schools. This drives the improvement agenda forward in a less threatening way. The culture of fear by ETI should be left in the past. Younger teachers and principals should show the way in this regard.10/18/2013 5:39 AM	Support
	93.Support services have been depleted to such an extent it is unclear if they could support schools to develop. 10/18/2013 4:32 AM	Support
	97.The uncertainty over ESA has resulted in no CASS support for schools other than those in special measures. There is therefore a lack of help or the option of a critical friend in the years prior to an inspection. Many schools feel isolated therefore the fear of inspection and the uncertainty if the school is on track cause undue stress. Self-evaluation should also have support from ELBs or ESA.10/18/2013 4:00 AM	Support
	2.The role of the Support officers should not be to support schools requiring improvement after inspection but there should be more resources poured into support officers being proactive in schools rather than reactive to inspection reports.10/27/2013 9:03 AM	Support
	9. The Inspectors should be more appreciative of the work of the Teachers and Principals in Northern Ireland. Their role should be one of support rather than damaging their self-esteem and confidence.10/23/2013 3:45 AM	Support
	12. The inspection process must include a link to support for teachers whose practice is judged to be less than satisfactory. In current terms, that is those judged to be inadequate or unsatisfactory. There should be an element whereby these teachers are held accountable for their poor performance and challenged to improve, with support within a 24 month period. There should be a system whereby the Board of Governors are informed about individual teacher performance - this should not be published in any public forum. There has to be accountability within any inspection process at the individual professional level. 10/23/2013 2:40 AM	Support
	14.The inspection process should give schools a list of strengths and areas for improvement rather than a grade. It is essential that CASS be brought back to support all schools in on-going improvement not just schools in intervention. 10/22/2013 10:13	Support
	17. A more detailed report should be made available to school to provide an in-depth analysis of the evaluation. I agree completely that only those with a sound knowledge of education/school/teaching should be involved in Inspection Teams. There is no support!!!! The ELB support mechanisms are gone, since funding cuts. Schools now have to pay privately for support from experts in particular areas. This is not acceptable. 10/22/2013 7:15 AM	Support
*	19. Individual teachers are not mentioned in inspection reports yet in small primary schools it is not difficult to identify the teacher of the class which has been referred to. Managers (Principals) have no hiding place in inspection	Support

	reports as the quality of leadership is constantly reported in them. Inspections should be there to SUPPORT teaching and learning not to decimate it. Terminology such as 'satisfactory', 'good', etc is also derogatory. If a teacher/school is putting in tremendous effort then they should say so. I could write a 'paper' on this. 10/22/2013 3:38 AM	
	23.School self-evaluation is a vital tool but must be supported by advisory/mentoring staff. Currently our Link Officers who supported schools with this have been withdrawn. Schools need this support, especially small schools with teaching principals so that self-evaluation can be carried out thoroughly. During my inspection I did explain why I felt Pupils were not level 5 in Literacy and provided evidence for this.10/22/2013 3:00 AM	Support
	24.Schools know their individual situations best. I feel inspection should be more of a supportive role, rather than entirely judgemental. Teachers are coping with a huge amount of change / bureaucracy / demands on their time which means that, to do the job in the way they are expected to, it is no longer possible within working hours! Something needs to be done to support the workforce rather than pile on more demands.10/22/2013 2:38 AM	Support
	71. It used to be that local Inspectors would visit schools in a pastoral capacity. This was an opportunity for schools and Inspectors to have professional conversations about the direction of the school and the Inspectors could give feedback as to whether or not they were heading in the right direction. This to my knowledge does not happen very much, and I had not met a local Inspector before our recent Inspection process began. I agree that there should be a mentoring system whereby Inspectors are designated schools and liaise with the principals and Governors regularly - not unlike the PRSD process of an external assessor. In this way it ensures that the process is supportive, has improving provision and raising standards as its focus, but also ensures that there is not only a shared responsibility between the Department and the schools, but a shared accountability. 10/21/2013 1:35 AM	Support
	74. Ref No 29 - I believe this should read 'The support services should be aligned to the inspection service' 10/21/2013 12:18 AM	Support
	79. There is a lot to be gained from the inspection process. As a Principal I fear for my life if I ever get the dreaded envelope but I can completely understand why it is in place. I work very hard therefore I do not think I have anything to fear from them but what I do fear is unfair criticism on issues which are beyond my control and how these may unfairly bias the view of the public who do not know the context of the school. I get frustrated when I hear of some schools slating the inspectors when, in fact, they are 100% right when they expose some inadequate teachers and provision. I feel in many cases inadequate teachers are too protected and the inspectorate is one tool which can be used to put things right but from what I can see so far, there is a lot to be mended on the ETI side as well. This all-powerful, judging body appears to be very one-sided. I'm frightened that someone may come here some day and judge me before I have had time to put things right. A school/Principal is only as good as the staff he has and in many cases Principals are completely handicapped by the Unions in terms of what they can realistically manage. Do the ETI take account of this? I don't think so. 10/18/2013 2:40 PM	Unfair/support

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	8. Inspections are relying far too much on data and end of key stage results. They do not take a holistic view of the education and support each school provides. 10/23/2013 3:54 AM	Data driven
	10. I think that the inspectorate's expectations for planning are completely unacceptable. Schools are currently planning to death, to the point that the plans are more important than the teaching. In the inspectorate's efforts to improve standards the teachers' ability to teach has been undermined, confidence has completely dipped and every teacher is planning for every lesson like a student at training college waiting on a tutor to assess them. If the Inspectorate has high standards for planning then they should devise a common template demonstrating what they want, to allow for consistency across the province and it should be realistic and not something that compels teachers to stay until 5 or 6 o'clock at night in school and to sit all day Sunday at home. No other profession puts such demands on home life and health as teaching because of the continuing new initiatives, planning, changes, inspections and lack of appreciation for what seems to be becoming more like a thankless task for teachers. We need to improve standards for pupils but please let those instigating change (this should be Principal/teacher led) have some insight into how this can be done realistically. Give teachers some credit for what they do. Those teachers who have been deemed inadequate by the Inspectorate would perhaps benefit from some extra help but there are many teachers in failing schools who are doing a really good job and are lumped with the school as 'failed'. Thus they also begin a new process of planning to death with the rest of the school with no recognition for what they have accomplished or achieved as a teacher. Couldn't we use these teachers in the process! 10/23/2013 3:35 AM	Data driven
	53. Due to the nature and timing of our inspection process, schools are encouraged to develop a separate set of skills, namely those required to provide a successful outcome to an inspection. Genuine school improvement which will be sustained requires a different culture than the one which pervades at present. The new culture would see inspection as one of the tools used for school improvement and not a stick to beat with. The inspectors would need to have the respect and trust of schools and the outcome of inspection should not be manipulated or abused by the media. 10/21/2013 3:49 AM	Data driven
	16. Lack of understanding of issues faced. No interest shown beyond Level 4 scores. 10/23/2013 1:44 AM	Data driven

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	42. There needs to be more opportunity for principals and staff of outstanding schools to show other principals and staff what it is that they have done to get that rating. If it involves spending a lot of money it is not inspirational to a school that does not have funds due to underfunding from the DENI. For example I have recently been hearing about all the wonderful work that schools are doing in the area of ICT/ I pads/Special needs etc, all of which is able to happen through extended schools or similar earmarked funding. I can't finance any of this as it would put my budget into deficit and then I am at fault for not managing the budget properly. I can't win. ETI needs to place more emphasis on the constraints that a tight budget place on a school.10/21/2013 6:13 AM	Context and Constraints
	16. I think the whole area of value added needs to be examined as a means to judge where schools are. It is impossible to compare the work carried out in a school with other schools if there is not enough credence given to value added and to the context of individual schools.10/22/2013 8:06 AM	Context and value added
	6. Unfair negative comments by one teaching member of staff were seen as more valuable than all of the other positive and supportive comments by all of the others as they were not permanent teachers, but mostly non-teaching 10/23/2013 7:53 AM	Unfair
	7.ETI need a pro-forma by which to rate school to ensure outcomes are 'fair' to all schools and staff inspected. 10/23/2013 6:37 AM	Unfair
	22. I disagree with the publication of reports for wider audience - what benefit does it serve. I agree that stakeholders should be included but fail to understand why schools in communities are forced to compete with each other - give informed feedback to schools - identify what they are doing well and highlight areas to be addressed - stop using graded language - inform the schools where they are at but give a more general publication of report to public 10/22/2013 3:14 AM	Unfair
	5. A great injustice is being done to those of us who work in disadvantaged areas. Teachers will not apply for SENIOR MANAGEMENT posts in these areas. 10/23/2013 1:41 PM	Unfair
	33.Public naming and shaming of a Principal is horrible and totally uncalled for and this comes from a Principal who was 'Graded' outstanding in their last inspection. No other job would ever have a 'boss' named and shamed in local papers etc....10/21/2013 12:52 PM	Unfair
	75. I believe that inspection process is an important that must be carried out but, on occasion, factors outside the school's control are included whereby that should be given due consideration and this should be reflected in the final report 10/20/2013 10:55 AM	Unfair
	76. At times the role and attitude of the Chief Inspector seems to be used to support political opinions of DE. The ETI must remain independent AND THE CURRENT CHIEF INSPECTOR DOES NOT SEEM AS INDEPENDENT AS PREVIOUS CHIEF INSPECTORS come back Marion Matchett !!!!! 10/20/2013 9:21 AM	Unfair
	51. I feel that the inspectors changed the goal posts when it came to the school's follow-up inspection. They asked for things at the follow up which had not previously been mentioned. Most of our pupils are over-achieving in comparison to their NRIT scores yet we are views as not having high standards but the school is pushing the children as hard as they can. The inspectors are poor on practical knowledge when it comes to describing what they would consider outstanding practice.10/21/2013 7:20 AM	Unfair
	62.Teacher employment law makes efforts to secure improvement in the unsatisfactory teacher very slow and often ineffective. This is detrimental to the pupils who have to suffer those incapable of improvement. 10/21/2013 5:51 AM	Unfair
	58.The Inspectors seemed to focus their attention solely on the % of children achieving level 4 in P7. They did not accept, or seem interested in, the	Unfair

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	standardised scores of these children which clearly showed that the vast majority of children in P7 were achieving higher scores in English and maths than their IQ indicated. 10/21/2013 6:08 AM	
	95. The inspection team should be named on the report. Those in charge of the complaints procedure should be independent of the Inspectorate. Reports should remain unpublished until a complaint has been investigated. The inspectorate should maintain a record of the grades issued by each reporting inspector and use this information to ensure that there is a fairness of reporting across all sectors and all schools. 10/18/2013 4:17 AM	Unfair
	60.Many teachers have little respect for the inspection process as there is little consistency and we all know many colleagues who have successfully duped them 10/21/2013 2:53 AM	Consistency
	52. We felt most annoyed by the Asocial Assessor - who, while his views must have been positive enough, was more concerned with plagiarising 'stuff' he could assimilate to his own school. I would see this as a major flaw in the current system. The use of a mentor/critical friend process could be much too wishy-washy. AT the end of the day, to maintain standards, we need a regulator. My experience of mentoring is that the people being mentored always tell you they are 'already doing it' and are shocked and surprised at the lack of outcomes!! There are serious problems in some schools because of poor capacity building, leading to mediocre provision and consequently to lower standards. I would be concerned that the complaints against the ETI are often more reflective of an unwillingness to change. If all the pupils in a school are not at least achieving potential - there is clearly need for improvement and schools should be consistently seeking to address this - that is the only healthy approach for any school to take. 10/21/2013 3:53 AM	consistency
	27.ETI definitely has an important role in the development of schools to ensure the best outcomes for children. My concern is that if the attitude of the lead inspector is negative to the sector, as was our experience, then the outcome is going to be less than helpful for school development and staff morale.10/22/2013 2:19 AM	consistency
	44. In talking to colleagues, it appears to me that, inspection can succeed or fail depending on which inspector leads the team. I know of schools with very good inspections which are followed up by a different inspector who finds faults despite the school not changing. 10/21/2013 5:58 AM	Consistency
	66. Inspections are fine if they were fair and had the same criteria for all schools. Schools in the same area should be inspected by the same team to make it fair. From reports I have read, there is little difference in good and very good. Some schools with good results (because of naturally gifted children) are now almost 'untouchable' even though their daily practice is very poor. Children are no longer first no matter what 'spin' is put on it. 10/21/2013 1:53 AM	Criteria/Unfair
	18. There are no specific criteria against which the school was evaluated. It was a very personal subjective opinion on the part of the inspectors.10/22/2013 12:26 PM	Criteria
	52.More specific detail is required of the judgments of lessons and teachers including the criteria by which they are judged in order to inform prior and subsequent self-evaluation and improvement planning 10/21/2013 7:12 AM	Criteria

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	11. WITH REF TO Q26 - SCHOOLS SHOULD BE GIVEN THE OPP TO CHALLENGE A VERDICT – EG RI SITS DOWN WITH PRINCIPAL & VP AND INFORMS THEM OF EXPECTED GRADE AFTER 2 DAYS. PRINCIPAL & VP SHOULD BE GIVEN OPP TO CHALLENGE DECISION.10/23/2013 3:18 AM	Challenge
	13. The use of Associate Assessors is good practice, however many of these in the Early Years area have no recent classroom or management experience e.g. they are lecturers, private day care owners or playgroup advisors. This cannot be counted as having "relevant recent classroom experience" as it is very different to advise rather than to teach on a daily basis! Also, a robust assessment mechanism, such as the ECERS Early Childhood Education Rating scale, could provide a valuable assessment device against which to judge practise - against specific examples of good practise / criteria.10/22/2013 12:36 PM	Inspector experience
	1. No inspector should be allowed to be more than 3 years removed from school/classroom. With the exception of a very small management team who DO NOT INSPECT but manage a seconded team. 10/30/2013 1:42 AM	Inspector experience
	47. During my school inspection the Reporting Inspector was a Post Primary A level English teacher inspecting a small rural primary school with a full time teaching Principal.10/21/2013 5:27 AM	Inspector experience
	91. Inspection of Irish-medium schools should be carried out by personnel who understand the context within which IME operates, the dynamics that impinge on it and who can read documentation in Irish. 10/18/2013 5:31 AM	Inspector experience
	94. Given the current ETI focus on the quality of leadership and management within schools it is strange that very few of those working for ETI and conducting Inspections have experience as working as Principals within large schools. 10/18/2013 4:28 AM	Inspector experience
***	32. Start with the fact we all want to improve. To degrade a school does not help pupils who often feel already disadvantaged. EVERY SCHOOL has good practice and EVERY HIGH PERFORMING school has some bad practice it is difficult to label the whole school 10/21/2013 12:58 PM	Approach
	39. As a school principal I have worked hard to encourage my team to offer the best practice / experiences for children based on observed need and on-going monitoring and evaluation of progress. This takes persistent effort and energy from the whole team and I always "trust" that inspectors see genuine practice and value it beyond schools which simply "tick the boxes" and make big preparations for Inspection Day. However, we are not magicians and unfortunately class sizes, clustering of children in Full-Time Classes from the TSN bracket and STAFF: CHILD ratios of 2:26 is making the responsibility of providing a quality nursery education which best meets the needs of every child almost an "impossible dream". Informal "drop in" would be very useful - "warts and all" observations would highlight exactly what some schools/teachers and assistants are coping with. 10/21/2013 7:01 AM	Unfair/new approach
	37. Mentoring and sharing of good practice are invaluable approaches to school improvement. 10/21/2013 9:02 AM	New approach
	38. The inspections should still be rigorous but they should be more frequent and more realistic. Dissemination of good practice is the best way to raise standards according to a recent Audit Office report so why does the Minister think that throwing money at problems makes them go away? Also - the inspectors do not seem to be that independent of DE. Recently, schools have said that their grading at the end of the inspection report was capped due to sustainability issues. THAT IS NOT FAIR. IF A SCHOOL IS OUTSTANDING - THE ENROLMENT IS NOT RELEVANT! 10/21/2013 7:28 AM	New approach
	43. There is a case to be made for both effective self-evaluation and also an objective view also. 10/21/2013 6:07 AM	New approach

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	58. Follow Finland and put the money into real improvement through professional training of the teachers first 10/21/2013 3:11 AM	New approach
	65. I cannot see how someone who has not been a Principal can comment on a headteacher's performance. You will not know the problems being faced because you have not actually experienced them. Reading about difficulties is not the same as actually being faced with them. 10/21/2013 2:02 AM	New approach
	67. We had a recent inspection, which went very well in terms of outcomes - but what a dreadful, divisive process, conducted with a cold, calculated arrogance. 10/21/2013 1:50 AM	New approach
	70. The inspection process needs to identify specific areas (classes) where they can identify good practice and also areas where there is room for improvement. 10/21/2013 1:43 AM	New approach
	63. There is no evidence - apart from their own backslapping evidence - to show that inspection helps.....why on earth are we continuing this out dated and disproven practice! 0/21/2013 2:27 AM	Outdated
	15. There is no model of learning underpinning this process and it is anti-professional 10/22/2013 9:53 AM	Anti-professional
	92. There is no better way to innovate for improvement than to get advice and encouragement from a practising principal 10/18/2013 4:53 AM	New approach
	36. Having only 2 weeks notice is not always the best for some schools. At times the school could be going through a transition stage where key Coordinators or Management staff move jobs or roles. This takes time to put in place. I would much prefer a little longer say 3/4 weeks. 10/21/2013 9:49 AM	Longer notice
	2 I believe the inspection process should be an integral part of the education system with much more regular but shorter visits in a 'critical friend' / school improvement role. The notice given of an inspection is too long and creates a false picture. 10/28/2013 3:28 AM	New approach
	88. I hope the responses from this contribute to a total overhaul of the entire process. Thank you for the opportunity to respond. 10/18/2013 6:15 AM	New approach
	45. The mentoring process is a good idea but if schools are to be compared an objective approach is required also. 10/21/2013 5:55 AM	Approach
	3. Schools who have a consistent record of outstanding practice should be trusted to self-evaluate their own practice with only a light touch from external inspection. Schools in this category should be required to show case their practice this would disseminate good practice and ensure that practice is sustained beyond the inspection period. I think another way forward would be to have cluster of cross sector principals working together as critical friend partnerships and perhaps a district style inspector attached to the group to provide and external monitoring process for the Dept if that is something they still feel they need. This partnership approach would allow for shared resources and expertise across sectors. I personally would not object to a standard level of achievement which has to be reached before a school can be independent in these partnerships (not sure if colleagues would feel the same) but if you are a capable leader you should not be afraid of this. Newly appointed principals may need to grow into this level of self-evaluation with a clearly defined pathway to achieve self-evaluating status. 10/26/2013 1:58 PM	New approach
**	29. Would like to see clusters of schools meeting and working together productively on a regular basis with a district inspector facilitating the process. Focusing on good practice, innovation, creativity and opportunities for all to learn would be a much better approach to striving for improved outcomes for all children. 10/21/2013 1:59 PM	New approach
	64. I think the critical friend process is a great model. All schools want to improve and are open to help to do this. 10/21/2013 2:10 AM	New approach
	46. I would welcome school self-evaluation supported by an inspector on a yearly basis. 10/21/2013 5:45 AM	Approach

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	31. Was a follow up inspection and was limited to one day 10/22/2013 3:11 AM	General
	82. I would be interested in the thought process behind these questions. Some appeared to be somewhat loaded and lacking in objectivity. Was the q'airepiloted. Perhaps responses will be provided in next Update 10/18/2013 11:43 AM	General
	4. I have also been impressed by the work of Michael Fullan and the fact that the education system in Ontario, Canada does not have any Inspectorate and yet has high quality education. 10/25/2013 5:48 AM	General
	9 I am not sure how this survey will take into account how the Inspection process has changed in very recent years. It may also have been useful to have ascertained the grading schools attained alongside their perceptions of the process. 10/23/2013 11:29 AM	General
	10 Parents found it very difficult to access online questionnaire 10/23/2013 9:00 AM	General
	40. I believe that in Primary Schools all inspections should be general as everything we do has an impact on each child 10/21/2013 6:52 AM	General
	31. Again, I must note that I have no recent experience of the inspection process. 10/21/2013 1:12 PM	General
	35. Would like to know more about the system described at 31. How would it work in practice? Structure etc? 10/21/2013 11:09 AM	General
	78. Thank you for the opportunity. 10/18/2013 2:43 PM	General

There are very clear themes running through the qualitative responses (see Appendix *) .

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	Q14 +22	Q 22	Q 32	Total
Positive Comments	47 (14 with other issues)	3	0	50
Challenging Comments				258
General	17	49	61	127
Stressful	27	3	5	35
Data Driven & value added	10 (1 with other issues)	22	2	34
Feedback	21 (3 with other issues)	1	6	28
Consistency & Criteria	7 (1 with other issues)	4	6	17
Support	2		15	17
	131	82	95	308

Summary

	Q 14	Q22	Q32
Positive- no reservation	34		
Positive with reservations	13		
TOTAL Positive	47	3	

Challenging

	Stress/Health	31	3	5
	Feedback and challenge	20		21
	Data driven & context	12	23	
	Consistency & criteria	10	12	8
	Unfair		13	14
	General		12	19

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GTCNI position paper to DE - NISRA feedback

Position statement to DE

in response to NISRA's feedback on GTCNI's Survey of Teachers' Perceptions of Approaches to Inspection and School Improvement'

1 Introduction

1.1 Strategic context

This position statement is set in the context of 1) the current Inquiry into approaches to inspection and school improvement initiated by the Assembly Education Committee and 2) the recent OECD review of evaluation and assessment in Northern Ireland, part of a 28 country study which is summarised in the '*Synergies for Better Learning*' Report (OECD 2013).

Both the Education Committee Inquiry and the OECD report highlight that external school evaluation/inspection is an important process, among a range of other important processes which, together, combine to influence school and teacher practices in pursuit of better teaching and learning and better student outcomes. The other important and interdependent elements identified by the OECD include: 1) student assessment; 2) school self-evaluation; 3) teacher appraisal; and 4) leadership appraisal (see Figure 6.1 over, OECD 2013:385).

At a series of meetings with Primary Principals' Associations and Area Learning Communities in 2012-13 head teachers expressed a range of concerns to GTCNI about current approaches to both assessment and inspection and the extent to which they were appropriately designed, supported and implemented to enable '*fair and accurate reporting and informed analysis and comparison*' (Matthews and Sammons, in OECD 2013: 284) of the value added by teachers, leaders and schools.

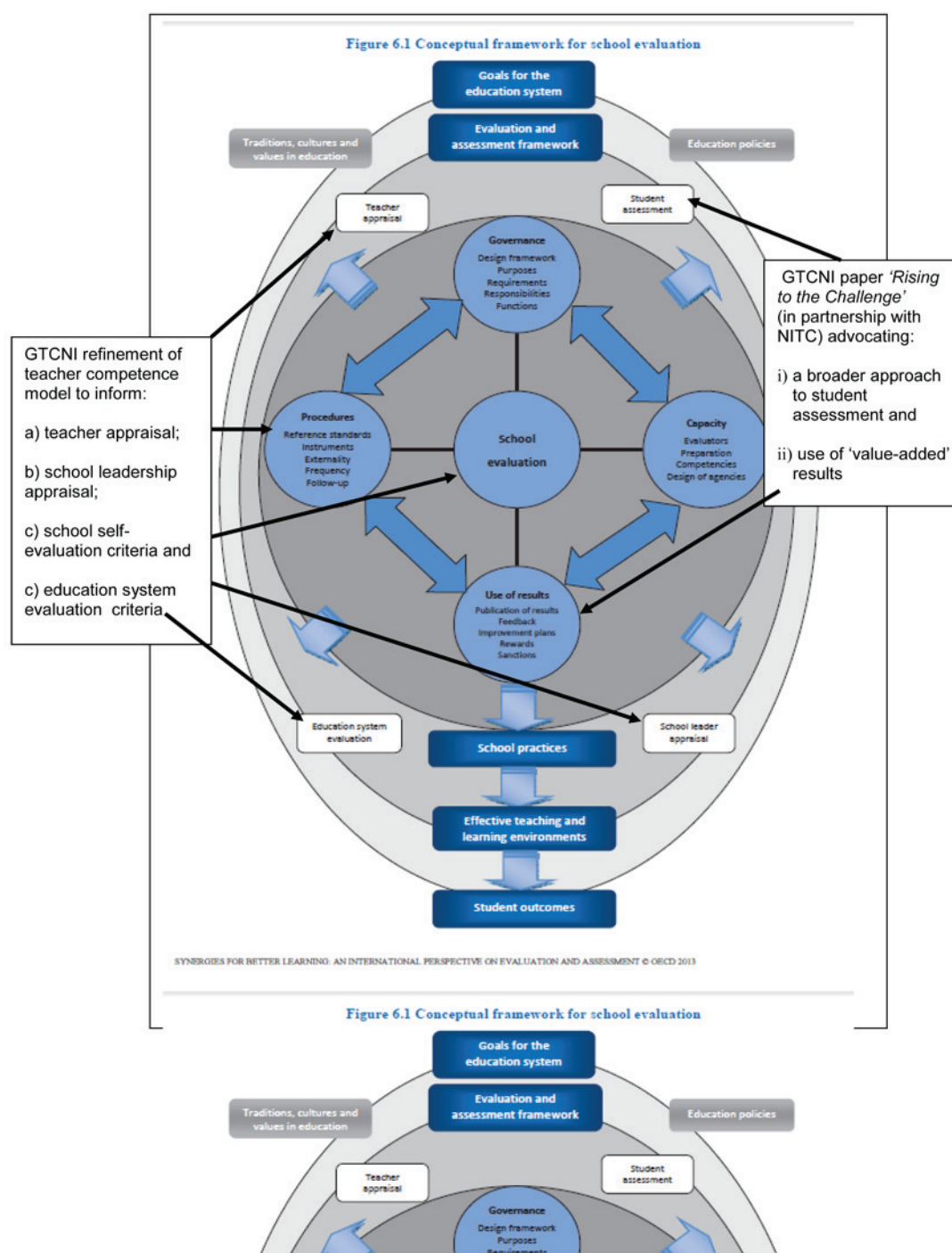
1.2 Purpose of the surveys

It was in this strategic context that GTCNI carried out two surveys of perceptions of two key areas of policy which are currently under scrutiny (assessment and inspection) with a view to informing policy considerations and developments in these areas as suggested by the OECD and conceptualised in Figure 6.1 (over).

The purpose of the surveys was to ascertain the extent of support or otherwise for current policy approaches to these policy areas and to assess the extent of professional support for constructive recommendations for refinement as articulated in *Professional Update 1 on 'Assessment'* and *Professional Update 2 on 'Striking the Right Balance'*

The Council considers that listening to and representing teachers' views is a key responsibility of GTCNI as a professional body, and a critical first step in '*engaging educators seriously in helping to design services to achieve greater buy-in to and support*' (OECD NI Report; Dec 2013).

GTCNI's strategic contribution to the design of a coherent framework for school evaluation



2 Response to NISRA Feedback

2.1 Aim of the survey

The letter from Dr. Kennedy of 31st January has wrongly quoted that *"the aim of the research is to provide "a proper independent research analysis" of the ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection/improvement (para1.1).*

The purpose of the survey, as outlined on Survey Monkey was ‘to gather teachers’ professional views about approaches to school inspection and school improvement to feed into the current NI Assembly Education Committee ‘Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process’.

Para 1.1 of the survey report states that: “the report summarises the responses of 1677 teachers to an opinion survey which aimed to gather [teachers’] professional views and experience about approaches to school inspection and school improvement to feed into the current NI Assembly Education Committee”.

2.2 Methodology

The Council acknowledges that a random selection of the sample from a target population is a commonly used method in social science research but notes that in particular research scenarios other sampling methods, such as quotas, are justifiable in terms of both practicality and time / resource constraints. Advice on achieving a representative sample highlights that the sample source is more important than sample size to ensure that:

- The sample source included the whole target population;
- The data collection method (online) can reach individuals, with characteristics typical of those of the population;
- The screening criteria truly reflect the target population;
- non-response bias with appropriate contact methods to guarantee that designated members of the sample are reached.

The methodological approach adopted mirrors that taken by DE in the majority of its opinion gathering processes i.e. to notify schools of the opportunity to respond and to invite quantitative and qualitative responses. The volume of responses is well in excess of the norm for many DE opinion-gathering exercises (see Appendix 2), although it is recognised that DE undertakes other more comprehensive and complex ‘Omnibus’ surveys from time to time.

2.3 Representativeness

NISRA considers that *‘the GTCNI survey ..has resulted in findings which are not representative of all teachers and it is unknown if they are representative of schools’*.

One way to explore potential representativeness is to profile a sub-sample by certain characteristics and see how that compares with total sample. As there is only 1 principal in each school it is therefore considered reasonable to profile the number of returns from school principals as representative of the number of schools which made a response.

The potential representation of schools by sector on the basis of returns from Principals only is as follows:

- 450 returns were received from Principals out of a ‘total sample’ (n 1199) representing 40% of all possible returns.
- The returns were stratified across all sectors and all types of schools as follows: nursery 37%, primary 38%, post-primary 36%, and special 48%.
- Returns from Principals whose schools had been inspected in the last 5 years averaged 48% (with 50% of Principals whose schools has been inspected in the last year returning a response).

The data collected about respondents isn't in line with some DE surveys have gathered similar 'contextual only' information that does not require specific identification of the respondent of their school. Information requested includes:

- In which education and library board area do you work?
- In which type of school do you work?
- In which management type of school do you work?
- In total, how many years have you worked as a teacher?
- Which of these best describes the terms of your employment?
- Which of these best describes your job?
- Which of these best describes any additional responsibilities of your post?
- Please state your gender?
- Please indicate to which age band you belong?
- Are you a teacher union representative?

- The response from Principals overall and from those whose schools have been inspected in the last 5 years suggests that the survey might be considered to be representative of school principals across all school types and sectors.

2.4 Questionnaire design

NISRA commented on the 'the impact of multiple concepts being included within one question'.

The wording of questions 16 and 18 were subsequently judged to contain multiple concepts and therefore responses to these questions were omitted from the analysis.

NISRA commented on 'questions being biased against the inspection process, lack of objectivity and leading questions potentially resulting in response bias'.

Appendix 1 shows related questions side by side to illustrate the balance of positive and alternative statements (which were mainly drawn from the approach to inspection taken in Scotland to ascertain the extent or otherwise of support for this type of approach).

2.5 Qualitative Responses

NISRA acknowledges that *'information collected in qualitative research is very valuable in adding depth to the quantitative findings'* and that the GTCNI survey *'is in keeping with standard practice of asking for verbatim comments' following on from the quantitative questions*.

NISRA suggests, however, that the alleged lack of objectivity of questions opposed may *'have an impact on how a person responds to the following open questions, again potentially leading to response bias'*.

The majority of qualitative responses were recorded in response to question 14, which followed on from a series of almost entirely positive questions. As indicated at 2.4 above and in Appendix 1 a balance of questions was offered.

2.6 Revised random sample survey

The Council agrees that that a revised survey could be issued to a random sample of teachers. Presumably in order to accurately reflect current perceptions of inspection the sample needs to be drawn from a stratified sample of schools which have undergone inspection within a specified period of time (as opposed to all schools) which is why GTCNI had a specific sections for those who had experienced inspection within the past 5 years.

The Council continues to await DE approval of its business case to re-structure core staff and to appoint a dedicated researcher. Until this approval is obtained the Council is not in a position to conduct a proper independent research analysis of the ETI's current approach to school inspection/improvement which it highlighted in its 'Striking the Right Balance' submission as necessary.

2.7 Summary of the Council position

The clear view emerging from the survey is that the profession is generally supportive of the concept of external inspection. However, as the OECD NI report (2013) observes, while many of the elements of a coherent evaluation framework are present in official policy some of elements have not achieve the degree of professional buy-in and support needed to maximise school improvement. In relation to ETI approaches to Inspection the OECD NI report recommends:

- *building school self-evaluation capacity and adapting external evaluation to reflect the maturity of the school self-evaluation culture*
- *Only moving to a more proportionate and risk based approach to school inspection once the evaluation culture is consolidated, evaluation capacity in schools is satisfactory, and data gathering and analysis within the school evaluation framework is established*
- *Developing new indicators in key areas of pupil performance and self-evaluation capacity*
- *Ensuring a consistent approach to reporting on equity in school and system evaluation; and*
- *Involving the profession more fully in the design of key elements of education policy in a way that maximises 'buy-in' from the profession.*

The Council also draws attention to EU research (Ehren et al. 2013) which recommends that the maintainance of staff morale and self-esteem needs to be designed into any evaluation process as an important requirement and pre-condition to help persuade teachers to embrace the changes necessary for improvement.

The Council reiterates its total commitment to working collaboratively with DE, ETI, the teaching profession and all relevant stakeholders to design a coherent evaluation and assessment framework that address the profession's clear concerns in relation to 'fair and accurate reporting and informed analysis and comparison'. GTCNI has already put forward constructive proposals in collaboration with NITC in both 'Striking the Right Balance' and 'Rising to the Challenge' towards the design of a coherent evaluation and assessment framework for Northern Ireland which draw on: a broader range of value-added measures which are reflective of system goals; a refined professional competences model; and a supportive approach to accountability.

The Council is aware that revisions to the teacher competence framework is a central component of this work and attaches for information development work to date on this area which highlights the complexity of this work. Currently the Registrar alone is undertaking virtually all education development work, assisted only by one part-time development officer employed within the limited flexibility offered by delegated limits to work on the review of the competences.

To advance this work to the breadth and depth necessary requires the restructuring of core staffing (as envisaged in the business case currently with DE since 22 May 2013, revised and re-submitted on 19 November 2013) and the provision of additional educational staff and accommodation, as proposed in business cases submitted last month.

Appendix 1: Responses to DENI consultations and surveys since Jan 2011 <http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/about-the-department/public-consultations/closed-consultations.htm>

Name of Consultation	Number of Responses	Date
1. Draft Budget 2011-2015	162 responses	16 Feb 2011
2. Qualifications	460 responses	30 Dec 2011
3. Consultation on the Provision of Performance and Other Information	responses not detailed to date	22 Sep 2012
4. Education Maintenance Allowances - Public Consultation	responses not detailed to date	02 Nov 2012
5. Public Consultation - Priorities for Youth	518 responses	10 Dec 2012
6. Proposals to widen the powers of the GTCNI	41 responses	18 Jan 2013
7. Learning to Learn	332 responses	31 Jan 2013
The Way forward in Teacher Education	48 responses	21 March 2012
8. Consultation on Potential Short Term Changes to GCE A Levels	responses not detailed to date	08 Mar 2013
9. Consultation on proposed changes to the Common Funding Scheme	responses currently being considered	25 Oct 2013
10. Workplace pension reform	2 responses	28 Oct 2013
11. Consultation on the fundamental review of GCSEs and A Levels	responses not detailed to date	20 Dec 2013
12. Consultations - NI Teachers' Pension Scheme 2013-14	responses not detailed to date	20 Jan 2014
13. Disability Action Plan and Five Year Review of the Disability Action Plan	responses not detailed to date	7 February 2014

Appendix 2: Balance of questions

The table aligns positive statements with statements /proposals drawn from Striking the Right Balance to illustrate the balance of statements in the survey

5. ... the inspection process took appropriate account of our school context and intake	16. The inspection process has an 'in-built' social bias
20. The inspection process takes appropriate account of intake and value added	17. The inspection process is overly data driven
6. The inspection process took appropriate account of our own school self-evaluation	31. The inspection process should be replaced by school self evaluation supported by a critical friend / mentor process
7. The inspection process took appropriate account of the range of practice in our school	18. The emphasis on data produces undesirable practices such as 'teaching to the numbers'
8. The inspectors provided appropriate insight into the criteria against which our school was being inspected	24. The inspection process and report should take explicit account of all important wider learning goals than those which can be measured
9. The inspectors provided appropriately detailed feedback in relation to the inspection criteria	21. The inspection process holds schools to account for factors outside their control
10. The inspection process allowed us appropriate opportunity to challenge judgement with supporting evidence	26. The inspection process should include an opportunity to challenge the inspection judgement with evidence
11. The feedback provided advice in relation to next steps and how to access appropriate support	29. The inspection process should be aligned to the support services
12. The inspection has been central to later improvement	25. Inspection outcome categories should use more supportive language e.g. very confident; confident or not confident
13. The Inspection process has been a valuable process	15. The inspection process encourages compliance rather than innovation
19. The inspection process drives improvement through observation and measurement	30. The inspection process should highlight areas for improvement and only report on progress against these 6 -24 months later
27. The published school report should remain short and concise	28. A longer unpublished report to schools should be provided which includes more detail
	23. The Inspection process should be undertaken primarily by practising principals and teachers with recent classroom and management experience.
14. Please add any comments you wish about your experience of the inspection process and its impact	22. Please add any comments you wish about your experience/views of the inspection process and its impact

GTCNI letter to Chief Inspector, Noelle Buick

3.03.2014



General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland

Albany House
73-75 Great Victoria Street
Belfast, BT2 7AF

3 March 2014

Dear Noelle

GTCNI survey into perceptions of inspection Given the concerns that you expressed about the GTCNI survey into perceptions of inspection I wanted to follow up with you personally to reiterate earlier assurances that any reporting of the survey would be sensitive and responsible.

I attach, for information, a revised draft report based on an analysis of a sub-set of respondents - school principals – which includes a significant level of qualitative (and quantitative) detail including, for example, the entirety of the verbatim comments expressed by Principals. The purpose of including this level of detail - grouped into sub-nodes according to the main thrust of the issues raised - is to give you, and colleagues, insight into the range, breadth and depth of issues being raised (acknowledging that the categorisation is open to critique and refinement). However, in line with the commitment made regarding sensitive and responsible reporting, it is not intended that quantitative and qualitative data will be reported back to schools at this level of detail. Rather, the outcomes will be reported at a level of generalisation as part of feedback on the broader Education Committee Inquiry (as opposed to as a separate entity).

It is reassuring to note that the survey outcomes endorse the centrality of internal and external evaluation as key processes contributing to continuous school improvement. In contributing to this shared agenda GTCNI's aspiration, as discussed with you and colleagues, is to work in collaboration to develop and refine the professional competence model into a practical working document that might inform school development planning, school self-evaluation, teacher and leadership appraisal, external quality assurance and system evaluation.

We have begun to develop this work, alongside a career progression model for teachers, and I would value the opportunity to liaise with ETI colleagues in refining it into a coherent framework that commands ETI support.

I look forward to discussing this with you and colleagues in the foreseeable future.

With best wishes

Dr Carmel Gallagher (Registrar)

Cc La'Verne Montgomery

GTCNI correspondence with ETI - GTCNI

From: Carmel Gallagher

Sent: 10 March 2014 17:04

To: 'Buick, Noelle (ETI)'

Cc: Lesley Dickson; McIlorum, Audrey; 'Kennedy, Gayle'; 'laverne.montgomery@deni.gov.uk'

Subject: RE: GTCNI survey into Principals' (and Teachers') Perceptions of Inspection and School Improvement

Dear Noelle

Thank for this feedback from Gayle Kennedy. The report which she has commented on remains a draft and I have assured you that we will be sensitive and responsible in reporting any outcomes.

The quantitative data from teachers was retained in this draft to allow you to see the comparative data but only the responses from principals have been commented upon.

The teacher data will be removed in the next draft if that is what is required and any internal inconsistencies in the data can be addressed at that stage.

We are happy to liaise with Gayle directly on these finer matters of detail which should not affect the general representativeness and reliability of the survey.

Best wishes

Carmel

Dr Carmel Gallagher

Registrar



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From: McIlorum, Audrey [mailto:Audrey.McIlorum@deni.gov.uk] On Behalf Of Buick, Noelle (ETI)
Sent: 10 March 2014 16:50
To: Carmel Gallagher
Cc: Lesley Dickson; McIlorum, Audrey
Subject: GTCNI survey into Principals' (and Teachers') Perceptions of Inspection and School Improvement

Dear Carmel

Please find attached below the response from NISRA regarding the GTCNI survey. Clearly in NISRA's professional view, issues remain about the reliability of the survey.

Best wishes.
Noelle

Noelle Buick
Chief Inspector
The Education and Training Inspectorate
Personal Secretary Audrey McIlorum
Tel: 028 9127 9738

From: Kennedy, Gayle
Sent: 10 March 2014 14:08
To: Buick, Noelle (ETI)
Subject: GTCNI survey into Principals' (and Teachers') Perceptions of Inspection and School Improvement

Noelle

Last week I received an updated version of the GTCNI's survey into Principals' (and Teachers') Perceptions of Inspection and School Improvement. On initial review of this document there are two points for your attention:

Firstly, the document continues to report on teachers' perceptions even though concern was raised about the representativeness of the teacher sample (as outlined in the letter dated 31 January). The report also states that *"Accordingly it has been decided that the survey should be analysed on the basis of a sub-set of respondents, namely Principals, of which there is only one in each school."* Therefore it would be appropriate to report Principal findings only in the report.

Secondly, some internal inconsistencies has been identified in checking the Principal data. It will be necessary to liaise with GTCNI to address these issues.

Kind regards,
Gayle

Gayle Kennedy
Principal Statistician

GTCNI ETI Inquiry - Closer inspection of schools and teachers 18.03.14

Closer inspection of schools and teachers

Tristram Hunt (Comment, 13 March) is right that "school inspections must be free of political meddling", that Michael Gove's policy of "forced academisation" is disastrous, and that "we need to disaggregate curriculum from qualifications; question the breadth of provision; and highlight the broader function of schooling in building character and resilience in young people".

He is also right in his critique of Ofsted - but doesn't go far enough. Over the years it has often been a ruthless enforcer of government policies with a narrow vision of education that has ignored local circumstances; for many teachers its inspectors are fear-inducing and unsupportive; for headteachers an adverse report may cost their job; and overall it seems to promote a bullying culture in school staffrooms which would not be tolerated in playgrounds. It is time to close down Ofsted - and save £70m of the national schools budget.

Schools aren't factories and don't need tick-box inspection: to raise their profile they need dialogue with experienced fellow professionals. That can come from local authority inspectors who understand local problems, from colleagues in neighbouring schools on the basis of school self-evaluation, and from teacher-trainers at the local university. Schools improve from the inside - through collegial discussion of staff, drawing on views of parents, community support, local governors and fellow educators - not from the outside in the form of quick in-and-out visits by Ofsted inspectors.

Professor Michael Bassey
Newark, Nottinghamshire

Tristram Hunt's confirmation that, as secretary of state, he would guarantee the independence of Ofsted and ensure that all schools funded by the taxpayer are open to inspection is welcome. So too is his recognition that there is far more to a good education than can be

recorded in tickable boxes. It is now time for him to ask himself whether England should remain the only country in Europe to attempt to manage thousands of schools by means of contracts with an individual government minister. Academy "freedoms" are important but can perfectly well be secured by other means. Contracts are proving unenforceable and ludicrously inefficient.

Peter Newsam
Thornton Dale, North Yorkshire

Some of the suggestions made by the Policy Exchange review about the inspection of schools are helpful, but overall they are dangerous to the future of our children and our country (Ofsted needs shorter inspections and better use of data - thinktank, 17 March). Yes, more frequent visits by better-qualified inspectors could be valuable, as would a shift of emphasis towards helping schools to improve their performances - both to make what is being done more effective and to respond to changes in the world in which we live.

However, to rely on test results to judge schools and decide whether and how they should change would be disastrous. Already there is far too little time observing teaching and talking with teachers and children. I know of a six-class school judged on the basis of six lessons being seen. Test results are never perfect. By 13 years of age it was shown that 10% of children were misplaced under the old 11-plus system, and the percentage rose with age. The tests given today are also far too narrow to provide an adequate picture of a school's performance. Our children need a broadly based education that will enable them to take a positive part in the world about them.

Children's education needs to proceed from where they are, and so does the development of a school.
Professor Norman Thomas
(Former HMI), St Albans, Hertfordshire

The Policy Exchange report on inspection makes many good points but fails to get at the heart of the inspection process. Evaluating a school without observing work in class is akin to reviewing a play or a concert without having seen it performed. It can be done, it probably has been done, but it should not be done.

Professor Colin Richards
(Former HMI), Spark Bridge, Cumbria

The Kent LEA "Protocol for what happens to a headteacher if/when their school receives a poor Ofsted report" (Headteachers face up to the prospect of being 'disappeared', 11 March) should be no surprise. Many headteachers have had their careers tarnished, or wrecked, by the implementation of Ofsted's approach. In turn this "zero-tolerance" approach is replicated by local authorities and central government, who fear being seen as weak in their management of schools. Fear and intolerance permeate the system.

The paradox here is that we fete and honour successful headteachers. In psychological language, there is a powerful split at work here, based on our own experiences of having once been school-children ourselves. On the one hand we idealise headteachers (and teachers

generally) who are perceived as "good", but we cannot bear the idea of "failing" school leaders or schools. Our politicians and Ofsted have played into this simplistic formula for too long.

It seems Ofsted may slowly be realising that for schools they approve of, the threat of public exposure and professional punishment for "failure" is not the answer. It is not the answer for schools which are struggling, either.

Dr Phil Goss
(Former headteacher), Kirkby Lonsdale

Teachers are leading the transformation of English education, and your misleading article (Inside the A* factory, Weekend, 15 March) undermines their enormous efforts. We have given teachers more freedom: the new national curriculum states what children need to know, rather than telling teachers how to teach, and Ofsted has made it clear it will focus on whether children are learning, rather than interfering in how teachers teach. That makes teachers more important. Thanks to them, 250,000 fewer children are in failing secondary schools, while we have the highest-ever number doing subjects like chemistry and physics.

Your article also described a "demoralised" profession working in an "exam factory". But we have got rid of GCSE modules, and moved to linear A-levels with exams only at the end of the course, hugely reducing the number of tests children sit. Meanwhile we have the best generation of teachers ever. New teachers are half as likely to switch to another career as other graduates. Teach First, which recruits more teachers than ever, is ranked the third-best graduate employer in the country. We have the highest-ever proportion of new teachers with top degrees, and our teachers are paid more, and promoted more quickly, than in most developed countries.

Elizabeth Truss MP
Education minister

It seems to promote a bullying culture in staffrooms that wouldn't be tolerated in playgrounds

Professor Michael Bassey

Hunterhouse College

Written Submission to the Committee for Education's Inquiry into The Education and Training Inspectorate and its Role in the School Improvement Process

Introduction

This submission has been completed by Mr. Andrew Gibson (Principal) and Mr. Peter McQuillan (Vice Principal) on behalf of Hunterhouse College. The school has a wealth of information explaining the value added measures which we use to determine the progress that individual pupils and their cohort make across the various stages in their education and we would happy to explain these figures to the Committee if requested.

1. Review the effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement – considering particularly how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment
 - 1.1 'Value added' should be interpreted as the progress which students make between different stages in their education. The strength of this value added measure can then be gauged by comparing it against the progress made by pupils in other schools who had a similar level of performance at the end of the previous stage in their education. It is we believe, if carried out rigorously, the fairest way of comparing schools as it takes full account of the intake of a school and the levels of individual prior attainment.
 - 1.2 In our opinion, the current approach is based upon a flawed model in which schools are compared on a named type (eg grammar or secondary) without any attempt to distinguish between schools within these types and between their widely differing intakes.
 - 1.3 Apart from the very broad categorisation of 'selective' and 'non-selective' the only factor that is currently taken into account in relation to examination performance is the percentage of children on free school meals. However, it is acknowledged, even in documentation produced by the Department of Education that in some schools this has little impact. In fact, in some of the benchmarking data tables supplied by the Department, attainment rises slightly as the percentage of free school meals itself rises!
 - 1.4 In the past, schools and Governors have been provided by the Department with a scatter diagram which shows the relationship between attainment at GCSE and the % of children on Free School Meals within the school. The line of progression has a r^2 value of only 0.02. (r^2 values measure the reliability of a progression line with 0 indicating no reliability to 1 indicating very reliable.)
 - 1.5 When comparing the intake of our own school with those of other grammar schools we are acutely aware of how different we are to the vast majority of other selective schools. The students who completed their GCSEs in 2011, 2012 and 2013 entered the school with on average 15 % of them having attained an A grade in the old 11+ system. The A grade intake for other grammar schools over this period is several times this. Is it realistic and indeed fair to assume that given this very significant difference in intake, that our pupils attain the same GCSE outcomes as those who entered post-primary education with a much higher level of prior attainment?
 - 1.5 As an alternative to this and to allow us to realistically benchmark our pupils against other grammar school children who entered post-primary with a similar attainment level we compared the results at GCSE with their standardised 11+ scores. This gave a much more

- robust line of progression with a much more reliable r^2 value. This one calculation shows that prior attainment has a much greater impact on outcomes than Free School Meals.
- 1.6 If the inspection process is truly about assessing how a specific school 'meets the needs of individuals', the words used by the ETI, the current model pays very little attention to how far an individual has progressed but views them instead as part of a very large group covering a wide range of abilities. This model benefits nobody.
 - 1.7 Schools are then, in relation to public examination performance, labelled as 'well above average', 'above average', 'in line with average', 'below average' or 'well below average' with little attempt to take previous levels of achievement into account. In many cases, this results in schools being labelled as below average or well below average even when there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that, given previous levels of achievement, the school has exceeded expected levels of attainment.
 - 1.8 By using national tests on entry to the school, we are able to show that, on average, every pupil taking GCSEs in our school obtains 5 grades more than should be expected. However, as prior attainment is not taken into account, the overall performance of the school at GCSE level is classed as "below average".
 - 1.9 It is a similar story at Post 16 Level. Here we make use of the C2K progression lines to measure outcomes against prior attainment at GCSE. Over the past four years these figures have shown that the vast majority of our grades either meet or exceed benchmarked expectations with on average 50% of our A Level grades at least one grade higher than they should be. This is an astonishing achievement especially when taking into account the fact that value has already been added at GCSE. In spite of this our grades are seen as 'well below average' as prior attainment at GCSE is not taken into account.
 - 1.10 All schools will have Sixth Form entry requirements based on GCSE performance. These will differ between non-selective and selective schools and between schools within these two groupings. As a school we set a low tariff as we know that we are able to add value and to get students into third tier education – our percentage of students entering university being comparable with the NI grammar school average. By putting the interests of pupils first however, we are accepting students into post 16 study who, based on their GCSE outcomes, will have difficulty attaining three A levels at C grade or better. Indeed over the period 2010-12 over 25% of our predicted grades, using the C2K prediction lines, were grade D or lower. We have to add value to every one of these grades to reach the C grade benchmark. This is not a challenge faced to the same extent by many other schools. A very easy way for any school to improve its A level results is simply to raise the academic profile of its post 16 intake by raising the threshold of entry. This would not however be in the interests of pupils or their families.
 - 1.11 A school where pupils had very high levels of achievement on entry but adds little or no value over the course of the pupils' education could still be labelled as above average or well above average using the ETI framework.
 - 1.12 When a school is able to present evidence to show the value added to examination performance the ETI takes little notice of it as it does not fit into the scope of the inspection process.
 - 1.13 This process runs counter to Every School a Good School (page 27) which suggests that in a school improvement policy, "the school makes effective use of data as an evidence base to help evaluate performance, identify areas for improvement and assist with target setting."
 - 1.14 There are examples where the issues identified in a "Satisfactory" inspection report are almost identical to those in a "Good" or even an "Outstanding" report, the only distinguishing feature being the headline examination performance. However, the nature of the language used can be very different with much more negative language being used for the "Satisfactory" report.

- 1.15 The approach not only affects the performance level and language used in the report but can result in unrealistic targets for attainment in public examinations being set. A school with relatively low levels of prior attainment cannot necessarily be expected to match the performance of a school with high levels of prior attainment. Furthermore, it is statistically impossible for all schools to be “above average” which it would seem the current model of inspection expects.
 - 1.16 A school with public examination results which are “below average” can still be a good, very good or indeed outstanding school if it is adding value to its pupils. Conversely, a school which has public examination results which are above average may be unaware of the overall progress of its pupils, good or bad.
- 2. Identify the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the Education and Library Boards.**
- 2.1 If we accept that by not taking full account of the school value added profile, the inspectorate do not have a true understanding of the progression made by students, then by logical outcome the targets which are set for schools on how far and how fast they must improve must be fundamentally flawed, especially when tied into overall performance in public examinations.
 - 2.2 Currently there is no recognised and dependable measure of prior attainment available through the Department of Education. In the past there has been no moderation of Levels of Attainment at Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3 which makes the figures unreliable. As we move to the new Levels of Progression, it has been recognised by the Department of Education that it will take some time before we are clear on how well schools have adapted to this change. Consequently, schools have to be prepared to fund measures of prior attainment for themselves (e.g. CAT tests) and, therefore, there is no common approach to measuring value added figures.
 - 2.3 This is recognised at several points in Every School a Good School. For example on page 39, “concerns include ... the absence of a generally accepted range of performance indicators which can be used to provide an informed picture of a school’s performance and how this compares to other schools, and, the need for a more robust means of assessing social deprivation which also includes a “value-added” measurement that relates to the performance of pupils in their level of attainment at an earlier stage e.g. in post-primary schools, performance at GCSE can be matched against level of ability on entry to the school.”
 - 2.4 The current model of inspection is based purely on outcomes and is focused on schools reaching benchmarked figures of attainment in public examinations. This approach penalises schools that carefully manage the individual needs of pupils rather than concentrating on reaching the benchmarks. For example, if a school decides that, in order to fulfil the ambitions of particular pupils to secure entry to university, they should take only take 2 A Levels and a third course which is recognised by UCAS (but not the Department of Education), the school is penalised as these pupils cannot be included in the 3 A*-C benchmark set by the Department of Education. Furthermore, the 3 A*-C benchmark in itself is by no means a measure of a school’s outcomes in successfully achieving pupil progression to Higher Education or employment. Importantly, Every School a Good School (page 26) suggests that school improvement policy should have “the interests of pupils rather than institutions at the centre of the policy and the interventions.”
 - 2.5 The biggest stakeholders, pupils and parents, are best placed to be the barometers of how a school is doing in raising standards and measuring prior attainment against final outcomes. They are asked to submit evidence through the issue of questionnaires but, although some acknowledgement of the response to the questionnaires is made at feedback sessions with the ETI, the findings from these are usually reduced to a short paragraph of the final report.

The concept of a school being the “best fit” for an individual child seems to be lost in the reporting model.

- 2.6 At the outset of an inspection it is made clear that the final report will be “Evidence Based”. However, on the whole, the only documentation used as part of the evidence base is that which is requested by the ETI in advance of the inspection. Additional documentation supplied by schools as evidence is by and large ignored. During the feedback sessions held at the end of the inspection process, there is no right to reply or opportunity to influence decisions made. Furthermore, many positive comments made during the feedback can be left out of the final report with editorial decisions resting solely with the ETI. There appears to be an overall lack of consistency, a lack of any moderation process and lack of accountability on the part of the ETI in relation to the inspection process.

3. Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection, the assessment of value added and improvement;

No comment

4. Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve ETI’s approach to the school improvement process including the need for enhanced powers; alternative measures of achievement; improved governance; and transparency;

- 4.1 Until a reliable and robust measure to establish the progress made by individual pupils across the key points in their education is developed and these figures are then aggregated to give an overall ‘score’ for a school, a fundamental weakness will, we believe, continue to lie at the core of the inspection process.
4. In terms of standards and achievements a successful school is one that makes a difference to individuals, that adds value by allowing them to exceed beyond expectations and this is not being fully recognised.

Imelda Jordan

I retired this year (August 2013) from the privileged role of Principal for 14 years at St. Colm's High School, Twinbrook where I began my career in 1977. During that time, there have been many initiatives which rightly focused on the identification and promotion of strategies which positively impact on the school's ability to continually improve and support achievement for all pupils. It would be fair to note that some were more successful than others. Support services to schools for development and improvement work has varied in quality and more laterally has all but disappeared. It is hoped that a new and more school centred and effective model will develop and soon emerge.

However, I would wish to note the historic and ongoing contribution of ETI in driving school improvement. Insufficient consideration has been given to the positive impact that ETI can, and does, bring to what is a shared and prime goal for all involved in education. There is often a misconception that Inspectors are removed from the reality of school life, have a limited understanding of context and the particular and unique challenges in each institution. That was not my experience.

Firstly, the inspection process naturally, but necessarily, presents challenge for school leaders and teachers. All who work in education want to do a good job and make a real difference to the life chances of the pupils and communities we serve. But no single organisation would claim to be 'getting it right' so it follows that professional pride dictates that the process and outcome of external and objective evaluation will bring additional pressures to schools. However, not enough cognisance is given to how the identification of strengths and areas for improvement through inspection can refocus all involved in schools and prove to be the catalyst in the identification of alternative and better ways to move the school forward. There is clear evidence that struggling schools have developed the capacity to overcome significant difficulties and show real improvement following inspection. The role and contribution of the Inspectorate in this pivotal change should be more widely acknowledged.

Secondly, formal inspection is only a part of the role of the inspectorate yet seems to be the only aspect of their work which attracts comment. It is important that the role of the District Inspector is not only maintained but strengthened particularly the support and The positive role of the District Inspector in the promotion and enhancement of school improvement processes within schools should be recognised. Over time, he/she develops a unique relationship with the school and awareness of its culture, structures, processes and practices, standards and achievements through formal contact and less formal school visits. Professional conversations support the Principal and Senior Leaders in learning about good practice, of which there is much in our system, and consider how approaches may be adapted to suit the specific needs and priorities of an individual school. The effective District Inspector will challenge thinking and encourage the development of a whole school culture of self-evaluation which empowers teachers at all levels to learn from each other and gain confidence in determining how the school moves forward. He/she will provide constructive feedback on key areas identified and audited by the school to inform future development work.

This is happening in our schools and should be highlighted as exemplar practice

I would wish to put on record my personal appreciation of the specific help and contribution of Dr Paddy Shevlin, ETI in his position as District Inspector in St. Colm's for over twenty years. Over that period, our understanding of quality learning and teaching, the development of effective self-evaluation processes to promote improvement and ultimately pupil achievement, was underpinned by Dr Shevlin's approach as District Inspector which was one of support but insightful challenge. His involvement in St. Colm's exemplified the approach outlined above and was pivotal to the clear progress of the school.

St. Colm's serves an area of high social disadvantage and was formally inspected in 2010. The quality of education and pastoral care was judged to be Outstanding and evidenced the school's development journey over that time.

In conclusion, I believe that any future model and approach to school improvement should more fully recognise the expertise, skills and knowledge of ETI personnel in promoting positive change in education. It should be valued as complementary, yet supplementary, to the work of any other support networks which clearly need to evolve as a matter of urgency. The model should recognise the multi-faceted support and challenge roles of the District Inspector and ensure resources are available to facilitate this pivotal aspect of their work in schools.

Imelda Jordan OBE, M.Ed, D.L.I.S

Integrated Education Fund

Integrated Education Fund



Education Committee Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate Submission

September 2013

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Integrated Education Fund

The IEF welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the Committee for Education Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

About IEF

The Integrated Education Fund (IEF) was established in 1992 with money from EU Structural Funds, the Department of Education NI, the Nuffield Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, as a financial foundation for the development and growth of integrated education.

The IEF seeks to bridge the financial gap between starting integrated schools and securing full government funding and support.

The IEF financially supports the establishment of new schools, the growth of existing schools and those schools seeking to become integrated through the transformation process.

The Board of Trustees, which at 01 July 2013 has 13 members, administers the charity; the day to day operations of the IEF are managed by the Chief Executive, appointed by the Board, and her staff. The Board is made up of individuals nominated by the founding bodies together with others co-opted for their skills and expertise. Trustees receive no remuneration from the Fund. In addition, there is a Campaign Executive made up of volunteers which is chaired by Baroness Blood, supported by Volunteer Teams in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

The Fund is accepted as a charity by the Inland Revenue under Reference XR52574.

Introduction

We welcome the opportunity within this enquiry to identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in terms of improvement; including the need for enhanced powers and alternative measures of achievement and transparency. To date, the Department of Education's response to school improvement has been through schools participating in self-evaluation and self-improvement; a policy on literacy and numeracy; and, a review of organisational delivery structures (area planning, Educational and Skills Authority, Education Bill).

The IEF is greatly concerned that the final area based plans have yet to be produced and that the introduction of the Education and Skills Authority has stalled. That body, when established, will be tasked with the difficult challenge of addressing the continuous problem of area-based planning. It is clear that these measures have had little impact on the key problem of segregation facing the education system in Northern Ireland and there is a need to consider some creative alternatives.

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Context

The Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Policy (DE, 2011) aimed to make community relations an integral part of education that should align with increased sharing and collaboration within the education system to enable children and young people to come together in a more consistent manner. The CRED policy represented an intention to address criticism from the ETI (2009) about the absence of a clear policy on community relations work in education, particularly limitations in the level of support and access to continuing professional development that teachers receive in this area. The ETI stated “there is little evidence that the promotion and development of good community relations have been prioritised within the Department of Education.”

We remain unconvinced as to the effectiveness of the Department of Education incentivising, supporting and monitoring a “whole school-community approach” to building sustainable cross-community relations. In light of the commitment stated in the policy, it is imperative that the Department of Education Minister sends a strong signal and message of his commitment to a shared future and the civic leadership role of schools and integrated education in that task. A whole school approach means giving children and young people an opportunity whether in formal or non-formal education to think about why the areas they live in are the way they are, to meet adults from a range of occupations and expertises, to learn outside the classroom in unusual places and to critically place themselves in relation to alternative ways of knowing.

Key recommendations

The IEF has a clear vision about the key elements that should be considered in an alternative measure of achievement under the ETI.

The IEF believes that all schools in receipt of public money should work towards becoming inclusive shared spaces where children from all backgrounds, including Catholic and Protestant, have the opportunity to learn, play and grow together in an environment, which respects and celebrates difference. Educational reform should be more than managing separation. This should be incentivised by the Department for Education and monitored by the ETI to ensure continuous improvement and progression.

We believe changes to our current legislation, under the new Education Act, should place a duty on all schools in receipt of public money to be ‘inclusive shared spaces’ and strive towards being open to children from all political, religious and cultural backgrounds that make up Northern Ireland. This could be demonstrated, for

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example, by governance arrangements, the delivery of the curriculum, symbols and emblems, denominational religious education/faith formation and the provision of sporting and cultural activities.

We recommend that a school's inclusive and shared ethos is monitored and progressively verified by the Education and Training Inspectorate using qualitative and quantitative measures. These reports should be published on a periodic basis and widely available.

In addition, there should be a clear expectation on all primary schools to be open to receiving and welcoming post-primary schools from all sectors wishing to encourage P6 and P7 children to transfer to their school. The ETI should have a clear role in monitoring and addressing access inequalities, seeking significant changes over time.

Conclusion

We believe there needs to be a shift in focus within inspections to the value which schools add to pupils' learning rather than a reliance on self-evaluation and improvement, a system which lacks incentives or punitive measures for poorly performing schools. The ETI should oversee a new system of cross-community networked learning, incentivised through a shared and integrated education premium, aimed at raising educational outcomes for all children.

The IEF is pleased to respond to this inquiry. If there is any further way in which we can contribute to the consultation process, we would welcome the opportunity to do so.

Irish National Teachers' Organisation

THE IRISH NATIONAL TEACHERS' ORGANISATION'S
(INTO) RESPONSE TO

THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE FOR
EDUCATION

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE AND THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
PROCESS



INTRODUCTION

1. The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) is the largest teachers' union in Ireland, with approximately 7,000 members currently in Northern Ireland. The INTO has members in nursery, primary, post-primary and special schools, including teachers at all stages of their career, from student teachers through to principals, and across all sectors of education in Northern Ireland.
2. The INTO, along with the other recognised teacher unions in the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have had a longstanding arrangement with previous chief inspectors, Tom Shaw, Marion Matchett and Stanley Goudie for regular meetings to discuss relevant issues. There was initial resistance from the new chief inspector, Noelle Buick to continue this arrangement but we recently agreed that ETI meet with NITC once a term to discuss issues of concern to teachers in Northern Ireland.
3. INTO members withdrew co-operation from inspections from January 2012 to July 2012 as part of our campaign of industrial action on workload, pay and terms of condition of teachers.
4. Resolutions passed at recent INTO Northern Conferences

2012

Conference notes the on-going review of the ETI complaints procedure and is concerned that there is currently no facility to appeal the overall outcome of a school inspection.

Conference calls on Northern Committee:

- (i) through the NITC, to work to ensure that a mechanism to formally challenge the findings of a school inspection, before it is published, is built into the procedure;
- (ii) to seek to ensure that ETI does everything it can to engender increased levels of confidence in the proposed procedure such as including an element of independent oversight at the internal investigation stage;
- (iii) to ensure that all ETI visits are formally planned.

2013

Conference notes the on-going NITC discussions with the ETI in relation to school inspections.

Conference calls on Northern Committee through the NITC, to work to ensure:

- (i) An inspection system which is supportive and developmental;
- (ii) The inspection teams comprise inspectors with relevant and recent experience of the sectors / subjects being inspected;
- (iii) The role of the district inspector is one of support and assistance;

- (iv) The abolition of the grading system for inspection outcomes;
- (v) The removal of the social class bias which is evident in inspection outcomes.

5. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) introduced a new risk based approach to inspections using performance indicators and monitoring to determine how often a school should be inspected. This coincided with the retirement of the chief inspector, Stanley Goudie.
6. A new chief inspector, Noelle Buick, formerly of OFSTED in England took up post in May 2012.
7. The INTO were a major contributor to the GTCNI/NITC document 'Striking the Right Balance, Towards a Framework of School Accountability for 21st Century Learning'. A copy of which is appended to this document and details comprehensively the views of INTO.
8. Also appended to this document is a paper prepared by the NITC and tabled for discussion with the ETI in November 2012.

ETI'S CURRENT APPROACH IN RESPECT OF INSPECTION/IMPROVEMENT

9. INTO members have reported a change in inspections in recent years with an increase in workload in preparing documentation for the inspection and increased stress associated with the process for principals and teachers.
10. The manner in which inspections are currently carried out is increasing pressure on schools to perform for the inspection and then go back to doing what they have been doing. There is a very real sense among teachers that what is expected of them in inspections is unsustainable throughout the rest of the time. It is true that to an extent teachers put themselves under pressure too but that is because the climate in schools and inspections is such that to do any less would be to receive a poor inspection report.
11. The reality of day to day teaching and management in schools is not what is observed by the ETI when they visit. Principals and teachers do not feel able to carry on as normal in front of the inspectorate or raise issues with them in case it leads to a poor or average report.
12. A consequence of the nature of the current inspections is that schools feel under pressure to do whatever they think, or they have heard, the ETI wish to see. This therefore leads to a distortion of the school's development plan with ETI driving the school's agenda rather than the actual needs of the pupils and the school. Innovation or trying a different approach, which may actually be more beneficial for their pupils, is viewed as too risky, particularly if they think an inspection is due.

13. The potential impact of the inspection report has increased in recent years. Within a system of education where funding is based on pupil numbers, schools have to compete for pupils and in such circumstances a poor/bad or even average report can have a detrimental impact on school numbers.
14. In addition the use of school inspection reports as indicators of a sustainable school also means that schools have to fight for their survival. In this situation principals/teachers and even Boards of governors are reluctant to raise issues in relation to the inspection process or the report of their school in case it back fires on them.
15. The role of the District Inspector (DI) is one that was highly valued not just by schools but also by the DIs themselves. This role of advice and support to schools has changed in the last few years. Previously the principal was able to contact the DI in relation to school improvement issues in the confidence that seeking advice and support on areas of identified weakness would not be detrimental to the school and in fact was viewed by the DI as a strength and support duly given. That role has now changed, the DI is no longer a source of advice and support. In fact schools have reported where they have raised issues with the DI they very soon find those issues the subject of an inspection.

SCHOOLS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

16. In recent years the level of support available to schools has decreased. Where schools have identified issues requiring support they have been informed that unless the school has a poor inspection report or a teacher is in the formal procedure there is no support available. Essentially schools or teachers have to fail before they can avail of support. This approach is detrimental to school improvement and undermines the ability of schools to address issues when they identify them.
17. A relevant and appropriate menu of support is required for teachers and schools to enable issues to be addressed early and minimise any detrimental effects on performance and school improvement.

ALTERNATIVE INSPECTION/IMPROVEMENT APPROACHES.

18. The Scottish inspection system emphasises cooperation and collaboration and where inspections are carried out in a constructive, positive and professional manner. It is very much viewed as a 'two-way process'.
19. The only written feedback given to schools is the report issued to the school, the parents and published on the ETI website. This is a short document with a few bullet points indicating the school's strengths, weaknesses and areas for development. This document is of little or no real use to a school in addressing the issues due to the lack of detail contained in the report.

20. In the Scottish system two reports are issued. A short report for parents and publication and a longer report for the school, detailing the areas for improvement and what they need to do to effect improvement. This is a more professional approach and is valued by teachers, principals and governors.
21. Further information on the Scottish system and the Finnish and New Zealand systems are in the appended GTCNI/NITC document, Striking the Right Balance.

ACTIONS TO IMPROVE ETIs APPROACH TO THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

22. Appeals Procedure:

There is no appeals procedure in relation to school inspections. The complaints procedure currently in place has no element of independent oversight. All complaints are dealt within internally by the ETI with the Chief inspector being the final arbiter. There is no independent appeal mechanism, despite repeated requests from NITC to this effect. An independent appeals procedure is particularly important in instances where schools have reported changes between the oral feedback given to them by the reporting inspectors and the written document they receive.

23. Makeup of the ETI

Currently the ETI are appointed on a permanent basis. This means that inspectors become further removed from classroom/school experience the longer they remain in the inspectorate.

Associate Assessors are appointed for a 3 year cycle and remain in their schools, taking part in inspections two to three times per year.

A system whereby inspectors are seconded to the ETI for a period of three to five years would enhance the inspectorate and the schools the secondees return to. This process would also enhance the confidence of the profession in the inspectorate and ensure that appropriately qualified and experienced teachers/principals were inspecting their schools.

24. Powers of ETI

The Education Bill proposes new additional powers for the ETI. It is the view of INTO that the powers of the ETI do not require enhancement. Currently there are restrictions on what the ETI can access within a school, in relation to data, documents, etc. The proposals would give ETI the right to demand children's' books and other information which is used by the school and teachers to inform their work but which may not be easily understood out of context. The proposals if implemented would effectively place the ETI in charge of schools as opposed to Governors, not a role INTO believes they should have. Given the issues outlined above and in the appended documents, INTO is clearly of the view that the role of the ETI needs to be changed and the powers they currently hold reviewed, certainly not expanded as proposed in the Education Bill.

ETI Towards a shared NITC position – the High Road or the Low Road?

Introduction: It is the view of NITC that, at minimum, the way in which teachers view Inspection has changed. This is partly because a poor inspection grade can start a downward spiral leading to closure of a school. Viability audits associated with the school rationalisation process make this so. Lurid headlines in local or regional press can provoke parental ‘stampedes’ away from a school placed in “intervention”. In addition, the school performance policy, ‘Every School a Good School’ is increasingly seen as a crude tool for a data-driven system of *hyper-accountability* in education.

The manner and mode of inspection is perceived by many teachers to be moving towards the high stakes “*name and shame*” style of OFSTED, the English inspectorate, rather than in the two-way, supportive and developmental emphasis of the inspection systems of Scotland or Ireland. This philosophical cleavage – of the “Low Road” versus the “High Road” - is at the heart of NITC concerns about inspection.

Broadly, the low road to educational success is characterised by systems of micro-accountability, league tables, excessive testing and assessment, tightly prescribed central curriculum, data driven, appraisal based on micro targets. In short, teaching as a middling skill, low discretion, craft.

The high road would characterise teaching as a reflective, high skill, high autonomy profession, with teachers recognised for their knowledge, expertise and judgement, at the level of the individual pupil and in articulating the wider role of education. Within light regional parameters, development of the education system collaboratively, the curriculum developed in partnership with local stakeholders; assessment should be carried out through local professional networks, with schools encouraged to work collaboratively across local learning partnerships.

So where does the Inspectorate sit within this “high road” vs “low road” spectrum?

We know that a sharp social class bias exists in inspection outcomes. You would expect that if the Inspectorate really took account of social class, and the advantages or disadvantages that particular schools face, that you’d find that schools in each social band would show the same broad range of inspection grades. If they really took account of social disadvantage, that is.

What you actually find, is that schools with the most advantaged intake band are to get an “Outstanding” or “Very Good” inspection grade than those from the least advantaged – and that schools from the least advantaged social band are four times as likely to receive an “Inadequate” or “Unsatisfactory” grade than those from the most advantaged intake band.¹

Main issues for NITC: In the table below, we set out the range of issues relating to Inspection, together with an NITC view.

Inspection Issue	NITC View
General Ethos	NITC considers that inspection should, fundamentally, be a supportive and developmental experience, rather than a judgemental one. As such, we believe there is more to learn from the Scottish or Irish inspection systems than the English (OFSTED) system
• Qualifications of	• NITC considers that the current qualification requirement of a

¹ Letter, Education & Training Inspectorate to the NITC on 2 November 2012

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualifications of Inspectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NITC considers that the current qualification requirement of a Degree + a teaching qualification is appropriate. However, NITC sees merit in working towards a substantial majority of Inspectors having recent relevant experience, at minimum within the past 5 years. The ETI and Education Minister have been reluctant to disclose the recent experience of current inspectors. One source considers that 38 of 59 full-time inspectors have no classroom experience.¹
Constructive Engagement with Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Termly ETI-Teacher union meetings Work stream sub-groups on agreed priority areas Work-shadowing: union personnel to work-shadow ETI inspectors to increase awareness of the total inspection process, across all phases CPD Work Shadowing: Teachers to work-shadow ETI inspectors to increase awareness of the total inspection process
More Teachers in ETI, creating a two way system	NITC considers that significantly increased numbers of serving teachers should experience spells of 2-4 years within the Inspectorate as Associate Inspectors. Facilitated as a CPD opportunity through secondment, we believe this would increase confidence and trust in the ETI, create a “two way” system, as well as increase movement to ‘aerate’ a rigid and ossified teaching workforce. Secondments could be organised through the ESA professional development unit and should be open to both teachers (on reaching the Upper Pay Scale) as well as Principals/Managers
Social Class Bias	NITC is shocked by the degree to which social class of the pupil intake correlates with Inspection results. The current situation whereby schools with the most advantaged intake band are twice as likely to get an “Outstanding” or “Very Good” inspection grade than those from the least advantaged – and that schools from the least advantaged social band are four times more likely to receive an “Inadequate” or “Unsatisfactory” grade than those from the most advantaged intake band is shocking. This issue requires immediate attention.
Grading System	<p>NITC supports a review of the current grading system to consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status Quo A 5 grade system A 4 grade system A 2 grade system <p>The NITC formal position is for a 2 grade system.</p>
Inspection Notice	NITC considers that the current notice for inspection should be two weeks for standard and focussed inspections.
ETI status	<p>Although NITC has no formal viewpoint, the Council supports a review of the status of the ETI, to consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status quo Independent of the Department of Education (as an Agency or Non Departmental Government Body)
Reporting Period	NITC considers that the current reporting period of up to 3 months

¹ UUP spokesperson, Danny Kinahan in NI Assembly debate on the Chief Inspector’s Report, 13 November 2012

	should be reduced to a maximum of 8 weeks, as in Scotland. This 8 week period should include time for reasonable, evidence based, professional challenge of the professional judgement of Inspectors. We do not support the quick response time of the English OFSTED system of 15 days as adequate for appropriate reflection.
Type of Report	NITC considers that the type and nature of Inspection reports have changed, negatively, over time. In the past, an Inspection report offered a richer, more rounded, picture of the school inspected. Today's practice is for significant levels of pre inspection data to 'pre-judge' the actual inspection, with the report more truncated and likely to "follow the stats" ² NITC considers
Data / Evidence	NITC accepts that data relating to inspections does need to be held. For instance, the Supporting Effective Principals/Teachers procedure allows for the challenge of such evidence. NITC therefore supports the storing of evidence relating to inspection for a period not exceeding three years.
Right to seize data	The Education Bill allows for the ETI to assume draconian powers to seize data relevant to inspection. NITC opposes this clause within the Bill and will refer it to the Information Commissioner.
Inspection of Sub-Teachers	Substitute/Supply teachers should not be inspected / observed unless on a substantive temporary contract of one year

² In regard to Inspection report style and content, the Northern Ireland system appears to be moving in the same direction as OFSTED in England. For fuller treatment of this evolution and shift in the emphasis of report writing, see Warwick Mansell: Education by Numbers, 2010 at <http://www.educationbynumbers.org.uk/>

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Introduction

This paper is submitted on behalf of The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) and The Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC).

GTCNI is the professional and regulatory body for teachers, responsible for establishing and maintaining a register of teachers; approving qualifications; promoting professional development and a code of ethics; regulating professional conduct and competence; and providing advice to the Department of Education and the employing authorities on all matters relating to teaching.

NITC is the teacher union side of the Teachers Negotiating Committee (TNC) with representation from: the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL); the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO); the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT); the National Association of Schoolmasters/ Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT); and the Ulster Teachers' Union and is responsible for negotiating on pay and seeking agreement on procedures to regulate conditions of service, as well as advising on educational policy.

The main author, Dr. Carmel Gallagher, Registrar of GTCNI, has undertaken comparative research into curriculum and assessment policy making in Northern Ireland, the UK and internationally. Additional research insights have been contributed by Mark Langhammer, Director of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and by Gerry Murphy, Northern Secretary the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO).

Preface

GTCNI and NITC emphasise that any policy change should be informed by insights from research and professional practice and should take account of teachers' voice. On behalf of the profession we, therefore, warmly welcome this important inquiry and commend the Education Committee for initiating it. While the inquiry is focused on the effectiveness of the Education and Training Inspectorate and its role in School Improvement, in the words of the Education Committee's own research, the key issue is about achieving a *'balance between holding schools to account and allowing innovation and supporting school improvement'* (Perry, C. 2012, P1, NIARIS).

This inquiry, therefore, has much wider implications for the entire ethos and culture of our education system, the focus of schools' work and the measures by which they are held accountable and supported. This in turn has major implications: for Department of Education policies in relation to school improvement; for ELB/ESA structures and processes for supporting schools; and for CCEA processes and mechanisms for assessment and examinations.

At the core of this chain of cause and effect is the Northern Ireland Programme for Government Targets and how these are monitored and reported by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and subsequently reported within the media.

In order to stimulate debate across the profession about the central issues being raised by the inquiry GTCNI and NITC a) wish to provide advance notice of their intention to publish this evidence for wider discussion and b) would welcome the opportunity to present oral evidence to the Committee.

Summary

1.1 The current approach to inspection / school improvement:

- 'incentivises schools to prioritise compliance... over innovation' (*Perry, C. 2012*);
- has an 'in-built' social bias, due to lack of socio-economic & other base-line data;
- is overly data driven, which may serve to 'pre-judge' outcomes;
- exacerbates fear that a poor inspection outcome may trigger a downward spiral;
- is at variance with inspection models in other successful education systems;
- produces a range of undesirable practices with unintended consequences;
- gives rise to a form of 'blame culture' which holds schools to account for failure to overcome the absence of family and community cultural capital (*McBeath 2012*);
- places intense pressure on young people (*McBeath 2012*) resulting in 'compliance without engagement' among Northern Ireland's pupils (*Harland et al, 2002*); and disengagement' by many (*Purvis et al. 2011*)

1.2 The current approach to value-added is flawed because:

- it lacks sufficient base-line measurements and fails to analyse effect sizes and correct for student intake (*Mc Beath 2-12*);
- there is no solid evidence that investing in increasingly sophisticated measurement devices drives change (*OECD –Scotland report -2007*);
- performance indicators lose their usefulness when used as objects of policy (*William, 2001*);
- reducing attainment to a single figure or grade, while attractive to politicians and the public'... masks complex nuances in ability and performance. (*Gipps, 1994*);
- statistical differences tend to conceal more than they reveal (*i Mc Beath 2-12*);
- trying to achieve multiple objectives with a single policy instrument is not feasible' (*Hanushek & Raymond, 2004*).

2.1 Key Issues for schools and gaps in support include:

- insufficient base-line measures to take account of factors which most influence variations in pupil attainment (*Sammons 2007*);
- selective systems exacerbate these differentials (*OECD 2011*)
- a deficit model of support; delays in the review of teacher education; and concern about lack of research and planning for a future school support strategy.

3 Alternative approaches/models that should be considered include:

- Finland, which does not have a school inspection regime at all.
- Scotland and Ireland, which emphasise a two-way collaborative approach
- New Zealand, which uses census information to stratify schools

4 Recommendations to improve approach to school improvement

- 1 **Undertake a cost benefit analysis** of the relationship between inspection and school improvement (*Whitby, K. 2010 in Perry, C. 2012, P21*)
- 2 **Develop a 'two-way' supportive model** (Scotland/Ireland) aligned to support services, widening the composition of the Inspectorate to include seconded teachers to 'aerate' the teaching workforce and increase ETI credibility;
- 3 **Stream-line inspection processes** to provide clearer guidance on pre-inspection data requirements; permit verbal (and written) challenge; reduce reporting timescales; improve the qualitative detail of the report back to schools.

Recommendations to improve the assessment of value-added

- 4 **Use NISRA census information** and to stratify schools according to socio-economic intake, catchment areas and journeys to school in order to allocate resources more effectively, target social need and calculate value-added.
- 5 **Use geographic information system (GIS)** to analyse the social characteristics of schools; to explore the effect of social and academic selection; and to work towards socially balanced school intakes.
- 6 **Assess productive language (oracy) on entry to school** as a key indicator of future educational potential and as a base-line measure of school value-added (*Stothard, Snowling, Bishop, Chipchase, & Kaplan, 1998*).

Recommendations to improve system monitoring

- 7 **Use light sampling** to provide robust and independent monitoring data over time, disentangling teacher assessment from accountability;
- 8 **Use International data** (PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA) to provide additional quantitative and qualitative information as a broader comparative measure.

Recommendations for alternative measures of achievement

- 9 **Develop and use wider indicators:** combining information of different kinds' to 'enable progress in all important learning goals to be reported' (*Tymms & Merrill, 2007; Assessment Reform Group, 2008*) and to provide 'value-added' insights.
- 10 **Use standardised testing data sensitively** for diagnostic, formative and value-added purposes. Establish comparability ratings between different test instruments but avoid prescribing a specific test to prevent teaching to the test.
- 11 **Use pupil attitudinal and 'well-being' surveys sensitively** to gain insight into the correlation between 'motivation', 'liking' and achievement (*Sturman, 2012*).
- 12 **Develop 'unseen' thinking skills assessments** 'to ensure that important 21st century skills become valued in the education system' (*OECD, 2011: 19*).
- 13 **Develop new qualifications for N. Ireland** which reflect needs of young people, the economy, employment in the 21st Century (*CBI 2012*).

- 14 **Commission international research and development** to assist CCEA in developing innovative 21st C assessment and examinations.
- 15 **Introduce a measure to reduce the number of pupils leaving school with no qualifications** by an agreed percentage.
- 16 **Revise Programme for Government Targets** to reflect the foregoing recommendations, based on a proper understanding of current performance and targeted investment in appropriate support and professional development.

Recommendations for additional powers, governance. transparency

- 17 **Obtain powers to ban media publication of simplistic school league tables** which ignore school intake characteristics and proper value-added calculations.
- 18 **Ensure that any potential review of ETI status** is subject to robust, evidence-led tests alongside extensive debate and consultation with stakeholders
- 19 **Ensure that all future educational policy and measurement is based on sound research**, taking account of the complexity of education, the link between background, motivation and learning; leadership, professional development and school improvement; and respect for teaching as a complex profession committed to adding value to young people, society and the economy.

1 Review of current approaches to inspection, school improvement and assessing value-added

1.1 ETI's current approach to school inspection / improvement

- 1.1.1 **A 'risk-based' approach to inspection:** was introduced by ETI in 2010 (Perry, C. 2012) which prioritised school performance indicators and ongoing monitoring as the major determinant of when schools should be inspected. As the Education Committee's own research evidence highlighted, there are *'concerns around the pressures for organisations undergoing inspection, and ...that evaluation can incentivise schools to prioritise compliance with requirements over innovation'* (ibid). Other concerns about the current ETI approach to inspection which GTCNI and NITC wish also to highlight include concerns about:
- 1.1.2 **Socio-economic bias:** Research has verified that *'Socio-economic status is the most important difference between individuals'* (OECD –Scotland report -2007:15) and the greatest determinant of educational performance. If inspection took appropriate account of social advantage and disadvantage in terms of value-added, then schools in each social band should be able to achieve the same broad range of inspection grades. Instead, analysis of inspection outcomes over the last few years suggest that schools from the least advantaged social band are four times more likely to receive an "inadequate" or "unsatisfactory" grade than those from the most advantaged intake, which are twice as likely to get an "outstanding" or "very good" inspection outcome (Irish News, 26 February 2013).
- 1.1.3 **Pre - Inspection data requirements:** The inspection notice period given to schools varies from two to four weeks (ibid), to give schools time to provide necessary data. While the evidence which informs inspection judgements includes classroom observation, interactions with pupils, and parent and staff, considerable emphasis is placed on written evidence. The

perception is that pre-inspection data may serve to 'pre-judge' the actual inspection process (Mansell, W, 2007). In addition:

- There is no clear directions on the ETI website about what documentation schools are expected to provide;
- C2kni guidance to schools on formatting pre-inspection reports runs to 52 pages;
- A GTCNI analysis of support documentation revealed a confusing array of policies and guidance that require stream-lining; and
- Teacher Union case study data suggests, for example, that it is now the 'norm' in standard inspections for schools to be required to return data in the range of 2 gigabytes (around 700 pages).

1.1.4 **The ethos of ETI inspection:** Although NISRA's post-inspection survey of schools that underwent inspection in 2011-12 revealed largely positive attitudes to the process, (Perry. C. 2012, 3) viability audits associated with school rationalisation have exacerbated fears that a poor inspection grade can lead to negative media reporting, provoking parental 'stampedes' away from schools placed in "intervention", beginning a downward spiral to potential school closure. For many, the school performance policy 'Every School a Good School' is perceived as a crude tool for hyper-accountability.

1.1.5 **ETI Reporting:** In the past, an Inspection report offered a richer, more rounded, picture of the school inspected. Today's practice suggests that pre inspection data may serve to 'pre-judge' the actual inspection process, with the report more truncated and likely to "follow the stats" (Mansell, W, 2007). Concern has been expressed also about inconsistencies in the judgements made by different inspection teams. As a result the Inspection process is no longer perceived by the profession as positive and constructive but rather, more akin to a narrowly judgemental, OFSTED-inspired, model. This approach is at variance with inspection models in other more successful education systems both within these islands and beyond. Evidence from other jurisdictions, including Finland, where there is no inspection process and Scotland, where the Inspectorate has been aligned with the support services to provide a joined-up approach, suggests that a supportive and development quality assurance culture is more likely to instil confidence, win respect and reap rewards.

1.2 How ETI assesses value added

1.2.1 **Over-emphasis on numerical value-added:** Although ETI undertake inspections using 15 indicators, the strong emphasis on meeting numerical targets (i.e. *the % of pupils achieving designated levels at specific key stages or 5A* to C at GCSE*) is perceived as the dominant indicator when judging value-added. In the absence of more finely tuned base-line measures of each school's intake profile reliance on numerical data primarily is an insufficiently robust basis on which to assess school quality or value-added. A wide range of research has questioned the value of Levels of Attainment in particular, as a robust numeric, highlighting that:

- *Use of assessment evidence for accountability is based on the idea that measuring itself leads to improvement....Over the last 20 years there is no solid evidence from research or practice that investing in increasingly sophisticated measurement devices drives change (OECD –Scotland report -2007, p15).*

- *'Any progression is a construction. What it demonstrates will depend on how the "ruler" (the measure of progress) is defined' (Darr & McDowall, 2008).*
- *Performance indicators lose their usefulness when used as objects of policy.... When used as the sole index of quality, the manipulability of these indicators destroys the relationship between the indicator and the indicated' ('Goodhart's Law' - former chief economist at the Bank of England quoted in Wiliam, 2001: 2).*
- *...Put bluntly, the clearer you are about what you want, the more likely you are to get it, but the less likely it is to mean anything' (Wiliam, 2001: 2).*
- *Reducing attainment to a single figure or grade while attractive to politicians and the public' as a form of shorthand' in which to report performance masks complex nuances in ability and performance (Gipps, 1994: 27)*
- *Trying to achieve multiple objectives with a single policy instrument is not feasible' (Hanushek & Raymond, 2004)*
- *Assessments should be treated as approximations, subject to unavoidable errors (Gardner 2008)*

1.2.2 **School perceptions of the lack of usefulness of value-added measures:** In a recent independent survey conducted by GTCNI June 2013 (responded to by almost 50% of schools) the following views were expressed about the usefulness of numerical Levels to inform:

- Boards of Governors judgements of value-added (% to be added)
- Parents' understanding of their child's progress
- Receiving Schools about what a pupil knows and can do
- ELBs of the support a school may need
- ETI to understand the value added by schools
- DE and Politicians to understand system performance

2 Key Issues and Gaps

2.1 Key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties

2.1.1 **Insufficient base-line measures:** The cardinal rule of accountability is to hold people accountable for what they can control.

Over three decades of research into school effectiveness and improvement in a range of countries (Sammons, P. 2007) highlights that the factors which most influence variations in pupil attainment are:

- Individual characteristics (age, birth weight, gender);
- Family socio-economic characteristics (particularly family structure, parental background: qualification levels, health, socio-economic status, employment/unemployment, and income level);
- Family cultural capital, (particularly the powerful impact of the child's home learning environment, especially in the early years, as a predictor of attainment);
- Community and societal characteristics (neighbourhood context, cultural expectations, social structural divisions especially in relation to social class); and last of all, educational experiences, where teachers and schools can add value.

Of these, the two most influential factors are socio-economic status and the quality of parenting.

- 2.1.2 **A deficit culture:** It is a well known that the cause of 'differentials in educational performance lie largely outside schools and the classroom' (Purvis *et al.*, 2011, 7) and that affecting change in schools can prove futile against the culture of the surrounding community, its attitudes, values, traditions and beliefs (Vollmer 2010 in McBeath 2012: P42) Since very little account is taken of the factors that influence variations in pupil attainment, the 'blame' for failure to overcome family and community cultural capital tend to be placed at 'the door of schools and on the shoulders of teachers' (*ibid* P21).

'If children are not succeeding, it is obviously the fault of teachers, their low expectations or incompetence, the malign influence of unions on teachers, or failures of leadership to raise standards... There may be a nodding acknowledgement to social and economic factors but successive governments have regarded any reference to these as excuses and insisted that background factors can be overcome by good teachers and inspirational leaders, This ignores the growing body of evidence about the crucial influences [for example, during pregnancy of the effects of smoking, drugs and foetal alcohol syndrome, poor stimulus and bonding in the first nine months after conception and poor child care in the early years] that are beyond the repair of even the most enlightened teacher' (ibid, 21-2).

'The task facing teachers and other professionals who work with children from disadvantaged backgrounds is, for these reasons, much more challenging now than it was a generation ago'. (Alexander and Hargreaves, 2007, 3).

- 2.1.3 **Unintended effects of narrow accountability:** International research by the OECD confirms that strong accountability systems (such as narrowly focused inspections, exam focused quasi-league tables and cumbersome end of key stage assessment processes) produce a range of undesirable practices with unintended consequences, such as: teaching to the test; spoon-feeding the patients; 'nursing the coursework'; gaming the grade boundaries; and twisting the system generally. A recent paper from the OECD, as well as a range of other UK and local NI research, suggest that:

- *'The higher the stakes are for school leaders and teachers, the more these unintended/undesired effects are likely to occur.'*
(Hooge et al 2012, 10)
- *'Children are under intense and perhaps excessive pressure from the policy driven demands of their schools and the commercially-driven values of the wider society' (McBeath 2012, 22)*
- *There is persistent evidence to challenge the belief that school improvement strategies in general, and literacy and numeracy strategies in particular, can affect the level of change needed to address the endemic long tail of underachievement* (Gallagher, C, 2012)

2.1.4 **Pupil 'compliance without engagement':** The Northern Ireland Cohort Study (1996-2002) of 3,000 pupils over 7 years revealed a culture among young people of 'compliance without engagement' even among high-performing grammar school pupils (Harland et al, 2002). School was described by pupils as only useful for jumping hurdles to pass exams, but with little relevance to real life. As a result of their feedback and wide consultation with teachers and wider society the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum was introduced in 2007. Unfortunately a revised assessment system has not kept pace with its 21st Century thinking.

2.1.5 **The peer effect:** We have significant evidence that young people from a disadvantaged background, separated at age 11 from the positive aspirations of their 'better-off' peers, switch off from exam-focused schooling altogether (Purvis et al. 2011).

The power of the 'compositional' or peer effect has been shown to be one of the strongest determining factors of achievement and attitude, but is also mediated by the strength of cultural capital within the family. The weaker the social and intellectual capital in the family, the stronger the influences of peers, which tends to find its level at the lowest common denominator (Mc Beath 2012; 47)

Dominant forces in childhood and adolescence can be ascribed to 'significant others' who shape values and character often more insidiously and powerfully than parents and teachers which play out in school and classroom life on the one hand and in street and neighbourhood culture on the other hand (Harris J 1998 in ibid, P47)

'Neighbourhoods' and their impact on educational outcomes is being explored locally through the Iliad Project (Ruth Leitch, Education, QUB) See also van Ham and Manley's research.

2.1.6 **Wider differentials in attainment in NI:** Thus in Northern Ireland, a 20% underachievement problem doubles into a more serious 40% problem, mainly of social class failure and disenchantment. It is foolhardy to ignore the consistent international evidence that selective systems create wider differentials of

achievement and stack greater odds against the economically disadvantaged. The outcomes of this policy are evident on our streets.

2.2 Gaps in the ETI review process

2.2.1 Lack of analysis of effect sizes and correction for student intake: School quality is the degree to which a school scores better than other schools, corrected for student intake characteristics. An effect size is no more than a relative measure subject to considerable margins of error. Researchers are cautious about quantifying the language of effects, pointing out that statistical differences are often marginal and tend to conceal more than they reveal. This, however, has not prevented DE and ETI conflating the term 'effective' (a statistical term borrowed from economics) with the perception of 'good' (which is a value judgement) (Mc Beath 2-12: 44).

2.2.2 Understanding the school effect: The comparative importance of various factors in influencing pupil performance has been researched for many years and within a number of research traditions. An important categorisation is between factors internal and external to the school. The larger the sample under investigation, the smaller the influence of school factors has been found to be. The huge 'Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey' conducted in the United States for President Johnson in 1966 was an early example, which concluded that the school effect was very small. A more recent tradition in the United States is for econometric studies (see e.g. Hanushek) which have reached the same conclusion.

As a counter to the fatalism which might derive from such findings, the school improvement movement in Britain sought to identify characteristics of effective schools, on the assumption that the generalisation of effective techniques would raise overall achievement. However, a review of this work by one of its most eminent practitioners (Mortimore) also confirmed that such internal factors were much less influential than external ones. A review of related studies (Chevalier, Dolton and Levacic, 2005) concluded that the variance in pupil performance due to schools ranged between 5% and 18%. A more recent study (Cassen and Kingdon) of a population of half a million pupils found the secondary school factor to be 14%.

Consistent among studies since the 1966 Coleman Report has been the identification of the school effect as being between 8 and 15 per cent, While this is a statistic to be treated with much caution and qualification, the interplay of school with family, neighbourhood and community needs to be taken into account in any judgement about teaching quality and effect (Mc Beath, 2012: 45).

Given the high degree of agreement between researchers from different traditions, a judgement that approximately 85% of the variation in pupil achievement is due to factors external to the school is secure and conservative. The major gap in the DE policy of 'Every school a Good School' and in the ETI school review process is,

therefore, the lack of analysis of effect sizes, which may be marginal, and the lack of appropriate correction for student intake. The review process also prevents schools from challenging findings that may be *'no more than a relative measure subject to considerable margins of error'*.

2.3 Gaps in the support services provided by the Department

- 2.3.1 ***Delay in the Review of Teacher Education:*** While it is accepted internationally that *'No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers'* (McKinsey Report, OECD, 2007) and that *'Change is based on building the expertise of the profession'* (Hayward et.al: 2012) yet the DE Review of Teacher Education has been on-going for over a decade.
- 2.3.2 ***Absence of provision for career-long professional development:*** The most-highly regarded education systems in the world: sustain a very high respect for teaching as a profession; attract able and committed people into it; provide quality research-informed initial teacher education linked to up to date classroom practice; support all professionals throughout their careers with effective career-long professional development; and provide effective and appropriate training for leadership positions. The reality in teaching, unlike other professions, is the lack of coherent and sustained provision to support career-long professional development and leadership so that teachers have opportunities to continually re-fresh their skills, confidence, capacity and motivation. There is a pressing need in Northern Ireland to provide a policy framework and to allocate sustainable resources to support the career-long professional development of teachers, aligned to professional competences and to the processes of school development planning, school self-evaluation, PRSD and external quality assurance.

2.3 Gaps in the support services provided by the ELBs

- 2.4.1 ***Deficit model of support:*** ELB support is now targeted almost exclusively on schools identified by the ETI and management authorities as failing to meet the required academic standards. This approach has emerged, not as part of any strategic shift in the thinking but, rather, as a consequence of the vacancy control policy related to ESA. Schools which have not been identified as failing academically are now struggling to effect meaningful change due to shortfalls in expertise within their own staffs and a shortage of finance to purchase this expertise from outside, even if it was available. Many ELB officers report that their task, post-inspection, is as much about restoring confidence and motivation after inspection trauma, as improving teaching and learning.
- 2.4.2 ***Concerns about future support strategy planning:*** From the limited information available at this time, this appears to be the main strategy for how future support will be prioritised to schools in future. The limitations of such an approach are already manifest. This is a serious issue because as time moves on schools will not have the necessary knowledge and skills available to them to exploit developments in educational thinking and approaches into the future. While there is a growing

acceptance that the best professional development is school-centred, collegial and focused on the core skills of better teaching learning and assessment, this will not happen overnight or without a proper strategy and support. There is a need to 'pump-prime' and sustain a professional development initiative, centred on effective classroom practice.

3. Alternative approaches / models of good practice

3.1.1 Finland, which has sustained its position at the top of the international leagues tables for many years, does not have a school inspection regime at all. This insight would appear to support the Education Committee's own research findings that: *'There is relatively little proof of the relationship between school inspection and school improvement, although it is known that school accountability links to student outcomes (other accountability measures include the use of examination results and market choice)'* (Perry, C.2012, 5)

3.1.2 Scotland's inspection service increasingly emphasises a two-way collaborative approach, aiming to work with staff in a *"constructive, positive and professional manner"* (ibid). Several changes have happened over the past 2-3 years, the most significant of which is the much closer alignment of the Scottish Inspection Service with the school support service within a new amalgamated structure, under the banner of 'Education Scotland'.

- **Revised inspection arrangements in Scotland:** place a stronger focus on: school self-evaluation; analysis of a wider range of outcomes; and a wider range of "continuing engagement" or "improvement visits" carried out by non-HMI development officers and/or senior education officers who work within Education Scotland. (Such visits can involve HMI from time to time). This engagement aims to offer support more directly or to capture and publish innovative or creative work noted on inspection.
- **The PRAISE framework** (a self-evaluation tool used by HMI, individually and as a team) is used after each inspection to evaluate HMI performance on inspection.
- **A New Scottish Benchmarking Tool** is a new approach to assessing added value has been piloted and will be introduced from August 2014. It aims to help local authorities and secondary schools to analyse, compare and improve the attainment and achievement performance of pupils in the new senior phase (Secondary 4 to 6) and
 - takes into account a wider range of qualifications and learning programmes, including post-school participation, than has previously been the case. It provides
 - provides an intuitive, easy to use range of data brought together on the national dashboard
 - promotes a richer understanding of information to help raise attainment (e.g. the virtual schools methodology designed for schools to use for comparison purposes.)

- **Scottish School Improvement Partnerships** programme led by Education Scotland working with local authorities and professional associations have been set up to tackle the link between socio-economic deprivation and low educational attainment.

3.2 Assessment of value added / school improvement in other jurisdictions

- 3.2.1 **New Zealand's socio-economic 'decile system'** informs school base-lining, value added, resource allocation and other services: Census information is used to place schools into ten deciles. Student addresses are assigned to the smallest Census areas, called mesh-blocks, which contain about 50 households. The mesh-block is examined against five socio-economic factors drawn from census data, including: *parental educational qualifications; parental occupation; household occupancy; household income; and Income support*. The five census factors are weighted by the number of students from each mesh-block so that those where only a few of students live will have little impact on a school's decile, while those having more will have a greater impact. The five scores for each school are added together (without any weightings) to give a total, which gives the overall standing of a school in relation to all other schools in the country. Each school receives a score according to the percentile that they fall into. This enables the Ministry to place schools into ten groups, called deciles, each having the same number of schools. Decile 1 schools (10%) have the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 10 schools' are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students. Analogous contextual information – with the exception of household income – is available in Northern Ireland not only from the 2001 and 2011 Census but also other administrative sources (see ward-level benefit information on www.ninis.gov.uk). There are potential linkages here to the recommendations contained in the Salisbury report.
- 3.2.2 **Australia:** Some Australian states, for example Victoria, have developed similar models to New Zealand that merit further research.

4 Recommendations and Priorities for Action

4.1 ...To improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process

- 4.1.1 **Research into the cost/benefits of inspection service:** Given the current pressures on the education budget, further research should be conducted into the value-added by inspection services, given the research insights that: *'Holding schools accountable is known to contribute to improved student outcomes. However, there is relatively little proof of the relationship between inspection and school improvement'* (Whitby, K. 2010 in Perry, C. 2012, P21).
- 4.1.2 **Devise a constructive 'two-way supportive inspection process' (Scotland/Ireland) closely aligned to support services:** to ensure joined up, consistent and supportive messages utilising a 3 point supportive, as opposed to deficit, grading system, for example *'Confident', 'Partially Confident' or 'Not confident'*. Professional views on the merits of a 'credit' rather than 'deficit' model of inspection are supported by the CBI whose Director, John Cridland, in a recent speech to launch the CBI's 'First Steps' called for:

*'a rigorous and demanding accountability regime that assesses schools' performance on a **wider basis** than the narrow measure of exams. We need to define 'a new performance standard based on the whole person'...and 'a shift to new style [inspection] reports which will assess both academic rigour and the broader behaviours and attitudes that young people need to get on in life'.* (CBI First Steps Report 2012)

- 4.1.3 Widen the composition of the Inspectorate:** Increase the numbers of serving teachers seconded as Associate Inspectors for between 2-4 year periods and open to both teachers (on reaching the Upper Pay Scale) and Principals. This "two way" system would serve to increase movement, 'aerate' the teaching workforce and increase confidence and trust in the ETI.
- 4.1.4 Streamline the inspection process:** Provide clear guidance on the ETI website of pre-inspection data requirements; encourage a constructive verbal (and written) challenge process; and reduce reporting timescales to a maximum of 8 weeks, as in Scotland, but avoiding the OFSTED 15 day schedule (which is considered inadequate for appropriate reflection).
- 4.1.5 Encourage Local Learning Partnerships and Sectoral Bodies** to progressively assume a lead role in Inspection.

4.2 ...To improve calculation of value-added

- 4.2.1 Socio-economic base-line data:** explore the potential to use NISRA census information to calculate the socio-economic intake of schools to:
- stratify schools (into deciles) according to the socio-economic intake
 - map school/pupil catchment areas and journeys
 - allocate resources more effectively to target social need
 - calculate value-added on the basis of better baseline data (see also recommendation 2 about base-lining pupil's productive language on entry to school)
- 4.2.2 School catchment analytics:** Develop a GIS system (geographic information system) to capture, store, manipulate, analyze, manage, and 'map' all types of statistical analysis and databases to produce detailed educational analytics; to compare actual with expected school catchments and to consider daily spatial moves for different groups by gender, FSM status, social class and so on. The data could be collected through existing administrative procedures³ or using the 2011 Census to calculate school catchments and pupil journeys to school. Spatial information of this kind could make a useful addition to a multilevel framework that includes individual and household level information.

³ These data are available already. It is surprising they have not been mapped by DENI and the results made publicly available already.

4.2.3 **Educational baseline data:** Undertake oracy assessments (productive language on school entry) on entry to school as a key determinant of ability to learn. There are a whole range of baseline measures that might be used to assess spoken language on entry. One well-known example is The Renfrew Bus Story (RBS) – a short screening assessment of receptive and expressive oral language for young children age 3 years to 6 years 11 months. Using ‘narrative re-tell’, the RBS provides a quantitative and qualitative assessment of each child’s oral language skills based on rich language data. It has been shown to be able to identify children with language impairments, as well as to be predictive of later language and academic skill (Stothard, Snowling, Bishop, Chipchase, & Kaplan, 1998). The assessment is quick to administer and enjoyable for children, using a technique that is familiar to most children – storytelling. Other comparable examples might be researched and trialled for suitability.

4.2.4 **System monitoring through sampling data:** Develop a system relying on ‘light sampling’ of a percentage of schools, for example 10% each year to provide stable and robust information for the purposes of accountability and policy formation. Virtually all of the research into the use of teacher assessment (and levels of attainment in particular) advises against the use of numerical assessment outcomes for target setting and accountability purposes. Instead, it advises that school evaluation should be disentangled from accountability, and that monitoring standards over time should operate outside an accountability framework. Recent advice in Scotland (Hayward et al., 2012) endorses this and suggests the potential for enhanced targeted sampling in areas where there are concerns, to provide robust and independent data.

4.2.5 **System monitoring from International data (and objective interpretation)**

The Department already has a wealth of quantitative and qualitative sampled data from international testing, together (PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA) with detailed qualitative information on the sampled population. This needs to be properly analysed and fed back to participating schools as part of the improvement process – as well as a broader comparative measure for the whole system. Care needs to be taken in data analysis and reporting so as to avoid simplistic rank ordering and the tendency to misinterpret significance.

4.3 **Alternative measures of achievement**

4.3.2 **Develop and use wider indicators:** Experts in the field have called for the gathering of ‘multiple indicators of standards by combine information of different kinds’ to ‘enable progress in all important learning goals to be facilitated and reported and should) Assessment Reform Group 2008: 5; Tymms and Merrill, 2007: 14; Gardner et al, 2008: 5) and, to inform decisions about expenditure, the allocation of time and resources and to provide potential ‘value-added’ insights.. The following suggestions, which are not exhaustive, illustrate the potential for improving the range and quality of data that might be garnered to facilitate a more sophisticated analysis of the value-added by schools

4.3.1 Sensitive use of standardised testing data: Most schools use standardised tests of literacy and numeracy (for example NFER and Durham tests) for diagnostic and formative purposes, precisely because the level system provides no specific information about what a pupil knows, understands and can do. The tests allow pupils to be compared with a large, UK wide representative sample. The standardised score is on a scale that can be readily compared and combined with standardised scores from other tests; to give a percentile rank order based on the population as a whole. The tests can also detect learning difficulties in aspects of literacy and numeracy which schools can then focus on. Data from such tests would need to be anonymous and used in a very sensitive way, for example combined with other baseline and sampling data, to prevent schools from teaching to test. There is benefit therefore in no prescribing a specific test but comparability ratings could be established between different test instruments.

4.3.2 Attitudinal data: Attitudinal surveys are a potential proxy for actual measurement. There is a well-established correlation (for example, in PIRLS & TIMSS 2011) between being a 'motivated or somewhat motivated reader' and between those who 'liked learning Mathematics/Like Learning Science bands' and the highest achievement in the subject. The better readers, for example, were also the more confident readers. The pupils who reported being most confident in mathematics and science were also the pupils who had higher average achievement scores. If we could teach towards motivation and enjoyment then achievement (and life-long learning dispositions) would follow. There are also a number of measures of social, emotional and personal well-being which might be investigated (for example the ACER scale) and of creativity and dispositions to learn (Bristol University and Antidote) which also could be considered in any holistic assessment of a quality education.

4.3.3 Proportionate focus on the 'old' literacies: The relentless focus on literacy and numeracy, while important, ignores the evidence that 80% of the school population is doing relatively well (Tymms, 2004) and that pupils are in danger of being turned off by too much drill and lack of creativity in education. The proportions of pupils in Northern Ireland who do not like reading was higher than the international mean (Sturman et al., 2012).

4.3.4 Greater focus on the 'new' literacies: Concerns are increasingly being expressed about preparing young people for what has become known as the 'knowledge era'. reflecting the exponential growth, ease of access to, and speed of flow, of all kinds of knowledge via the world-wide web and social media. This knowledge revolution has had a profound impact on our access to knowledge and our potential to learn. There is a need for a profound shift in conceptions of learning and knowledge 'rigour' that moves away from memorisation of traditional knowledge towards more creative conceptions of learning associated with research, information management, knowledge construction and creativity across traditional subject boundaries, which in turn require more complex forms of assessment that are not readily achieved through traditional examinations.

A recent OECD report (2011) highlights how already high-performing countries like Japan and Korea have taken action 'to ensure that 21st century skills that are considered important become valued in the education system' (OECD, 2011: 19). The outcomes of these changes in assessment policy are believed to be already bearing fruit a decade later (ibid.).

A recent survey of seventeen countries (OECD, 2009) found that most countries or regions cover 21st century skills and competencies in their regulations, guidelines or recommendations for compulsory education. However, there are few specific definitions of these skills and competencies at national or regional level and virtually no clear formative or summative assessment policies for these skills. The only evaluation regarding their teaching is often left to external inspectors as part of their whole school audits. (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009: 4).

Northern Ireland is an exception, having put in place specific definitions of these skills and competencies and valuable support materials at national/regional level.

The recently published *OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Synergies for Better Learning - An International perspective on evaluation and assessment* (April 2013) recommends that countries should align assessment with educational goals, designing fit-for-purpose evaluations and assessments, and ensuring a clear understanding of educational goals by school agents.

The opportunity should be taken in the review of GCSEs and A levels to develop new qualifications for N.Ireland to be taken at the appropriate age (17-18) which reflect the 21st century needs of young people, the economy, employment and life-fulfilment.

- 4.3.5 Research and Development in innovation assessment and examining:** The recently published OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Synergies for Better Learning - An International perspective on evaluation and assessment (April 2013) recommends that countries should align assessment with educational goals, designing fit-for-purpose evaluations and assessments, and ensuring a clear understanding of educational goals by school agents.

The opportunity should be taken in the review of GCSEs and A levels to develop new qualifications for N.Ireland to be taken at the appropriate age (17-18) which reflect the 21st century needs of young people, the economy, employment and life-fulfilment. Proactive research should be commissioned, possibly from the OECD or from leading international assessment organizations (for example the Australian Council for Educational Research - ACER) to assist CCEA in identifying, trialling and evaluating innovative 21st C assessment and examinations mechanisms to move the field forward.

- 4.3.6 21st Century 'unseen' thinking skills assessment** at Key Stages 2 and 3 (and possibly also as a synoptic overview assessment of skills at GCSE/A Level similar to Queensland) should focusing on the promotion of 21st Century thinking skills, (possibly as an 'unseen' assessment of information management, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity. This would mean that assessment and examining serve the curriculum (and the skills needs of the economy) and drives pedagogy in the direction of developing student thinking skills. If, therefore, teachers were 'teaching to the test' they would be teaching towards the skills, identified by the OECD and the CBI as key to 21st C competence which are already central to the revised curriculum.

4.3.7 Monitoring standards over time must be undertaken outside an accountability framework; otherwise the accountability pressures distort the processes of learning and the outcome data. CCEA moderation processes should therefore support the development of better assessment literacy while ETI processes should monitor and support standards of teaching and learning.

4.3.8 Teacher assessment for learning only: Quality feedback to pupils is considered one of the most effective strategies to improve learning (The Sutton Trust). The clear recommendation from assessment experts (Assessment Reform Group; Gipps; Tymms etc) is that processes of teaching learning and assessment should focus on improving learning only and should not be over-burdened with bureaucracy or exposed to potential manipulation for accountability purposes.

4.3.9 Revise Programme for Government Targets to reflect the foregoing recommendations, based on a proper understanding of current system performance and future capacity and investment.

4.4 Additional powers, improved governance, transparency

4.4.1 Powers to ban media publication of school outcome data: Some states make it an offence for newspapers to publish school outcome information which allows the construction of false rank orders which take no account of intake, as in a number of other countries.

4.4.2 Ensure that any potential review of ETI status is subject to robust, evidence-led tests alongside extensive debate and consultation with stakeholders.

Conclusion: - Mark Langhammer ATL

The purpose of this submission has been to stimulate school and stakeholder discussion and influence policy thinking on the development of a new accountability system for schools in Northern Ireland, based on multiple data sources to better meet the Department of Education's vision of *"Every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development"*⁴. An important dimension is to inform future (and better) Programme for Government targets for education and associated accountability arrangements.

In recent years in Northern Ireland, a conflict of educational philosophies has tended to divide opinion between (to borrow a Scots analogy) the "High Road" and the "Low Road". The "Low Road"

⁴ Department of Education Vision for Education 2012-15, at www.deni.gov.uk

is characterised by systems of micro-accountability, league tables, excessive testing and assessment, tightly prescribed central curriculum, , data driven, appraisal based on micro targets. The “High Road” is characterised by a reflective, high skill, highly autonomy profession, where teachers recognised for their knowledge, expertise and judgement as a low skill, low discretion, craft⁵.

The evidence⁶ from international research is that narrowly focused hard targets can get a system from ‘Poor’ to ‘Average’, but developing from ‘Average’ to ‘Good’ or ‘Great’ requires more than a ‘low road’ deficit model of managerial accountability⁷. Northern Ireland is not a ‘Poor’ or even ‘Average’ educational system. Some parts of our system work very well. Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international comparison study of reading achievement at ages 9-10 while Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is a parallel study of mathematics and science at the same age. The results for 2011⁸, the first year in which the cycles of the two studies coincided, were announced in December 2012, showing Year 6 students in Northern Ireland have been found to have the best English and maths skills of any English-speaking nation in international comparisons.

To progress from ‘good to great’ or indeed from ‘great to excellent’ research⁹ advises that we need to build a high trust, high autonomy, high discretion professional system with multiple and nuanced forms of accountability. This requires a fresh look at the accountability system for education. The NI Executive and the Department of Education need system level accountability and data which is sufficient to assess trends between, for example, sectors, gender, rural, urban communities etc, to adequately meet equality and regulatory needs.

A new accountability system should seek to better identify need; enable resources to be better channeled toward need; and develop value-added measurements that can motivate and encourage staff in challenging environments. However, targeting need is not the whole answer. Directing more and more resources at the most challenged schools can help a little, but can only help at the margins and is not a real alternative.

In the medium to longer term, the aim must be to move towards social integration in schools, towards socially balanced intakes. The UK has the most socially segregated education system in the

⁵ For a comprehensive account of the “low road” vision see “Education by Numbers, the tyranny of testing: Warwick Mansell www.methuen.co.uk/ June 2007

⁶ Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C. and Barber, M. (2010) How the world’s most-improved-school-systems-keep-getting-better (McKinsey Report)

⁷ IPPR, The Relational State, 2012, <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/9888/the-relational-state-how-recognising-the-importance-of-human-relationships-could-revolutionise-the-role-of-the-state>

⁸ DENI (2012) [PIRLS 2011 and TIMSS 2011: Achievement of Year 6 Pupils in Northern Ireland](#)

⁹ McKinsey 2010; OECD (2012) – Hooge, E. Burns, T. Wilkoszewski, H. Looking Beyond the Numbers: Stakeholders and Multiple School Accountability

developed world¹⁰. We believe that Northern Ireland's schooling is likely to be amongst the more socially segregated within the UK, as a consequence of our selective system. Why does this matter? It matters because socially balanced systems perform better¹¹. And socially balanced system will require much less 'special case' TSN funding.

Movement towards a socially de-segregated education system and towards a socially balanced intake for all schools will require political will, not additional funding *per se*. Until then, we can do no other than to support differentiated funding in accordance with need, but should not kid ourselves that this approach (in anything other than truly enormous 'dollops') will make real difference in the long term.

Accountability matters because more weighing and measuring, more testing and drilling for exam hurdles will not serve us, or our economy, well. The recent 'First Steps' report by the Confederation of British Industry encouraged a broader vision –to develop young people with 21st century skills. Here, Northern Ireland is ahead of the game, having put in place specific definitions of these skills and competencies at regional level. So the 'leap' now required is that these 'new literacies' find their way into the accountability system, alongside better use of socio-economic data and appropriate base-lining to assess value-added.

We commend this paper and these recommendations to the Education Committee, schools and wider stakeholders for discussion, serious consideration and action.

¹⁰ Ref OECD 2012

¹¹ There is a long trail of local, UK and international evidence to support the proposition that social segregation is a key characteristic of underperforming systems. The 'Call to Action' published by Dawn Purvis et al, March 2011 on Educational Disadvantage and the Protestant Working Class' provides a selection of references at pX

Appendix 1

5.1 *GTCNI Survey of Teacher Perceptions of the Usefulness and Manageability
of End of Key Stage Assessment Arrangements June 2013*

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Larne Grammar School

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.

Lisneal College

Lisneal College

Written Evidence Regarding ETI

From Lisneal College

There were two areas which the school feel that ETI could further develop –

1. Take into account other ways to measure the value –added to a child’s education other than GCSE or GCSE equivalent results.
2. The process of Formal Intervention in itself can be very damaging to any educational Institution and therefore makes the task of getting out of this situation doubly difficult as the morale of the whole school community is affected, i.e all staff, all pupils, all parents and the whole community the school serves. Recovery from Formal intervention makes the process of improvement almost impossible due to the affect on morale to the whole school community. While it is vital that all schools seek to provide an excellent education for all pupils the current process of Formal Intervention with the implication that all aspects of the school is inadequate may not be the most productive or efficient method of improvement for a school or any educational establishment. We feel that the process of Intervention should be looked at so that schools can make a recovery more quickly. The psychological damage to the whole community is huge and the recovery from this takes too much time. We feel that there must be better ways to effect improvement without the public humiliation of all staff, pupils and the whole community. We are a school which has entered the process of Formal intervention in 2010 and exited this in 2012. We would be willing to present our ideas verbally to any committee.

Senior Leadership Team

Lisneal College

Mr David Lutton

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you as a teacher working in a school that has been inspected by ETI twice in the last 18 months. When I read that you were inviting responses as part of your inquiry into ETI I wasn't sure if I would be considered a 'stakeholder' or not but I think I am well placed to comment on the inspection process having experienced it twice recently.

As a teacher I have found the inspection process demoralizing to the point of considering leaving a profession I love. I am in no way against the idea of having inspections, in fact I welcome the opportunity to improve as a school and as teachers in any way we can. Unfortunately the way ETI judge schools has the opposite effect in many cases.

Our school has been described as 'inadequate', which is a label I find offensive. The reason we have been deemed inadequate is because our GCSE results are below the NI average. ETI's obsession with results and their use of averages means that a school like ours will probably always be deemed 'inadequate'.

It seems that no matter what is happening in a school the approach of ETI is that if your results are below average you are failing the children. Of course a basic understanding of maths would tell them that even if every school in the country was 'outstanding' there would still be a proportion who were below average.

We have reliable statistics that show our intake is well below average in terms of ability. ETI have refused to recognise this and insist that our results must improve. As a staff we have renamed their document 'every school a good school' as 'every school above average'. The truth is that even with the best teaching possible there are schools who have children that will perform below average. As a school we provide an excellent education for children who come to us struggling with basic literacy and numeracy. It is extremely unfair to be labelled 'inadequate' by ETI based on the fact these children get below average GCSE results.

The other major issue I have with ETI is the fact that they are not independent. There has been a feeling in our school that the timing of our particularly aggressive inspection seemed suspicious given the area planning that is ongoing. At both our recent inspections pupils have been asked which primary schools they come from and why they are travelling so far to get here. I am unsure how questions like this evaluate the quality of education we provide and they lead to suspicion as to the real reasons we have been targeted. Until ETI are independent from the department of education they are open to such suspicion.

I could write a lot more but will restrict myself to one more suggestion. Many of the inspectors haven't taught in quite a long time. It can be quite difficult for a teacher to take criticism, constructive or otherwise, from someone who left teaching twenty years ago. It would be great if being an inspector was a job that a top class teacher could do on a secondment for three or four years. It would mean that they had more credibility from teachers and would mean they were not only teaching recently but would be going back into teaching again. I have friends in the medical profession who cannot believe that teachers are inspected by people who haven't practiced in years.

I wish you all the best with the inquiry and hope that we end up with a better inspection process as a result of it. I can only speak for my own school when I say that the education of our children has not been helped by the inspection process as we try to improve statistics in whatever way we can since that is all that seems to matter to ETI.

Yours faithfully

David Lutton

National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers

Written Submission to the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to make a written submission to the Committee for Education's enquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate.
2. The NASUWT is the largest UK-wide teachers' union and the largest teaching union in Northern Ireland.

Comments

3. The NASUWT recognises the need for schools to be accountable and for inspection to form a key part of the school accountability system.

The Union believes that inspection should:

- i. Help schools to improve standards and the quality of teaching and learning;
 - ii. Be developmental and supportive by encouraging and supporting ongoing professional and institutional development;
 - iii. Encourage co-operation and collaboration. For example, inspection should encourage schools to work together to develop and share effective practice and the inspectorate should actively promote and the sharing of best practice;
 - iv. Be fair and equitable. For example, inspectors should make judgements about equality and diversity issues relating to pupils and staff. Also, inclusive schools must not be penalised because they have a challenging pupil intake or seek to meet the needs of pupils with complex needs;
 - v. Help schools to deliver a broad and balanced education to all pupils;
 - vi. Recognise and respect teachers' professionalism and not operate in ways that undermine teachers' professional judgement.
 - vii. Avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and workload and enable teachers and principals to spend more of their time teaching and leading teaching and learning;
 - viii. Be streamlined so that duplication and conflicts are avoided;
 - ix. Involve and take account of the views of teachers, school leaders, support staff, pupils, parents and the community; and
 - x. Have the confidence of the profession and general public.
4. The NASUWT does not believe the proposed changes as set out in the DE **'Targeted Engagement with Stakeholders on proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process'** document will meet the criteria outlined above.
 5. The union is concerned that the proposals put forward by DE in respect of formal intervention will make the inspection process much more high-stakes and punitive in nature, leading to schools focusing narrowly on what is inspected and the inspection process.

6. In addition the NASUWT believe that the proposals set out could lead to an inappropriate politicisation of the ETI compromising their independence.
7. NASUWT believes that these changes if implemented will result in the stigmatisation of schools and the undermining teacher professionalism.
8. The NASUWT believes that the proposed changes are at odds with existing educational policies such as the Performance Review and Staff Development scheme which is based upon trusting the professionalism of teachers and supporting them in their role.

Inspection and national education policy

9. Inspection is one of the main ways in which schools are held to account. Inspection operates alongside other forms of accountability. 'Every School A Good School' sets out the policy framework for school improvement and provides the context for inspection.
10. 'Every School A Good School' places great emphasis on self-evaluation and self improvement. But it also stresses the importance of inspection, the need for active interventions to address poor quality educational experiences, and the use of data. The NASUWT is extremely concerned that data is driving the school improvement process and that inspectors are making disproportionate use of performance data to monitor schools and form judgements about the quality of provision. As a result, inspection is becoming high-stakes, and schools are being pressurised into disproportionately prioritising improving exam results over broader educational outcomes for pupils.

Evaluation of individual teachers

11. The Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD) scheme is underpinned by a series of principles that emphasise teacher professionalism, confidentiality, sensitivity, openness and transparency, equity and fairness, and trust and confidence. The fundamental purpose of the PRSD scheme is to promote and sustain professional development and continuous improvement in schools. It requires all those involved in the process to 'accept and support an approach to performance review which is negotiated and agreed, evidence based and professionally focused, recognising teachers' commitment, strengths and good practice'.¹ The NASUWT is extremely concerned that the increasingly high-stakes nature of inspection and school accountability threatens to undermine this developmental and supportive approach to performance management.

School self-evaluation

12. School self-evaluation is located within an increasingly high-stakes system of inspection and school accountability. Evidence from other parts of the UK indicates that this changes the nature of self-evaluation and leads to the introduction of bureaucratic and burdensome systems in many schools. In these instances, material is collected to show others that particular tasks have been completed and prove that judgements should be believed. It is vital that schools avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and workload and ensure that school self-evaluation starts from a position of trust, and uses only the material needed to form an effective judgement.

Lesson observation

13. The NASUWT has evidence that, in some schools, the high stakes nature of inspection and school accountability is leading to principals and school leaders seeking to undertake more lesson observations. This is usually accompanied by a shift towards a more punitive approach to performance management. The NASUWT will oppose attempts to introduce such approaches in the strongest possible terms.

1 Regional Training Unit (2005), PRSD Handbook: A resource for governors, principals, teachers and external advisers.

Equity and inclusion

14. The NASUWT believes that inspectors often pay insufficient attention to the range of inequalities within the education system. The Union believes that inspectors need to assess schools' policies and procedures and their equality impact and outcomes. This is important because it will enable inspectors to assess whether a school's approach to identifying and addressing equality matters is strategic, the extent to which equality issues are being addressed through mainstream policy and practice, and the extent to which a school has taken steps to minimise bureaucracy and workload. Further, it will enable inspectors to look at whether the school is looking at equality matters that relate to pupils, staff, parents and the wider community.

School closures and inspection

15. The NASUWT is extremely concerned that inspection is being used to justify a decision to close a school. Some of these decisions appear to be politically motivated and do not reflect the best interests of pupils. This indicates a link between inspection and the Assembly's policy of rationalising schools.

The future of inspection

16. The NASUWT asks that the Education Committee and DE to use this opportunity to consider what would be the best model of inspection for Northern Ireland. The union is aware that the Committee has examined the inspection models in place in Scotland and England. NASUWT would urge the Committee to support the adoption of an approach similar to that in Scotland where there is a clear focus on support, professional development and trust. The merging of the former **Inspectorate for Education in Scotland** and **Learning and Teaching Scotland** to form Education Scotland has resulted in a body that combines both support and challenge.
17. The NASUWT acknowledge that the move to a more supportive model of inspection will be a significant challenge in an already challenging educational environment but it is important that as we establish the new structures for the delivery of education in Northern Ireland that the system of inspection is fit for purpose. The NASUWT is committed to working in partnership with the Minister, the Committee and DE to ensure we have a supportive, challenging and effective inspection regime.

Chris Keates

General Secretary

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North Coast Integrated College

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Evidence from North Coast Integrated College, Coleraine

North Coast Integrated College is a grant maintained integrated non-selective 11 – 18 school. A standard Post Primary Inspection was carried during the week of 26th November 2012. The inspection report was published on 17th April 2013.

Summary of findings of the inspection:

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Inadequate
Provision for Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

Context of the North Coast Integrated taken from the inspection report.

North Coast Integrated College draws most of its pupils from the town of Coleraine. The school is working in challenging circumstances: there is a downward trend in the year 8 intake, a significant number of pupils have a range of complex social, emotional and learning issues, key stage (KS) 2 outcomes for pupils entering the school are low and there is a high and growing percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, which is almost half of the pupils in years 8-12 in the current academic year.

1.1 The Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement and how/whether ETI properly assesses the value-added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment

During the introduction, which was presented to the team of inspectors on the first day, the Senior Leadership Team gave evidence which demonstrated the decreasing ability of the pupils from Key Stage 2 results and Cognitive Ability Tests. I believe that the inspectors did not take into consideration the decreasing ability of the pupils and give recognition to the performance of these pupils in GCSE exams.

The outcome of the inspection has resulted in Post Inspection action plans which have been forwarded on to the Department of Education. However the ETI have identified some areas in the Raising Standards action plan.

"The current targets for Years 11 and 12 that the school has provided are too low and would be a cause of concern, particularly when one matches such targets against the percentages for Level 5 + grades awarded at the end of key stage 3 for these cohorts in previous years.....

A minimum of 25% A* – C with English and maths. Expectations need to be raised, if the school is to raise standards for the pupils. 25% remains a low outcome."

July 2013 letter from standards and improvement team to the Chair of the Board of Governors

The targets that have been set were based on knowledge and ability of the pupils. It is unrealistic to expect rise upon rise each year when the ability of the pupils continues to fall. Expecting a continual increase each year would suggest that the teachers in the school are

not performing in the first instance. This is not the case. The performance of pupils tested at a end point is in reality, irrelevant when the ability of the pupils is ignored.

1.2 The key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the Education and Library Boards to help schools improve.

To achieve the targets that have been set it is about focusing on pupils who will possibly have a D in maths or English and ensuring that those pupils have the extra push of teacher time and resources. In my view this is wrong, the pressure to increase results for statistical purposes means that those pupils who will never achieve grade C are losing out and the overall basic numeracy and literacy skills of these pupils will fall.

In the past maths and English teachers at NCIC always offered additional support to any pupil who was willing to stay behind after school. This can no longer happen because the focus has shifted from what is the best thing for all pupils to raising standards. There are not enough days in the week or English and maths teachers to allow all the extra classes which would allow all pupils to benefit. We are now unable to take pupils in Yr 13 or 14 who have not achieved their grade C in English and maths for extra classes because the focus has to be current Yr 11 and 12; those pupils who will affect statistics. (guidance from CASS). Not only is the focus to be only Year 11 and 12 but also pupils who are capable of achieving C in both English and maths. If a pupil is currently attaining a D in English (capable of getting a C with a push) but is sitting on an F in maths never able to achieve a C. We have been advised by CASS that this pupil should not be offered additional support in English because they will not improve our statistics.

1.3 Alternative inspection/improvement approaches which might better assess value-added and recognise improvement by schools.

At present there is no acknowledgement of schools that are working in challenging circumstances and reporting the progress of pupils rather than assessing the final outcome. Reporting on the final outcome of pupils and using this as a benchmark of success has no credence.

1.4 The priorities and actions which need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process – does ETI need enhanced powers?; should ETI make more/any use of alternative measures of achievement (other than examination performance) to assess school performance?; should ETI be independent of the Department of Education (as Ofsted is)?; does ETI need a better complaints / feedback procedure? etc.; Do schools always understand the conclusions produced by ETI – is more transparency required in this regard?

ETI does not need more powers; the current system does not give recognition to schools who teach in the most challenging of situations. It is unfair and biased towards schools who continue to carryout academic selection. It is failing the most needy pupils; pupils who are low ability and from low socio-economic backgrounds. It will ensure that the basic literacy and numeracy skills of these pupils will fall as the shift and the focus for

schools is statistics. It will encourage schools to continue to select the most able as long as there is no acknowledgement of pupil progress. It will encourage schools who select at the age of 12 on academic ability to also select for entry into Post 16. There are schools who tell pupils to leave at the end of Year 13 if a student has not met academic targets. Again, the focus on results at a particular end point reinforces this as good practice. As these schools of course have high academic standards and nestle safely at the top of any league table.

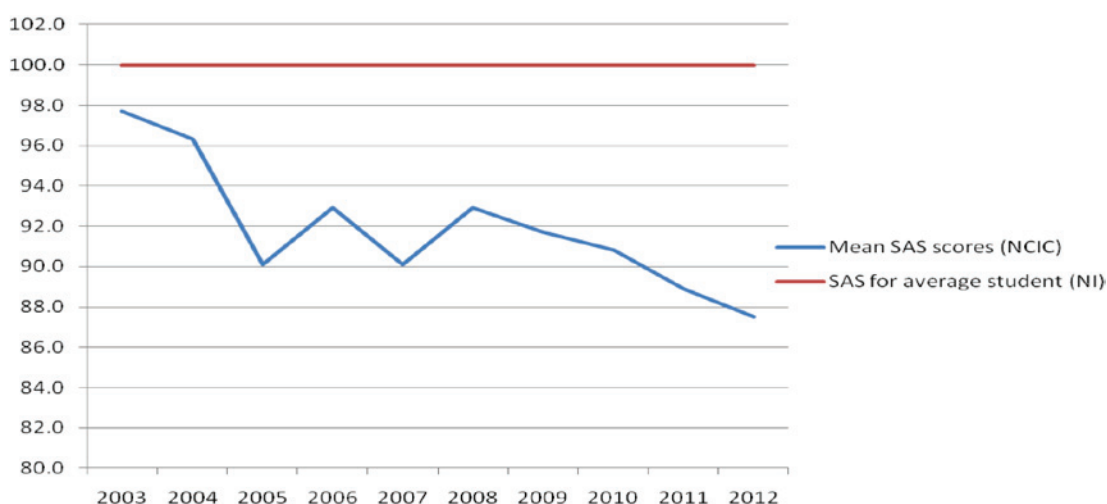
1.5 Other matters relating to ETI and the school improvement process that are worthy of further scrutiny.

The recent inspection in my school has turned a group of hard working, dedicated professionals who cared for all of the pupils in their care into demoralised and demotivated teachers who continue to teach and achieve progress for the neediest children.

The time span of the inspection was unsatisfactory; 21 weeks elapsed from inspection to published report. As the action plans have been returned by ETI we are still waiting for a visit from the District Inspector before the action plans can be resubmitted.

Appendix 1 Results for North Coast Integrated College

Graph Showing Mean Standardised Age Scores for Year 8 pupils



Year 8 Intake

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/2012	2012/2013
% of Year 8 pupils with Level 5 English	0	*	*	*
% of Year 8 pupils with Level 5 maths	*	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

GCSE Performance

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/2012
NCIC % of Year 12 achieving at least Grade C in 5 or more subjects	57	61	70
NCIC % of Year 12 achieving at least Grade C in 5 or more subjects including English and maths	31	22	19

North Eastern Education and Library Board

North Eastern Education and Library Board

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE AND THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

**SUBMISSION FROM THE NORTH EASTERN EDUCATION
AND LIBRARY BOARD**

SEPTEMBER 2013

- * Board officers would welcome the opportunity to give oral evidence to the Committee

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INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE AND THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Submission from the North Eastern Education and Library Board

Introduction

1. The Board was established in 1973 and its constitution as revised is laid down in the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986. The Board's area covers nine of the current twenty-six District Councils in the north east of the province, including: Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Larne, Magherafelt, Moyle and Newtownabbey. Within the Board's area there are 15 nursery schools, 207 primary schools and 48 post-primary schools. The Board has a statutory duty to secure support for teachers within its area, a duty which applies to teachers in schools of management types.
2. In recent years, with the introduction of key policies around raising standards of achievement of children and young people, including 'Every School a Good School' and 'Count, Read, Succeed' (Literacy and Numeracy) and, in the context of the Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government Targets, there has been a significant re-shaping of services to support school improvement. The Board support services, incorporating a wide range of departments, eg. the School Improvement Service, Children and Young People's Services and Youth have increasingly worked in a multi-disciplinary fashion to meet the key needs of schools if they are to effect improvement. In accordance with the agreed five Board approach, the performance of schools is analysed, schools are identified for support and resources are deployed in a relevant manner as a result of the outcomes of a diagnostic model where Board officers support schools in action planning for the identified key areas for development.
3. The findings in Education and Training Inspectorate reports following inspection of schools are an important factor, both in terms of the overall findings on the performance of the school and the individual evaluations of key areas such as: leadership and management and learning and teaching. Inspection reports signal the key areas for development/improvement and these findings, in conjunction with the schools' own self-evaluation, form the basis of work, supported by Board officers, to identify key actions to be employed to effect improvement. In summary, the combination of Board analysis of school performance, school self-evaluation and the external evaluation of provision by the Education and Training Inspectorate forms the basis of school development and improvement planning. It is important to stress that all aspects of the analysis of schools' performance are important, not simply the findings of external inspection, particularly in a climate where the Board and ETI are at one in promoting the competence of schools to self-evaluate and self-improve their own practice.

The Board provides support to all schools which, following inspection, have an indication that further development/improvement work is required and where a Follow-Up Inspection by ETI is required.

4. The Board would request that the Education Committee give serious consideration to including the recommendations below in its report.

Recommendations

- (i) The role of the Education and Training Inspectorate to be mainly focused on the Quality Assurance of schools' own self-evaluation of their performance.
- (ii) Reduce the notice given to schools in advance of inspection. The advance notice should be sufficient to allow inspectors time to consider the Self-Evaluation Report submitted by schools in advance of the Quality Assurance activity conducted by ETI.
- (iii) A self-evaluation framework detailing the elements of best practice across key areas such as Leadership, Governance, Learning and Teaching etc should be developed in collaboration with schools. This will then form a consistent approach to self-evaluation in schools and for the Education and Training Inspectorate Quality Assurance work.
- (iv) School Self-Evaluation and ETI Quality Assurance should have an emphasis on value added and make more effective use of data based on appropriate use of standardised tests and individual pupil tracking systems which are used by schools to assess the impact of the school on pupil achievement as well as considering examination outputs. The outcomes of the forthcoming report from OECD on the assessment/evaluation of the education system in Northern Ireland need to be considered in respect to this matter.
- (v) Robust procedures are required to address under-performance in Governance, Leadership and Teaching in schools, including the provision of an option to permit school leaders and teachers to leave the profession with grace and dignity where relevant.

ISSUE 1

5. The ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection/improvement and how/whether ETI properly assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment

- Notice for inspection adds considerably to the stress in schools. As the purpose of inspection is to assess the quality of provision giving shorter notice of inspection would:
 - encourage schools to have effective self-evaluation processes which work effectively and be in a position to submit a self-evaluation report on the school. Make it more likely that ETI would see the school in its normal operation, rather than in the “prepared state for inspection”;
 - reduce pre-inspection stress;
 - enable ETI to provide a much more accurate assessment of the practice of schools;
- given the current emphasis on school self-evaluation there should be a much more significant move towards school self-inspection, with ETI involved in quality assurance of a school's own findings. Such an approach would provide greater empowerment for schools, yet would still provide the opportunity for ETI to bring a wider perspective to the inspection process;
- schools could produce reports based on their self-assessment and evaluation processes in tandem with the School Development Planning cycle, including annual updates. Such a process would be integral to the school improvement process rather than the current perception of “extra work” which must be completed in the period before a notified inspection;
- in general it would be helpful to move towards a position where the quality assurance work of ETI were much more integral to a school's own improvement processes rather than being perceived as an “external event”;
- the current policy emphasis on standards, eg. 5+ GCSEs at Grades A* - C (including English and Maths), is recognised as important in respect to the future life choices of the students. However, in a time when the impact of school enrolment patterns during a period of demographic downturn has resulted in a number of schools serving socially deprived areas having large numbers of very challenging young people, many of whom have low educational expectations or who place low value on education. The opportunity through Area Planning to address issues such as this is recognised as being of particular importance;

- schools which have a profile of students reflecting that described above often report that, while they recognise and are very appreciative of the positive reporting from ETI on the practice observed in the school, they believe that the lack of effective value added measures within the suite of statistics available for school performance has the inevitable effect that they believe that, in the context of the young people in their school, it is often impossible to have substantial numbers of these pupils achieving at a level that would equate to a C grade in GCSE. Despite the fact that there is often evidence of the improvement brought about in the individual pupils' outcomes, schools often feel this cannot be recognised by ETI in their overall assessment of the quality of provision in the school. Where it is perceived that a school, even with very effective practice in dealing with challenging young people, cannot achieve an ETI evaluation above satisfactory and this can have a demoralising effect on teaching staff, the pupils and the wider school community.

This is felt even more acutely in many schools where they have sophisticated pupil tracking mechanisms in place, often using standardised tests, and where they can provide clear evidence of pupil improvement. The current practice in primary schools of using unmoderated teacher-based assessment lacks reliability and validity.

- research on school improvement across education systems in various parts of the world indicates that external intervention, support and challenge have a significant effect on school improvement. While recognising that the evaluation of ETI provides schools with clear indications of the areas for development, the current approach to the evaluation of external support provided by Board support services could be developed to articulate best practice. While it is acknowledged that ETI review and comment upon the impact of support, the ongoing process of school improvement would benefit from empirical evidence regarding the particular aspects of support which benefit schools, including a detailed exposition of good practice.

There is a need for a clearer understanding of the interplay between evaluation, identification of areas for development and the process of development, including support and challenge, to bring about improvement. The focus of the work of all agencies beyond the school is clearly to ensure that all children and young people have the maximum opportunity to achieve their potential and it is, therefore, essential that there is a clear co-ordination of the complementary roles of the various bodies;

- Effective school improvement should involve the complimentary and connected process of; school self evaluation and development, intervention, challenge and support from a "critical friend" and external Quality Assurance.
- A detailed, agreed framework which should form the basis for self-evaluation by schools and subsequent ETI Quality Assurance. Such a framework should be developed with the involvement of schools and presented in an open, transparent manner. Such an approach should assist greatly in the understanding of school improvement processes and standards and will also assist with making self-evaluation and quality assurance consistent across the schooling system.

ISSUE 2

6. **The key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps, both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the Education and Library Boards to help schools improve.**

Key Issues impacting on Schools

Leadership/Governance

- The quality and stability of the Senior Leadership Team (including the Principal) tends to vary leading to inconsistencies and difficulties with providing and sustaining a strategic direction for the school to inspire confidence amongst staff and sustain improvement.
- Difficulties with recruitment and retention of effective governors.
- The lack of flexibility in the principal recruitment process particularly around the terms and conditions of employment.
- The shortage of high calibre candidates applying to principal positions in schools in challenging circumstances.
- The particular challenges experienced by teaching principals in smaller schools.
- Challenges for leadership teams with capacity and capability issues in the requirement to address a range of issues identified through inspection within a tightly defined timescale of 12-18 months.
- Pressures on schools in areas of social disadvantage, targeted for participation in a wide range of educational and/or community initiatives, to ensure that the impact of sometimes conflicting 'projects' does not impact adversely on the core business of providing high quality teaching and learning .
- Challenges within schools to effectively engage in sustained, systematic and rigorous self –evaluation processes to inform school development planning processes to effect improvement, whilst ensuring accountability at all levels.
- Poor pupil and staff attendance impacts on the school's ability to improve.
- School policies and procedures may be incomplete, not current or are being inconsistently implemented.
- There are often poor relationships and/or poor channels of communication, including lack of effective consultation and dissemination.
- There is often a lack of robust and effective continuous professional development (CPD) in the context of school development planning priorities and the use of school development days.

Standards and Attainment

- The overall standards achieved by pupils in schools in challenging circumstances, particularly in external examinations, is often well below the Northern Ireland average.
- The issue for such schools in demonstrating ‘value added’ in the context of having a range of factors eg high percentage of newcomer children, children with special educational needs (SEN) which may impact on the overall standards achieved.
- For Primary schools in particular, the lack of standardised baseline assessment for children on entry to school makes the measure of ‘value-added’ more difficult to compare across schools.
- For Post-Primary schools an inherent tension often exists between improving standards system wide to meet PfG targets and providing courses to meet needs of individual pupils.
- The use of data, particularly to plan interventions for under-achievement is not always used to optimum advantage.

Learning and Teaching

- The pedagogy of the revised NI Curriculum and the Entitlement Framework may be inconsistently implemented. There can often be differing expectations of teachers and pupils and difficulties with challenging all pupils by matching the curriculum provision and teaching and learning strategies to their abilities and interests.
- The quality of learning and teaching in literacy/English and/or numeracy/mathematics are often identified through inspection as priority areas for improvement.
- The lack of robust procedures to effectively support schools to identify and support teachers whose work is borderline satisfactory or inadequate.
- There is a lack of rigorous and robust procedures for dealing with teachers whose work is identified as unsatisfactory.

Sustainability and Financial Planning

- Sustainability of the school including pupil enrolment trends, the school’s financial position, and standards achieved.
- Financial planning can be less than effective in securing school improvement whether deficit or surplus.
- Entry in to the Formal Intervention process, in some instances, may lead to negative media attention which may be detrimental to the profile of the school in the local community and the longer term sustainability.
- Area based planning has the potential to manage education provision to ensure that schools are viable, sustainable and in a position to support pupils to achieve their potential.

7. Support for Schools

The Board recognises the significant shift which has taken place in terms of the nature of support services to schools in recent years despite significant financial pressures and the challenges of changing the modus operandi of support personnel. Empirical evidence in Inspection Reports illustrates that the support being provided is of high quality and having a positive impact on school improvement by assisting schools to address areas for development/improvement identified in school inspection reports.

It is important that schools continue to take more responsibility for their own improvement and that, as has been shown through school improvement research, external support has an important role to play in assisting the strategic development of school improvement strategies, providing advice on action planning and, most importantly, acting as a “critical friend” who can bring a wider perspective on school improvement and challenge the actions and processes being used by the school to help them refine their work to effect improvement. This external support role should support the building of school improvement capacity in the school and in its ability to effectively evaluate its performance and, with the assistance of external quality assurance from ETI, engage in a process of continuous improvement. This must be an enabling process and must avoid any danger of those giving advice being placed in a position to evaluate the outcome of their advice.

ISSUE 3

8. Alternative inspection/improvement approaches which might better assess and recognise improvement by schools

- As indicated in the recommendations contained within the introduction to the submission, and further articulated in the response on Issue 1, the Board believes that the Education and Training Inspectorate role in respect to schools' performance should move to one where they quality assure the findings of a school's self-evaluation of its own performance. It is recognised that there is a range of survey work done by ETI which is useful in determining detail around a range of educational issues and can inform policy development. A quality assurance approach will provide the opportunity, through self-evaluation, for schools to address issues around value added in terms of their work with pupils by using the data systems and processes which have been the subject of significant development in individual schools in recent years.
- Schools should be provided the opportunity, within an agreed framework (as proposed in the introduction) to demonstrate their performance through their self-evaluative reporting. As indicated earlier in the submission, an agreed quality framework for self-evaluation will be crucial to ensure consistency of evaluation and enable schools' performance to be demonstrated.

It is recognised that in some successful school systems, such as Finland, external inspection is not part of the framework for education with the responsibility for school performance resting solely with schools. In the Northern Ireland context a move towards such an autonomy for schools through an emphasis on meaningful self-evaluation, coupled with external quality assurance, could be of great benefit to the development of the evaluation system in general and would have immense potential in addressing key issues such as under-performance of particular areas of the system.

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People



Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and The School Improvement Process

NI Assembly Education Committee Request for Written Evidence

Introduction

NICCY would like to thank the Northern Ireland Assembly Education Committee for the invitation to submit a written response to its inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and the school improvement process.

The Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) was created in accordance with 'The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order' (2003) to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people in Northern Ireland. Under articles 7(2) and (3) of this legislation, NICCY has a mandate to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law, practice and services relating to the rights and best interests of children and young people by relevant authorities. In determining how to carry out her functions, the Commissioner's paramount consideration is the rights of the child and NICCY is required to base all of its work on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC address the right to education, and the goals of education. The Convention places a high value on education and the importance of ensuring that it promotes different aspects of young people's development.

As further consideration is given to the work of ETI, NICCY would strongly recommend that relevant articles of the UNCRC are taken into account to ensure that children's rights and best interests are kept to the fore. Relevant articles include those pertaining to education (Articles 28, 29), referenced above, Article 3; the best interests of the child being paramount, Article 12; taking account of the views of the child in all matters affecting them, Article 19; protection from all forms of violence (with specific reference to bullying), and Article 42; the importance of adults and children knowing and understanding the UNCRC.

Clearly the quality of school inspections is a significant factor in determining the quality of education provided to children and young people. Furthermore, the provision of accurate, accessible inspection reports is essential in supporting parents or carers to make an informed choice about schools and to provide reliable information regarding the quality of the teaching and learning experiences which their children receive. ETI provides services to various departments and agencies. NICCY would therefore propose that it is important for ETI to engage with all stakeholders regularly and effectively and that the information shared is accessible, timely and of a high quality.

A review of ETI's approach and processes presents an important opportunity to assess and improve the remit for school inspections. In considering how and where ETI's powers might be extended, it will be important to consider whether such an extension will, ultimately, have

a positive impact on pupils' educational experiences. NICCY strongly recommends that this should be the **key** driver underpinning all decisions regarding potential changes to ETI's functions and practice.

Where appropriate, NICCY has addressed issues identified by the Committee, in its request for written evidence, below.

Effectiveness of ETI's approach to school inspection/improvement, and assessment of the 'value-added' in schools which have lower levels of attainment.

Clearly, quality educational provision entails more than the achievement of good examination results and academic performance, and while the quality of learners' achievements is a significant aspect of inspections, NICCY is aware that ETI also examines other important dimensions of educational provision, including pastoral care, special educational needs provision, child protection, teaching, and school ethos.

Before considering any assessment of value-added elements, it is important to clarify what is meant and understood by 'value-added' and how this contributes to improving pupil outcomes and school performance. For example, it will be helpful to confirm if the aspects of provision identified above are regarded as examples of criteria which have been defined to measure perceived 'advantage' or added value in schools. Schools do of course, provide pupils with myriad opportunities to participate in different learning activities and to achieve, outside the formal curriculum. NICCY would therefore highlight the importance of further consideration being given as to how such achievements can be effectively recorded and assessed in each individual school, as part of any inspection process.

When focusing on schools with lower levels of examination attainment, it is important to assess where progress and achievements have occurred, not only in the context of academic attainment, but also through the informal curriculum and across the wider school community. Pupils' achievements in extra-curricular activities such as sports, music, community/international projects, schools' councils and e.g. editing the school magazine, should also be taken into account.

Working with children and young people who experience specific learning difficulties and exhibit disaffection clearly presents significant challenges for principals and classroom teachers in terms of providing appropriate goals and motivating pupils. It is particularly important that where teachers have engaged with young people who find learning challenging or are disaffected, in innovative and creative ways, that their efforts and expertise are acknowledged. Furthermore, where there is evidence that their efforts have positively impacted, NICCY would propose that details of successful strategies and approaches should be actively shared with other schools. Clearly, ETI has a key role in promoting and disseminating good practice across the schools' network.

Key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties

As the Committee will be aware, there are a range of issues impacting on schools which may be experiencing difficulties. These may include a lack of parental support, insufficient support or resources, budgetary cuts and a requirement to teach significant numbers of pupils who are disaffected. In addition, prompt access to appropriate SEN services and support has been a problem for many schools and significant delays in providing assessments by educational psychologists has long been recognized as a problem for pupils and their parents. It is important that school development plans reference support services available through health, education and community providers. There is also an ongoing need for Education and Library Boards to support schools in the provision of SEN services.

A significant issue, which is an ongoing concern for NICCY, is the continuing prevalence of bullying within schools. The Office is aware that all grant-aided schools are required, within their discipline policy, to include an anti-bullying policy detailing definitions and measures they will take to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils. The effectiveness of these measures

is then monitored through the ETI's inspections of pastoral care arrangements. However, the practice of recording bullying incidents is a matter for individual schools and there does not appear to be any consistency or specific requirements in terms of the level of detail which is recorded, e.g. the form of bullying, type of bullying, number of incidents. Once incidents of bullying have been recorded, NICCY believes it is vital that schools then provide evidence of how they have responded and dealt with individual incidents. Evidently this is an area where ETI has a key role to play, in terms of advising and monitoring.

Improving ETI's approach to the school improvement process

The right of a child or young person to have their voice heard is enshrined in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC), as described above. This Article states that children, capable of forming their own views, have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them. NICCY therefore believes it is vital that pupils are consulted during the school inspection process and provided with genuine and meaningful opportunities to contribute their opinions and share their experiences. Evidently, pupils are key stakeholders in education and those most likely to be impacted by decisions made by ETI, school governors and senior management. As such, they occupy a unique position in terms of being able to provide insights and feedback as to how decisions actually work 'on the ground'. There are a range of innovative methods which may be used in consulting with pupils to ensure they can effectively contribute their views and reflect on their experiences.¹ In addition, where pupils are consulted as part of an inspection, NICCY would strongly suggest that they should be informed about the purpose of their involvement and how their feedback will be used by ETI. Following the inspection, they should be advised as to how their input subsequently influenced outcomes.

Providing robust assessments of the quality of educational services and support, should encourage and support schools and other education providers to improve provision, and help to inform stakeholders and the wider public about the quality of education. Throughout the inspection process, it is evidently important that appropriate information is shared with all stakeholders and that post-inspection reports and feedback are sufficiently clear and detailed to enable schools, where required, to make changes.

In conclusion, in its vision, ETI states that it is '*...dedicated fully to the education and well-being of all learners.*' and its mission statement is '*Promoting improvement in the interest of all learners.*' In reviewing ETI's role, priorities and practice, NICCY strongly advocates that children and young people remain the central focus of its work, and that any proposed changes should clearly enhance and improve their educational experiences and promote their well-being and development.

1 Mechanisms to consult with children and young people in schools may include school councils or other participative structures, questionnaires, suggestion boxes, focus groups and peer research.

Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education



Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate Evidence to the Assembly Committees

Submitted by

The Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education

Evidence to the Assembly Committee

- 1.1 Review the effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection/improvement-considering particularly how ETI assess the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment.
- Recent evidence from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, derived from the ETI, suggests that schools with a socially advantaged intake are more likely to receive a very good /outstanding Inspection Report than schools with a socially disadvantaged intake. This evidence suggests a social bias in inspections which can be traced to the distorting impact of selection throughout the educational system. A selective system influences attitudes and places a ceiling on the aspirations and expectations of those not selected. Selective exams distort the primary school curriculum and its delivery. The embedding of social segregation via selection disadvantages children from less well off or disadvantaged families.
 - A less than satisfactory Inspection Report can reduce parental confidence in a school and fast track the closure of a school especially in the current review of the school estate under Area Based Planning.
 - The concept of 'value added' does not appear to inform the inspection process and is not reported on. Recent reports indicate year 8 levels of attainment in English and Mathematics. The validity of this evidence has been challenged and many schools use independent assessment tools such as MIDyis to establish baseline attainment and for the purposes of target setting. A credible baseline tool is a necessary pre requisite before meaningful value added outcomes can be measured.
 - Inspection reports do not take enough account of the many factors that impact on the quality of education provided nor do recognise the wider achievements of schools in terms of social and personal development. A proper cognisance of the 'value added' concept is critical in making fair and consistent judgements on schools.
- 1.2 Identify the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties, and any gaps, both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or ELB's.
- The downturn in demographics will continue to impact on those schools experiencing difficulties. The resultant decrease in funding, due to falling enrolment and fluctuations in the AWPU, will impact adversely on the composition of classes in post primary schools and the size of classes in primary schools. Falling enrolment also impacts on a school's capacity to ensure specialist teachers are employed to teach their subjects, in the organisation of classes and on the provision of additional support for individual students.

- Schools, particularly post-primary schools competing for pupils with a nearby grammar school, who take an increasingly wide range of ability, will see a continued narrowing of their social base. This will impact on student expectation and staff expectation and will further impede improvement. Such conditions place students and teachers under a great deal of stress.

Essentially there is a key issue of inequality of provision for those children and young people in schools experiencing difficulties.

- Schools also experience financial problems due to incremental drift and, with schools having to remain within the 5% deficit parameters, staffing will be affected. There are situations in such schools where non-specialist teachers have to teach a number of subjects – such a situation will have an obvious detrimental effect on teaching and learning.
- Schools, as previously described, will usually be in socially disadvantaged areas with greater challenges in improving Numeracy and Literacy, making it extremely difficult for such schools to achieve an outstanding/very good inspection report.
- ETI monitors the quality of teaching and learning and depending on the outcome of an inspection the ELB, through the Curriculum Advice and Support Service, will provide whatever support is necessary. However, due to vacancy control in the ELB's and the financial constraints under which they operate, staff reductions in the CASS service means officers do not have the necessary in-depth knowledge to provide the support that may be required by schools. The range of high quality capacity and expertise is no, longer available. There is an additional concern that schools have ceased to look for external expert advice because of the reduction in the CASS service.

1.3 Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection, the assessment of value added and improvement.

- There appears to be a loss of confidence in the inspection process with fears that the inspection process may lead to the 'naming and shaming' of schools through the media. This undermines confidence in the process and its capacity to support schools towards improvement. It also adds to the stress of schools.
- The current performance levels, as used by the Inspectorate, to describe a schools performance is wide and does not help build confidence in staff, pupils and the community. A survey of inspections indicates very few schools have achieved a performance level of 'outstanding' in all areas. The use of language to support improvement is important. Phrases such as unsatisfactory and inadequate undermine the confidence of teachers, governors students and the community. A more thoughtful use of language, as used elsewhere, would identify weaknesses without the undermining of a school's capacity to improve.
- The Scottish system of inspection has put the concept of self-evaluation at the heart of their process:
 1. Scotland has moved from a cycle of inspection to a sampling model
 2. Primary schools receive two weeks written notice of inspection
 3. Post-primary schools receive three weeks' notice
 4. There is a constant dialogue between District Inspectors and Local Authorities
 5. The Managing Inspector will have had a significant leadership role – very important when assessing Leadership and Management
 6. Lay members as well as Associates are included in the inspection team
 7. A Health and Nutrition Inspector is present

8. Phrases such as Confident, Partially Confident and Not Confident are used to describe Inspectors' view of the school's ability to self-evaluate thereby not undermining the stakeholders.

It is worth noting that Finland, whose system of education is recognised as a global leader, does not use an inspection process at all to ensure quality outcomes.

"Finland has built up an education system whose characteristics consist of uniformity, free education, school meals and special education by using the principle of inclusion. Typical of Finland are very small differences between schools, which may be explained by the definition of admission areas and the lack of ranking lists and thus by the even distribution of good teachers between schools.

The Finnish school system has been intentionally developed towards the comprehensive model, which guarantees everybody equal opportunities in education irrespective of sex, social status, ethnic group, etc. according to the constitution. By the beginning of the 1990s the system of school inspection was discontinued. The realization of national goals was instead systematically evaluated by national and international surveys of learning results."

NICIE would argue that a deeper analysis of the purpose of inspection and its processes would assist the Committee with its enquiry.

- 1.4 Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process including the need for enhanced powers, alternative measures of achievement, improved governance and transparency.

- It may be that the publication on an annual basis of the names of schools to be inspected in the following year would be supportive of a schools journey to improvement.
- Such notice should be accompanied by a shorter period of actual notice. This would allow the inspection process to see the school operating normally and would reduce stress. Preparation for inspection disrupts schools and the long period of notice places teachers under stress.
- Inspectors need to cultivate an ethos of 'being a critical friend' and work with management and teachers.
- There is scope for an extended role for the district inspector. The DI has a detailed knowledge of the school and should be intervening, as the critical friend, at an early stage: to set the school's performance in a wider context; to ensure boards of governors are aware of the school's performance in this wider context; to support the exploration of strategies for improvement and to provide constructive challenge towards improvement.
- The depth and extent of the role of the DI would be determined by factors such as new leadership, shifts in performance, the outcome of inspections.
- Any enhanced powers for ETI should be agreed only after consultation with schools and other stakeholders.

Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Education – Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Comments from Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

September 2013

Background to NIPSA's Involvement with ETI

1. The Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) represents over 45,000 union members across the civil and public services and the voluntary sector. We represent members within the twelve Northern Ireland Civil Service Departments including the Department of Education (DE) which has responsibility for the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). NIPSA has been closely involved in negotiating and progressing many issues affecting our members in ETI under the leadership of both the current Chief Inspector (CI) and that of her predecessors. As such, we have a clear vested interest in ensuring the Committee of Education (CoE), in undertaking this inquiry, takes cognisance not only of the views of a wider range of stakeholders but also considers not only the effect that any proposed changes would have on our members who will be directly affected by the outcome/s of this review but also their invaluable direct experience of how the education sector best functions within NI.
2. We would add that we welcome the CoE's decision to instigate an inquiry into the School Improvement process and the role of the ETI as we believe this inquiry will afford the Committee the opportunity to witness for themselves the dedication and professionalism and high levels of public service manifested by our members.

Terms of Reference of the Inquiry

3. NIPSA would specifically comment on the terms of reference for the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate as follows - **The effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection /improvement – considering particularly how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment**
4. It is NIPSA's belief that Inspectors consistently display collegiality, team work and support in executing their duties, many of which are challenging and complex. They also consistently work well over and above the hours they are contracted to, without remuneration, in order to ensure that the evaluations they produce are robust and accurate through using the widest possible evidence base. Evaluations are always agreed through team consensus achieved after a process of rigorous and extended debate and always take context into account. As such, most inspection reports contain an opening section outlining salient features of the school's context.
5. In every inspection, the context of the school is foremost in inspectors' minds and in all cases the interests of the learner are paramount. Inspectors do not shy away from making difficult decisions, where those decisions are merited. This can involve relaying difficult messages, while treating all teachers with the utmost professional courtesy and sensitivity. However, no matter how diplomatically these messages are relayed, at times inspectors do not receive the same professional courtesy in return.
6. Inspectors possess a wide range of educational experience, professional expertise and knowledge and are highly reflective individuals. Because they work from home and, thus,

spend much of their time working alone, they value the opportunity to work together during staff development days, the most effective of which involve specialist inspectors leading sessions which focus on up-skilling on aspects of evaluating effectively across all phases. They also welcome the use of Area of Study panels, which allow inspectors to share and learn together, thereby keeping them abreast of contemporary research, while updating their skills, as well as staying well informed of contextual issues at local and regional levels.

7. The recent introduction of a new inspection model for post-primary schools and changes to the primary inspection model which our members are, in good faith, attempting to implement, has been at no small cost to their work life balance. In order to complete inspections within the new 5 day timeframe required by these changes our members are having to work well beyond their prescribed hours on a regular basis. Our members are very dedicated and already work very long hours, not least as they have to drive long distances to and from myriad locations in the course of their work. It is not uncommon for inspectors to work in excess of 70 hours per week in order to achieve the required turnaround. It is our understanding that the new models have the potential to add to an already heavy workload and, thus, may ultimately have a detrimental effect on the quality of inspections over time. The recent focus on driving up the numbers of shorter inspections (2 and 3 day completions, as opposed to 5 or 6 day completions), presumably to meet targets, are not be in the best interests of our members and may prove unpopular with schools. ETI inspection work was always underpinned with rigour: the desire to raise the number of inspections through doing more with fewer resources (the Chief Inspector cites a 20% reduction) and reduced time for inspectors to evaluate the provision has the clear potential to cause divisions between ETI and the schools, if mistakes are made due to the pressures of completion.
8. Inspectors on the ground are flexible and willing workers, willing to make reasonable adjustments, but all ultimately have a desire to work alongside schools with good professional relations in the interests of the learners.

Identify the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the ELBs;

9. The majority of inspectors carry out a District Inspector role in addition to their scheduled inspection work. The districts are divided by geographical area and phase of education. The District Inspector visits his/her organisations in order to accrue knowledge on the particular context and quality of education in each setting.
10. Inspectors highly value their role of the District Inspector. It is a role that is equally highly valued by many Principals and allows ETI to work alongside schools in the interests of promoting improvement for the learners, while maintaining good professional relationships. This role allows the District Inspector to share good practice, get to understand the context of the school first hand and promote good working relationships outside the formal inspection process. Furthermore Branch members undertake pastoral visits to schools in order to offer support to individuals or groups at times of difficulty.
11. This District knowledge is further disseminated through regular ETI meetings which are arranged along ELB areas. This is a cross-phase group and provides a vital opportunity to share and understand the contexts, developments and challenges across a particular ELB area. The Inspectors value opportunities to disseminate good practice, which is underpinned by their good working relationships with a range of other organisations, such as CASS, Health and Social Care Trusts and Early Years Organisation. Much of this dissemination work comes from the inspectors working voluntarily beyond their core duties with very positive feedback from the system.
12. District Inspectors are often called upon to provide briefings on organisations in their district for Ministerial visits and other VIP visits. They are also called upon to provide ETI recommendations on development proposals for schools within their districts.

13. We would, therefore, see the role of the District Inspector as pivotal.

Identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection, the assessment of value added and improvement

14. The education system, coupled with the culture, in Northern Ireland is unique and, much as we favour the abolition of selection post primary and would welcome the introduction of good practice from other jurisdictions if this would improve the current system, this needs to be carefully thought through as it may be difficult to import systems which may work elsewhere but which may not be a good fit for how the education system operates within Northern Ireland. Given the poor press that appears about OFSTED, NIPSA would urge caution about importing methods and ways of working with schools which may not be suitable for Northern Ireland's system. NIPSA would oppose strongly the importation of anything that would serve to put further pressure on schools and inspectors on the ground, who already work in challenging circumstances to promote improvement for the learners. NIPSA seeks to endorse greater engagement between schools and inspectors in a climate that is NOT fuelled by fear, but rather by mutual respect. However, any change that would impact on the way in which our members currently work would ultimately need to be negotiated with trade union side in the first instance.

Consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process including the need for enhanced powers; alternative measures of achievement; improved governance; and transparency

15. We believe that Inspectors, who are the professionals at the coalface in regard to school inspections, need to be the final arbiters when it comes to assessing and determining the outcome of an inspection, not least as it is ultimately their responsibility to justify and stand over their evaluations and explain their reasoning to the staff within the schools they have inspected.
16. The complaints procedure within the ETI was reviewed last year. Our members welcome the fact that they are able to be challenged as this encourages more openness **but they do have reservations about challenges that become time-consuming and protracted as, not only do they cause great stress to all concerned but they can be extremely time-consuming and very costly and detract from the core business of the ETI.**
17. There is a need for increased resources to ensure ETI meets the DE targets and to move away from the recent desire to drive up the quantity of inspections. If there is a need to ensure all schools are inspected in a seven year time-frame, then this needs to be adequately resourced. A recent development has been the increased use of Associate Assessors on inspection teams. Although our members value the current working skills and experience that these education professionals bring to inspection teams, there is a concern that they are now being used more in order to facilitate more inspections to taking place, by spreading ETI inspectors out more thinly. We are concerned that this use of unpaid labour devalues the professionalism of our members and is an attempt to bring ETI in-line with OFSTED.
18. Our members are very supportive of the work being undertaken to research, agree and identify a wider range of achievement that takes account of examination outcomes, as well as wider achievement. **ETI consider a wide range of evidence when evaluating the standards and achievement in schools. Colleagues do not rely on key stage results as a measure of achievement alone as this could be done by anyone in DE. Inspectors consider the school's internal data, scrutinise the children's work in class and in their books and undertake discussions with children in class - particularly those in year 4 and 7.**
19. However, Inspectors who conduct the inspection need greater assurances about the finality of their decisions and the fact that evaluations may not be over-turned from anywhere outside of the original inspection team.

20. Our strong view is that status quo should remain. Being part of DE and the wider NICS allows the ETI to be more accountable for their actions and fosters greater levels of transparency and public accountability.
21. There is a strong desire within the members in ETI to make reporting as clear and transparent as possible. To this end, schools are becoming more involved in the inspection process with the principal kept up-to-date on the emerging findings throughout the inspection and focus groups being utilised in order to assist in making reports clearer.

NIPSA response

YOUR REF

OUR REF

nipsa

The Leading Public Service Union

Brian Campfield General Secretary

Mr Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk
Committee for Education
Room 375 Parliament Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

11 November 2013

Dear Peter

RE: ETI AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INQUIRY – ORAL EVIDENCE SESSION

Thank you for expressing your appreciation to Janette McNulty and myself for our briefing on 6 November 2013 as part of the Committee for Education inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement process.

We had noted that the Committee had agreed to seek additional clarification regarding three points and I will certainly do my best to get back to you by your deadline date of 22 November 2013, earlier if possible.

Yours sincerely



TONY McMULLAN
Assistant Secretary

NIPSA response

YOUR REF

OUR REF



Brian Campfield General Secretary

Mr Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk
Committee for Education
Room 375 Parliament Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

6 December 2013

Dear Peter

RE: ETI AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INQUIRY

Further to my letter of 11 November 2013 in response to your letter of 8 November 2013, I do apologise for the delay in getting back to you. Unfortunately other work pressures have intervened.

However I have attempted to address all of the issues that you raised and if you require any further information please do not hesitate to get in touch.

(a) 20% proposed reduction in the budget for the Education and Training Inspectorate

The view of NIPSA is that the 20% reduction is not linked with a growth in self evaluation in schools but rather merely a budgetary cut. Schools have, for some considerable time now, been encouraged and indeed supported to ensure that they have rigorous self evaluation in place. The Education and Training Inspectorate provide free and ready access to a document entitled "Together towards Improvement", which supports schools in this regard.

In relation to the point raised about Associate Assessors NIPSA does not possess the data regarding the number of days and costs associated with this in order to know whether or not there is a correlation. The Office of the Chief Inspector might be best able to provide this information.

NIPSA welcomes the use of Associate Assessors as it provides greater transparency in the system and allows for practitioners with current and relevant experience to play a significant role in the inspection. Inspectors and current Senior Practitioners work extremely well alongside each other and both learn from each other. NIPSA sees the value of such a scheme.

The main concern NIPSA has with the 20% reduction in resources is the severe demands that it is, and will continue to play, on Inspectors' workload, health and wellbeing and indeed the additional stresses it places on Inspectors and schools

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where it is felt that there are demands to increase the number of inspections with increasingly less time to do them. As we pointed out during our verbal presentation, doing more with less and less in a quicker time period will present increasing risks. NIPSA members in ETI stand for quality and not quantity and we would welcome the support of the Education Committee in this context.

Coupled with the decreasing resources and the high stakes involved, NIPSA would wish to point out that the policy of not allowing the District Inspector to be the Reporting Inspector in one of their own schools is placing increased risks on inspections. The District Inspector has an in-depth knowledge of the school context which is an essential component in evaluating a school. NIPSA clearly stands for quality inspection processes and adequate human resourcing.

It has been noticed that over the last few years many highly valued and experienced Inspectors have retired, some of whom would have stayed on in a part-time / specialist capacity. NIPSA's members in ETI welcomes the Education Committees support in considering the many advantages and benefits of implementing such a policy which operates in other parts of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

(b) Education Scotland Inspection Model

Our members have not had the opportunity of having a collective discussion on the whole issue of the Education Scotland Inspection Model. What we raised in our verbal submission was the opportunity which Education Scotland allows for their Inspectors to have, compared to our members, a generous amount of time for professional development.

It was that one issue which we highlighted during our verbal presentation.

Our members are neither for nor against the Scottish model but we believe that if there was to be a move towards adopting the Education Scotland model then our members in ETI would welcome the opportunity for a full engagement and the opportunity to contribute to such a discussion before any decisions were made. Our members remain steadfast in their view that they want to work alongside other colleagues and in order to promote improvement.

NIPSA in ETI wants a service that meets the needs of Northern Ireland's children, pupils and young people. NIPSA is very concerned at the accusations being made around the Inspection Service that arouses fear and concern. Our members in ETI are very much in favour of working alongside schools and other service providers to promote improvement and they strongly oppose vigorously a punitive inspection regime. Our members in ETI acknowledge that a trust has been lost of late, then there is clear work to be done to rebuild confidence and to improve relationships and trust.

(c) Development proposals and area plans

Our members in ETI have been asked, as one of a range of bodies, to respond to a range of Development Proposals. These cover a range of issues, including school closures or proposed amalgamations. In other cases they are about increasing the enrolment number or a change in pre-school provision in voluntary and private to statutory such as playgroup becoming a nursery unit.

In their comments on Development Proposals, Inspectors provide statistical data or previous inspection evidence to the Department of Education. This is done so that others are better informed and can take whatever decisions required. In this regard the ETI acts independently, uses inspection evidence and provides information based often on district knowledge. The information provided by ETI is not always acted upon by Department of Education.

I hope this clarifies all of the points you raised but if there is anything further you want please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony McMullan', with a stylized, cursive script.

TONY McMULLAN
Assistant Secretary

Northern Ireland Teaching Council submission to the Workforce Review

Received 24 October 2013

Hi Sharon

I have attached a copy of the NITC submission to the Workforce Review work-stream. There may not be a huge amount of evidence gathered by NITC at this point in terms of questionnaires but we can certainly supply them at some stage.

Regards

Avril

NITC SUBMISSION TO THE WORKFORCE REVIEW WORKSTREAM OF THE STRATEGIC FORUM

This submission has been prepared on behalf of the NITC and focuses on the need to consider work flexibility as an important element of a teacher's professional development.

1.CONTEXT

1.1 The NITC recognises that there is rigidity within the Northern Ireland school teaching workforce, with little movement between schools, school types or sectors. It is a concern that the increased autonomy within the Education Bill may exacerbate this rigidity to the detriment of the profession, pupils and systemic performance.

1.2 The NITC also proposes that an agreement on Professional Development should be negotiated through the recognised negotiating machinery and should form part of a teacher's Terms and Conditions of employment.

2.CAREER FLEXIBILITY

2.1 The NITC proposes that introducing employment flexibility would allow opportunities for teachers, including principal teachers, at all stages of their careers to opt for different types of employment within the wider education service, thereby gaining knowledge and skills that would benefit their career development pathway.

2.2 Career flexibility has operated in a limited way in the past through secondment opportunities where teachers were appointed for varying periods of time to carry out advisory teacher posts within the Education and Library Boards. Unfortunately such

secondments have become less available as the Education and Library Boards have contracted in the lead into ESA.

- 2.3 The NITC believes that this type of opportunity should be encouraged within ESA and should certainly be taken into account by those drafting the new structures for Continuous Professional Development (CPD).
- 2.4 NITC would encourage increased use of secondments and exchanges to allow teachers extended periods of professional practice in another school, school type or sector. NITC would particularly seek to encourage talented and ambitious teachers to teach and practice in challenging schools within areas of social disadvantage.
- 2.5 The NITC also believes that such secondments should be extended into other areas within ESA where teachers could get experience of a variety of administrative functions. For example, a period within the Human Resources Directorate would allow teachers to encounter a variety of industrial relations scenarios, thus preparing them better to deal with future such issues in their management role in schools. This could be applied in a similar way to many of the administrative areas within ESA such as special education, school re-organisation or school funding.
- 2.6 The NITC would also propose that there should be a pool of centrally employed teachers, along the lines of the current peripatetic specialist staff, upon which schools could call in order to provide specialist help. This pool should also be staffed on a secondment basis to allow teachers to share experience that they have already gained within their schools and to learn from others as they travel from school to school.

3.LEADERSHIP

3.1 For those teachers aspiring towards leadership roles in schools there should be an extended and meaningful opportunity to work-shadow leaders in schools other than their own as part of the requirement to gain a PQH-type qualification.

3.2 Indeed, the NITC would suggest that the PQH structure should be reviewed to ensure that the alternative forms of employment placements suggested within this paper should form part of a career development portfolio.

3.3 NITC does not support any movement towards fixed term Principal posts, but would encourage the secondment of suitably qualified aspirant leaders for Principal posts as a

means of providing leadership opportunities and as a means of widening recruitment pools in hard-to-fill posts.

3.4 The NITC believes that teachers should also be able to add to their career portfolio through secondment to the Education and Training Inspectorate for a fixed period of time. This would ensure that the best practice in schools can be brought back into the teacher's school on completion of the secondment, but more importantly it would ensure that those who are current practitioners, with recent and relevant experience (and thus realistic expectations of what is appropriate) would be carrying out school inspections.

4.PRE-RETIREMENT OPTIONS

4.1 The NITC also believes that there may be opportunities for teachers nearing the end of their careers to avail of opportunities to contribute to specialised project work providing the school is prepared to appoint a recently qualified teacher to their post.

4.2 There may be scope to make the appointments of the recently-qualified teachers on a permanent basis if a scheme could be drawn up to ensure no detriment to teachers' pensions and indeed it could be devised in such a way as to allow for phased retirement for those teachers who wanted it.

4.3 This could apply equally to classroom teachers and to those in senior management roles.

5.TEACHER-TRAINING & CPD

5.1 The NITC would also suggest that serving teachers should have an opportunity to contribute to the work of Initial Teacher Training by secondment to the training institutions for a fixed period of time. This would ensure that those training teachers would be current in their thinking and practice and it might also allow those teachers to update their own knowledge of current academic research.

5.2 This type of secondment could be extended to provision of Continuing Professional Development for serving teachers within the teacher training establishments.

5.3 The logical consequence would then be that teachers could be encouraged to provide training for others within their own school, or be involved in developing teacher expertise and initiatives across a number of schools, including across phases.

The NITC recognises that these are only some of the ways that flexibility could be introduced to support career development and hopes that this paper might be discussed at the next meeting of the Workforce Review Workstream to stimulate discussion, with a view to it being included in the final report to the Minister for Education.

Parents Out Loud

Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Education – Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Updated and revised submission from ParentsOutLoud

1. About ParentsOutLoud

- a) ParentsOutloud is an independent, non-funded and non-profit group. It aims to give a voice to parents, carers and others who are interested in education. It operates primarily in England, but has also been campaigning on the issue of school starting age flexibility in Northern Ireland.
- b) It should be noted that the views expressed in this paper are the views of ParentsOutLoud alone, and are not intended to represent the views of any of the charities or other organisations, or other individuals, who are also involved in the above-mentioned campaign on school starting age flexibility.

2. Introduction

- a) We greatly welcome this inquiry by the Committee for Education. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in Northern Ireland has always maintained a very low public profile, compared to its relatively high-profile counterpart, Ofsted, in England. While Ofsted has attracted much criticism over the years, the publicity which has resulted from that criticism and from its own proactive communications efforts has engendered a level of public debate about school inspections in England which has never been evident in Northern Ireland. We hope that the Committee's inquiry will help to provoke a constructive public debate about school inspections here.
- b) We believe that ETI has significantly improved the standard of its school inspection reports over the past few years. However, there is much scope for further improvement. Our concerns about the current system of school inspections in Northern Ireland focus on a number of key issues:
 - a. The accessibility of school inspection reports and information about the school inspection system
 - b. The criteria used to assess schools
 - c. The extent to which parents and pupils have an input into school inspections

- d. The content and quality of inspection reports – **we are particularly concerned that reports, particularly primary school reports, are failing to examine the quality of delivery of the full breadth of the curriculum**
 - e. The frequency of school inspection reports – **we have found evidence of alarmingly lengthy gaps between full (or nearest equivalent to full) inspection reports which are available on the ETI website, and evidence that only a tiny proportion of primary schools and a modest proportion of post-primary schools receive a full inspection (or nearest equivalent to full inspection) in any given year**
 - f. Notice of school inspections
 - g. The resources available to ETI – **we are very concerned that ETI’s budget is currently being cut by 20%**
 - h. Assistance available to parents with concerns about a school
 - i. Thematic reviews of school provision and publicity
 - j. Benchmarking the quality of ETI school inspections
- c) As we have no staff members in Northern Ireland, we have not been able to research these issues in depth. However, we hope that we provide sufficient information on these issues in this submission to offer the Committee some areas of investigation for its inquiry.
- d) We have carried out some comparative assessment of the inspection systems and inspection reports in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, focusing on a small sample of recent reports in each country, and on the information available online. We readily acknowledge that a more robust and comprehensive study would be required in order to validate our findings.
- e) It should be noted that our comments focus on inspections of primary and post-primary schools only. We note that the Early Years charity has made a submission to the Committee’s consultation, and we would support its call for pre-school inspection reports to take a holistic view of the quality of pre-school provision.
- f) This revised and updated submission to the Inquiry takes into account information which was provided by the Department of Education to the Committee for Education at its request. We have also included some further analysis of our own, and revised information with regard to the different categories of primary school inspection carried out by ETI, in the light of the very recent addition of a new category of primary school inspection.

3. Accessibility of information

- a) Both Ofsted and ETI publish leaflets for parents about school inspections. By contrast, their Scottish counterpart, Education Scotland, has no easily accessible information on its website which is aimed at parents. The ETI leaflets are the most helpful, containing clear summary information about what will happen when your child's school is inspected.¹ However, while there is also a link under 'Information for Parents' to a page about different types of school inspection, no information is provided about 'primary inspections' which are one of a number of different types of primary school inspection.
- b) The Ofsted website also publishes a more detailed and very clear *Framework for school inspection* which explains the process in more detail and which outlines the detailed criteria used in school inspections.² **We could find no such easily accessible document on the ETI website, and information supplied by the Department of Education to the Committee suggests that no such document exists.**

1.b.1. After the Committee requested further information from the Department of Education on this question, **the Department stated that the quality indicators against which inspectors evaluated the quality of educational provision were contained in a document called *Together Towards Improvement*.** We could not access this document via the home page of ETI's website, nor under 'Information for Parents'. When we used the website's search facility to try to locate the document, links appeared to a number of versions. However, they all appeared to constitute guidance to schools on how to carry out self-evaluation. **We could not find any version of the document which stated that it provided a framework for school inspections.** Recent primary and post-primary school inspections contain a link to the relevant (primary or post-primary) version of this document, but the document itself is not presented as an inspection framework.

1.b.2. The Department also stated that another relevant document was one entitled *A Charter for Inspection*. This is available under 'Information for Parents'. However, it was only published on 23rd December 2013. In any event, this document contains a series of standards to which inspectors and ETI promise to adhere (e.g. courtesy), and does not constitute a framework for inspection.³

- c) Of the three inspection organisations, Education Scotland has the most user-friendly and fastest search facility. It is very intuitive and the results appear within a few seconds. On ETI's website, parents must use the overall website search facility. The search facility is reasonably fast and results can be filtered. However, in contrast to the Ofsted website, the results for a particular school do not appear in chronological order and searches produce

¹ See, for example: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-primary/schools-info-for-parents-2.pdf>

² See: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-school-inspection>

³ A further document was referred to in DE's response to the Committee – *What Happens After Inspection?* However, self-evidently, this is not a framework for inspections.

other, unrelated results. **In general, ETI's website could provide a more user-friendly and intuitive interface for parents.**

- d) We are also unhappy with the lack of any apparent system for providing parents with copies of school inspection reports in a timely manner. We note that a recent ETI Annual Report states that school inspection reports are emailed to "schools and organisations", but that no hard copies are provided to parents.⁴ Schools should be required to publish inspection reports on their websites in a timely manner, and notify all parents when a new report is published and where it can be found on the school website. Schools should make available hard copies of the report to parents on request.

Recommendation 1: schools should be required to provide the appropriate ETI information leaflet about school inspections to all parents when a child enrolls at a school, and prior to a school inspection (or provide a link to the leaflet via email).

Recommendation 2: ETI should publish its own equivalent of Ofsted's *Framework for school inspection* on its website and it should be available to parents in hard copy on request. This should clearly explain the inspection process in more detail and outline the detailed criteria used in school inspections.

Recommendation 3: ETI's website should have a dedicated search facility for inspection reports which displays the results for each school in chronological order. Other steps should be taken to make the website more user-friendly and intuitive for parents.

Recommendation 4: ETI should require all schools to publish school inspection reports on their website in a timely manner, and to make all parents aware of how they can access that report, once published.

4. The criteria used to assess schools

- a) As the criteria used by ETI is not – as far as we can judge – published (see above), it is difficult to make any comparison with the criteria used by Ofsted or Education Scotland. It is also difficult to make any assessment of the criteria.
- b) As ParentsOutLoud has no staff, we have not been able to attempt any analysis of the criteria which appear to underlie post-primary school inspections. However, we have been able to analyse a small sample of primary school inspection reports. We have, therefore, focused on the criteria which appear to be used in primary school inspections, as evidenced by those reports.
- c) We note that ETI's primary school inspection reports are structured under the following three broad headings, and that schools are assessed on each of these:

⁴ *ETI Annual Business Report 2011-12*, section 4.6. Available at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-general-documents-non-phase-related/support-material-general-documents-about-the-education-and-training-inspectorate/annual-business-report-2>

- a. Achievements and standards
 - b. Quality of provision (which includes quality of teaching)
 - c. Leadership and management
- d) Circumstantial evidence suggests that not all primary schools provide an adequate education in a broad range of subjects, and that some may focus disproportionately on mathematics, literacy and ICT, at the expense of other subjects which can help engage the enthusiasm of children for learning, and which provide an essential base for post-primary education. There is also circumstantial evidence of instances of a somewhat token approach to play-based learning at the Foundation Stage, and of poor communication with parents, and of a lack of involvement by pupils in the running of their school, in some instances.
- e) There is little doubt that school inspections act as a strong incentive for school to improve their teaching and practices, where these areas are weak. For this reason, we carried out two analyses of recent primary school inspection reports to examine the extent to which they focused on all these areas.
- f) ETI's primary school inspection reports are categorised under five different headings: 'baseline', 'focused', 'follow up', 'primary' and 'short' inspections. **The category of 'primary inspections' appears to have been introduced only in October 2013**, as no reports are published under this category prior to that date. **It is not clear what the difference is between 'focused' and 'primary' inspections, as both appear to focus on literacy and maths, and to cover the same general areas of examination.** The ETI website provides no explanation of 'primary inspections'. It states that a 'focused inspection' focuses on particular aspects of an organisation's provision. However, each 'primary inspection' report which we examined also stated at the beginning of the document that the inspection focused on certain areas.
- g) **We are concerned that ETI does not appear to carry out full, standard inspections of primary schools. Instead, it appears to focus on specific areas of a school's provision in both 'primary inspection' and 'focused inspection' reports. We believe this is entirely inadequate.**
- h) When the Committee questioned the Department on this issue, it responded:

On Primary inspections, the three key aspects which are evaluated and reported on include the achievements and standards attained by the children in English, mathematics and ICT; the quality of the provision which entails learning, teaching, pastoral care and assessment; and, the quality of leadership and management at all levels and safeguarding.

While achievements and standards in English, mathematics and ICT are assessed, the extent to which these subjects are integrated across the curriculum is a key aspect of the inspection process. ETI conducts thematic/survey inspections of other

areas of learning on a rolling basis and this year is looking at the World Around Us.⁵
[our emphasis]

- i) In our view, **the above response is basically an admission that ETI is not investigating the quality of teaching and provision across the full range of the primary school curriculum**, as the Department states that it is simply examining the extent to which English, maths and ICT are integrated with other areas of the curriculum.
- j) We carried out two analyses of 20 recent primary school inspection reports – ten of these were ‘focused inspection reports’ and ten were ‘primary inspection reports’.⁶ We present the amalgamated findings below as there was no significant difference in the findings between the two different types of inspection. As stated previously, we could not identify why these two types of report were labelled in different ways as they appeared to cover the same areas. Our findings were as follows:
 - a. **All 20 inspection reports focused on the provision of literacy and numeracy**, although **eight focused mostly or solely on achievement** (as opposed to teaching quality) in these areas
 - b. **Only 14 of the reports commented on ICT** in terms of either achievement or provision
 - c. **Just five reports commented on the quality of play-based learning** at Foundation Stage
 - d. **Only four reports commented on physical education provision** (a number commented on opportunities for physical activity during break times which one would expect to be in place, in any event)
 - e. **Just one report commented on the provision of science and technology**
 - f. **Only two reports commented on the quality of provision in music, while one commented on achievement** (but not teaching quality) **in art. None covered history or geography**, although there was a brief reference in one report to ‘the world around us’ curriculum area which is meant to encompass science, history and geo geography.
 - g. **None of the reports commented on the quality of learning with regard to the development of group work skills, and of research and investigation skills, despite**

⁵ Correspondence from the Department of Education to the Committee for Education, 13.12.13.

⁶ Both analyses examined a sample of reports carried out in 2013 and published on a page devoted to primary school inspection reports published in 2013 on ETI’s website. We analysed the first ten ‘focused inspection’ reports, as listed alphabetically on that page, on 21st September 2013. We analysed the first ten ‘primary inspection’ reports, as listed alphabetically on that page, on 2nd January 2014.

the fact that development of such skills forms part of the Revised Curriculum, and that such skills are so vital to the future employability of pupils.⁷

- h. **Only eleven reports commented on communication with parents.** However, **most mentioned only channels of communication which ought to be in place in any case** and, with one exception, there was no proper assessment of the effectiveness of such channels. The report which did assess effectiveness drew on the results of its parents' survey. None of the reports commented on whether the school regularly surveyed parents about their views.
- i. Four reports mentioned the existence of a school council which can provide a vehicle for pupils to express their views. However, the lack of such a council was not commented upon.
- k) In short, **there was no evidence of a consistent and rigorous approach to the investigation of the quality of teaching in any subjects other than mathematics and literacy, nor of the development of key cross-curricular skills, nor of the quality of a school's communication with parents or pupils.**
- l) We would like inspection reports to examine the quality of provision (which includes teaching) in each area of the Revised Curriculum, with specific assessment of play-based learning at the Foundation Stage, and of science, history, geography, physical education, art, music, and of the core skills described in the curriculum (e.g. group work) throughout P1 to P7. We would also like inspection reports to examine, in a consistent and rigorous way, the quality of a school's communication with parents and with pupils, including the extent to which parents and pupils are given a meaningful voice in the running of the school.
- m) It should be noted that, in their primary school reports, neither Ofsted nor Education Scotland appear to investigate the quality of provision right across the range of subject areas in any consistent way either, although Education Scotland's reports appear to be wider-ranging in this regard. However, this should not provide an excuse for the narrow focus of ETI's primary school reports. We believe that the quality of a school's teaching right across the full subject range should be properly inspected in any country.
- n) We are especially concerned about the importance of physical activity, given the current high level of child obesity and overweight. **It is quite inadequate for ETI's comments on physical activity to be limited to the fact that opportunities for such activities exist at break time, as was the case in some of the reports which we examined.** In addition to properly examining the quality of physical education, ETI should also investigate whether both primary and post-primary schools are delivering the full two hours of physical education each week which is recommended in Department of Education guidance.

Recommendation 5: Primary school inspection reports should examine, in a consistent and rigorous way, the following:

⁷ Two reports did comment that children worked well in groups.

- the quality of provision (which includes teaching) in each area of the Revised Curriculum, with specific assessment of play-based learning at the Foundation Stage, and of the areas of the Revised Curriculum which cover science, history, geography, physical education, art and music
- the development of the core skills described in the curriculum (e.g. group work) throughout P1 to P7
- the quality of a school's communication with parents and pupils, including the extent to which parents and pupils are given a meaningful voice in the running of the school

Recommendation 6: the Committee for Education should commission an analysis of the criteria used and the actual areas of investigation in post-primary school inspection reports.

Recommendation 7: primary and post-primary school reports should include an assessment of both the quality and quantity of physical education and sports provision received by pupils (excluding extra-curricular and optional activity)

5. Input by parents and pupils

- Until recently, Ofsted issued a questionnaire to every parent at each school it inspected. This asked parents to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with 13 statements relating to the quality of their child's education and to the school's communication with parents. The results were displayed (clearly in both numerical and percentage format) in the inspection report. The report also stated how many parents responded. This table provided a very valuable evaluation of the views of parents. By using the same questionnaire for each inspection, Ofsted also ensured that parents' views were both sought and reported in a consistent and fair way. The inspection report summarised this evidence and related it to the other inspection findings.
- Unfortunately, Ofsted has dispensed with this practice, and now relies on the results from an online survey on its ParentView website which it does not summarise in its reports. ETI issues a questionnaire to parents, but does not publish the results in tabulated form. It gives no detail of the questions asked in the questionnaire. In primary school inspection reports, it includes only cursory information about parents' views in its reports. In post-primary inspection reports, it includes only data on the number of completed questionnaires received and the number with comments. No attempt is made in either report to relate the views of parents to the other inspection findings.
- The current system of reporting parental views used by ETI is highly unsatisfactory. We would like ETI to adopt the very valuable data-gathering and reporting processes which were previously being followed by Ofsted, and to ensure that parents' views make a meaningful contribution to school inspection reports,** both with regard to the quality of teaching and with regard to communication with parents. We appreciate that this involves additional staff time. However, we believe that parents' views of the education provided by

a school are absolutely essential if that education is to be properly evaluated in inspection reports.

- d) We are also very concerned at the very low level of parental response to recent 'primary inspections' (see Table 1). **Of the ten 'primary inspection' reports which we examined, on average, just 14.7% of parents responded to a parental survey carried out by ETI.** In these reports, ETI states that the low response rate may be due to new survey methods which it is trialling. If this is the case, it is clear that the new methods are not working.
- e) ETI does talk to a sample of P6 pupils for its primary school inspection reports. Again, however, the information provided is cursory and we would welcome more detailed information which is related to the other findings in the report. ETI inspectors also talk to pupils from a number of year groups in post-primary schools but do not report any findings from these discussions. ETI is to be commended for talking to students. However, again, a reasonably detailed summary of the information gathered would be welcome.
- f) We were also concerned that, in most of the 'primary inspection' reports which we examined, a significant proportion of teachers or teaching support staff had not availed of the opportunity to provide their views to ETI as part of the inspection (see Table 1). We would suggest that teachers and teaching support staff should be required to contribute to school inspections in this way, except where they are ill or on leave.

Table 1: Sample of 'Primary inspections' Oct – Dec 2013 –parental, teacher and teaching support staff response rates (n = 10)

School	Response rate to ETI parental survey (%)	Response rate to ETI teacher survey (%)	Response rate to ETI teaching support staff survey (%)*
1	10	55	n/a
2	18	92	56
3	12	67	25
4	No survey referred to in the report		
5	11	85	25
6	27	75	60
7	11	n/a	90
8	19	55	n/a
9	5	62	n/a
10	20	100	100
Average	14.7	73.9	59.3

Recommendation 8: ETI should adopt a similar robust, comprehensive and consistent approach to that which was previously being used by Ofsted when surveying and reporting the views of parents for its school inspection report. The views should be gathered and reported in a way which makes a meaningful contribution to the overall value of the report. All parents should be given the opportunity to provide their views.

Recommendation 9: ETI should provide more detail on the views of pupils and relate them to the other inspection findings. It should speak to the widest possible sample of students and should select pupils at random, to ensure that they are likely to hold representative views.

Recommendation 10: Teachers and teaching support staff should be required to respond to surveys of their views which are carried out by ETI as part of its inspection process, except where illness or other absence makes this impossible.

6. The content and quality of school inspection reports

- a) **ETI's primary school inspection reports compare fairly well with those produced by Ofsted and Education Scotland in terms of clarity and user-friendliness.** They appear to be superior to those produced by Education Scotland in terms of having a clear and reasonably consistent structure. We welcome the fact that the most recent ETI reports, like those of Ofsted, provide clear gradings for each broad aspect of a school's performance.
- b) However, we are concerned that, as with the system used by Ofsted, no attempt is made to assess the 'value added' of a school's provision. We believe, therefore, that any such assessment must include an assessment of pupil achievement which factors in the proportion of children receiving free school meals, the proportion of children with special educational needs (excluding any classes which teach solely children with special educational needs), and whether or not the school in question selects its pupils through the use of academic tests.
- c) We have been unable to carry out any proper analysis of ETI's post-primary school reports. However, **we are concerned by the apparent lack of sufficiently rigorous attention accorded to the quality of teaching across the full range of subjects in those recent post-primary school reports which we have examined.** We do welcome the fact that recent reports generally (but not always) contain detailed assessment of the quality of teaching in two or three subject areas (normally including English and Maths). However, we would like to see this assessment extended to include a wider range of key subjects. In addition, there appears to be little or no specific comment on the quality of teaching at sixth-form level.
- d) We are concerned about the lack of breadth of both ETI's primary and post-primary school inspection reports. **Ofsted inspection reports provide a fuller account of how each inspection was undertaken. In particular, they provide information on the number and grade(s) of inspectors carrying out each inspection, and the number of teachers and of lessons observed. This is important information which should be provided for the sake of transparency, and to help ensure that sufficient resources are being invested in each inspection.**

Recommendation 11: The grading and assessment of pupil achievement in school inspection reports should investigate 'value added' achievement, and should take into account the proportion of children receiving free school meals, the proportion of children with special

educational needs (excluding any classes which teach solely children with special educational needs), and whether or not the school in question selects its pupils through the use of academic tests.

Recommendation 12: The Committee for Education should carry out a comparative analysis of the quality of the content and standard of the assessments of quality of teaching in ETI's post-primary reports, and should consider whether there is scope for a more detailed assessment of quality of teaching across a wider range of subjects.

Recommendation 13: ETI inspection reports should include information on the number and grade(s) of inspectors carrying out each inspection, and the number of teachers and lessons observed.

7. The frequency of school inspection reports

- a) While Ofsted provides clear information in its parent information leaflet about the frequency of school inspection reports, no such information is evident on the ETI website. However, **we believe that ETI's full inspections are far too infrequent**, based on the available evidence. We examined the frequency of inspection reports for 10 south and south-east Belfast schools (five primary and five post-primary), and for 13 schools in the Omagh area (seven primary and six post-primary).
- b) As can be seen from Tables 2 and 3 overleaf (pp. 13-14), *excluding short, specialist and follow-up reports*, and based on reports which we were able to find on the ETI website, using its search facility:
 - **The most recent available inspection reports for two Omagh primary schools date back 15 years and 14 years respectively**
 - **There is no full inspection report available for a well-known Belfast grammar school**
 - The most recent available inspection reports for a further four Belfast and Omagh area primary schools date back **nine years**
 - **There are gaps of up to 11 years between inspection reports, where the previous reports are available**
 - **In the case of one Belfast school where the most recent focused report was published in 2004, that report focuses on English and ICT – areas which the report says were selected by the school in question**
- c) We appreciate that this may be an issue of the inadequacy of ETI's search facility and/or website – or it may indeed represent the actual long length between full inspections. Either way, **the paucity of regular and comprehensive inspection information is quite unacceptable.**

- d) We would urge the Committee to clarify with ETI whether all inspection reports are properly uploaded onto its website, and to carry out an analysis of the actual frequency of school inspections in Northern Ireland. We believe that all schools should be inspected every three years as school inspections provide an important incentive to improve and maintain standards. We note that Ofsted now only visits good schools once every five years. However, we believe that standards can slip within a few years and a five year (or greater) gap between inspections is too large.
- e) We note that the Department has told the Committee that, until 2010, ETI 'aimed' to inspect every school once every seven years, but it would seem that there is now no stipulated maximum period between inspections, and that a 'risk assessment' approach is used.⁸ **We do not consider this to be acceptable.**
- f) We further note **66 'focused' or 'primary' primary school inspection reports are listed on the ETI website for the whole of 2013.** There are a total of 847 primary schools in Northern Ireland. This means that just **7.8% of primary schools received the nearest equivalent of a full inspection within a 12-month period.** At that rate, each primary school can expect to receive a focused or primary inspection just once every 13 years.
- g) The picture is only a little better with regard to the 215 post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. **Only 32 full inspection post-primary school inspection reports were published in 2013.** This represents just 14.9% of all post-primary schools. Thus, each post-primary school can expect to receive a full inspection just once every seven years.
- h) These figures contrast sharply with the rate of Ofsted's inspections. In the financial year 2011-2012, it carried out 5,769 maintained school inspections. There are approximately 21,000 maintained schools in England. This means that 27.5% of maintained schools in England were inspected in a single year by Ofsted and therefore that, on average, each school in England could expect to be inspected once every four years.⁹

Recommendation 13: ETI should carry out a full inspection of all schools once every three years, with additional follow-up inspections where necessary.

Recommendation 14: The Committee for Education should carry out an analysis of the actual frequency of full school inspections in Northern Ireland. It should also clarify with ETI whether all inspection reports are properly uploaded onto its website, and accessible via its search facility.

Recommendation 15: ETI should provide clear information on the frequency of school inspections on its website.

⁸ Correspondence from Department of Education to Committee for Education, op. cit.

⁹ Ofsted *Annual Report and Accounts 2011 – 12*, p. 11. This figure excludes follow-up and other monitoring visits.

Table 2: Frequency of sample of school inspection reports published on ETI website (Sept 2013) (all schools are situated in south or south-east Belfast)

Primary School	Most recent focused or primary inspection report (excluding specialist reports e.g. library facilities)	Previous focused inspection report	Length of time between focused/primary inspection reports	Length of time since last focused/primary inspection report
Forge Integrated PS	2008	2000	8 years	5 years
Holy Rosary PS	2004	Not available	Not known	9 years
Knockbreda PS	2004 (English & ICT)	Not available	Not known	9 years
Rosetta PS	2013	2003 (English, ICT & pastoral care)	10 years	0 years
St Michael's PS	Not available	Not available	Not known	Not known
Post-primary school	Most recent full inspection report	Previous full inspection report	Length of time between full inspection reports	Length of time since last full inspection report
Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School	2008	2000	8 years	5 years
Knockbreda High School	2009	Not available (but before 2001)	At least 9 years	4 years
Lagan College	2013	Not available	Not known	0 years
Methodist College	Not available	Not available	Not known	Not known
Wellington College	2008	Not available	Not known	5 years

Table 3: Frequency of sample of school inspection reports published on ETI website (Dec 2013) (all schools are situated in Omagh area)

Primary School	Most recent focused or primary inspection report (excluding specialist reports e.g. library facilities, and short inspections)	Previous focused inspection report	Length of time between focused or primary inspection reports	Length of time since last focused or primary inspection report
Omagh Integrated PS	1999	Not available	Not known	14 years
St Conor's PS	2005 (English, ICT/pastoral care)	Not available	Not known	8 years
Loreto Convent PS*	1998	Not available	Not known	15 years
Omagh County PS	2006 (English, ICT and pastoral care)	Not available	Not known	7years
Gibson PS	2009	Not available	Not known	4 years
Sacred Heart PS, Tattyreagh	2004 (Maths/ICT/pastoral care)	Not available	Not known	9 years
Christ the King PS	2004	Not available	Not known	9 years
Post-primary school	Most recent full inspection report	Previous full inspection report	Length of time between full inspection reports	Length of time since last full inspection report
CBS Omagh	2010	2001	9years	3years
Convent Grammar Omagh	2013	2006	7 years	0 years
Drumragh Integrated College	2008	2000	8years	5years
Sacred Heart College	2012	2003	9years	1 year
Omagh Academy	2013	2002	11years	0 years
Omagh High School	2013	2003	10years	0years

* Please note that Loreto Convent Primary School amalgamated with a neighbouring boys' primary school (St Colmcille's which is not included in this table) in Sept 2012. The new amalgamated school is called Holy Family Primary School. However, no inspection report exists for this new school, and we understand that it has not been inspected.

8. Notice of school inspections

- a) One controversial issue is the amount of notice which should be given to schools prior to an inspection. This issue has attracted great controversy in England, with a number of teaching unions criticising the concept of “no notice inspections”. However, shorter school inspections are conducted with no notice in the Republic of Ireland with no apparent difficulty, and Ofsted now gives schools just one day’s notice for full inspections. By contrast, ETI gives primary schools four weeks’ notice of a standard inspection and two weeks’ notice of a shorter inspection.¹⁰
- b) While we understand that some school staff find school inspections stressful, we believe it is vital that inspectors view a school on a normal school day. This can only be achieved through no notice or very short notice inspections. Moreover, when a school is conscious that it could be inspected at any time, this provides a powerful incentive for schools to maintain standards. Indeed, where all teaching staff are performing to the optimum level at all times (as should be the case), a school inspection is much less likely to be unduly stressful in the first place.
- c) We would therefore like ETI to provide schools with one day’s notice for full school inspections, and no notice for shorter or follow-up inspections. In order to allow schools time to prepare the necessary paperwork for full or focused inspections, all schools should receive at least three months’ notice that a full or focused inspection will be held, but with no details of the precise date. The precise date should only be confirmed the day before.

Recommendation 16: ETI should provide schools with one day’s notice for full or focused school inspections, and no notice for shorter or follow-up inspections. In order to allow schools time to prepare the necessary paperwork for full or focused inspections, all schools should receive at least three months’ notice that a full or focused inspection will be held, but with no details of the precise date. The precise date should only be confirmed the day before.

9. The resources available to ETI

- a) The level of resources available to ETI to undertake its role properly is obviously crucial, as is the efficient management of those resources. However, no information about ETI’s annual budget appears available on ETI’s website. **We are aware, however, that ETI has told the Committee that its budget is being reduced by 20% between 2011–2015.¹¹ We are appalled to learn that this is the case, when the evidence which we provide strongly suggests that more resources need to be invested in ETI.** Moreover, this is in the context of

¹⁰ Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service (October 2012) *School inspections*. Available at: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2012/education/16712.pdf>

¹¹ See para. 1.5 of ETI’s written submission to the Committee’s inquiry at: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/education-2011---2016/inquiries-and-reviews/education-and-training-inspectorate/41-education-and-training-inspectorate.pdf>

an annual budget which is only £5m or 0.3% of the total education budget; indeed, we understand that two or three large schools might typically have a joint annual budget of £5m. We would urge the Committee to investigate the level of resources invested in school inspections in Northern Ireland, compared to England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

- b) We would further urge that the Committee recommends additional investment if it believes that this is required to improve the service. In our view, school inspections are absolutely central to ensuring the highest possible quality of teaching and learning in our schools, and the Department of Education must invest properly in this important service.

Recommendation 17: The Committee for Education should investigate the level of resources invested in school inspections in Northern Ireland, compared to England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

Recommendation 18: The Committee for Education should recommend additional investment if it believes that this is required to improve ETI's inspection service.

10. Helping parents concerned about their child's school

- a) The current schools system in Northern Ireland makes it very difficult for a parent to raise concerns about their child's education. While we have only circumstantial information available, it would seem many parents who try to raise issues about their child's education don't get very far. School principals will often defend their staff and fail to address issues. If a parent is unhappy with the response of a principal, they are supposed to approach the Board of Governors and, if they fail to gain satisfaction through the Board of Governors, they are meant to approach their local education board. In both instances, these bodies will treat the approach as a formal complaint.
- b) Both these latter steps are very daunting ones for the average parent. In many instances, it would be much less daunting if they could obtain guidance and provide feedback to ETI. If the issue was a very serious and urgent one, ETI could carry out a snap inspection to investigate further. If it was less serious and not urgent, ETI could record the information to help ensure that it was fed into the next scheduled inspection of the relevant school.
- c) Indeed, in England, Ofsted does offer assistance to parents who have concerns about their child's education. Ofsted has set up a 'ParentView' website and a complaints system for parents. Parents can submit their view on a school at any time on the 'ParentView' website and those views will be taken into account in determining which schools Ofsted inspects and when.¹² However, Ofsted also operates a complaints system

¹² See: <http://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/>

where a parent has serious concerns about their child's school. It provides a helpful leaflet for parents about how they can complain.¹³

- d) The Ofsted system is not entirely satisfactory in that parents are still generally expected to go through the daunting Board of Governors/local education authority route prior to raising any complaint with Ofsted. However, Ofsted does at least provide clear information about complaints for parents, and does make clear that it can sometimes deal with serious concerns. Its 'ParentView' website is also very helpful.
- e) We would very much like ETI to set up a similar website to 'ParentView'. However, we would much prefer that ETI could provide an initial complaints route for parents, rather than going through the Board of Governors/local education authority route first.

Recommendation 19: ETI should offer assistance to parents who have concerns about their child's education, and should investigate any issues raised by parents when carrying out school inspections. If a parent raises a very significant concern, ETI should undertake a no notice short inspection to investigate the issue. It should provide clear information for parents on how ETI can help parents if they do have concerns. It should establish a website similar to the 'ParentView' website set up by Ofsted.

11. Thematic reviews of school provision and publicity

- a) **While Ofsted has attracted controversy in England, it has also made a very significant contribution to public debate about educational issues. One of the key ways in which it generates this debate is through the publication (and dissemination through the media) of thematic reports.** These draw on the collation and analysis of inspection data to focus on specific areas of the curriculum. In doing this, the reports are of immense value to schools which want to improve their practice, and to parents who want a benchmark against which their child's school can be measured.
- b) Examples of reports published in the past year include:
 - a. *Beyond 2012 – outstanding physical education for all* – a report which draws on evidence from school inspections carried out over a four-year period to provide an analysis of the current quality of provision, recommendations for the Department for Education, and practical advice for schools to help overcome common weaknesses in provision.¹⁴ In addition to the full report, Ofsted has also published a summary report.

¹³ Available at: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/schools/for-parents-and-carers/how-complain>

¹⁴ See: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/beyond-2012-outstanding-physical-education-for-all>

- b. *Going in the right direction? Careers guidance in schools from September 2012 – a report based on a survey of 60 schools which examined how well secondary schools were carrying out their new legal duty to provide careers guidance.*¹⁵
- c) Both of the above reports attracted significant publicity, thus raising awareness of the key issues among both teachers and parents. **We are very concerned that few similar thematic reports appear to be published by ETI, and that no publicity appears to accompany any such reports which are produced.** The ETI website has links to specialist surveys via both its 'primary' and 'secondary' publications pages. However, when we clicked on the link to primary school specialist surveys in September 2013, the web page stated that there were none. Three recent thematic surveys were listed for post-primary schools but none dealt with the quality of teaching in a specific subject area.¹⁶ None of these were the subject of a press release or received any media coverage of which we are aware.
- d) Since we originally investigated this issue in September 2013, ETI has added two thematic surveys to its 'primary' publications page for 2013. However, neither of these deal with the quality of teaching in a specific subject area. There are now four reports in the 'post-primary' publications section for 2013, but only one of these deals with teaching quality in a specific subject area. Again, we are unaware of any press release or media coverage. (One report appears on both pages). The one report which deals with teaching quality covers best practice in maths and English, and was published in October 2013.¹⁷ However, while this contains some useful information, it appears to us to be a collection of fairly descriptive case studies, rather than containing guidance of real value for teachers. We feel that the report would have been more useful if it had focused on a smaller number of case study schools and looked in more detail at exactly what was so special about the teaching of English and maths at those schools.
- e) We appreciate that ETI may be limited in the resources which it can devote to carrying out additional thematic surveys. However, at the very least, it can certainly collate and analyse, on a regular basis, its inspection data relating to specific subject areas and to different aspects of provision. **If such thematic reviews are not carried out – and widely disseminated – on a regular basis, we believe that a significant information resource is being neglected, and we further believe that parents are losing out through a consequent lack of public information and debate on issues of relevance to their child's education.**
- f) In addition, **we believe it is vital that ETI celebrates and publicises examples of good practice.** When a school is awarded an 'outstanding' grade, we believe that ETI should make every effort to publicise such awards in local weekly newspapers. It should also encourage

¹⁵ See: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/going-right-direction-careers-guidance-schools-september-2012>

¹⁶ See: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/surveys-evaluations/surveys-evaluations-post-primary/surveys-evaluations-post-primary-recent.htm>

¹⁷ This report is available at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/surveys-evaluations/surveys-evaluations-post-primary/surveys-evaluations-post-primary-2013/best-practice-in-english-and-mathematics-in-post-primary-schools.pdf>

regional media to focus on the special characteristics of outstanding schools through proactive publicity efforts from time to time.

Recommendation 20: ETI should draw on its inspection data to publish and properly disseminate regular thematic reviews of different aspects of school provision. These should include a robust analysis of inspection data which highlights strengths and weaknesses in provision, together with examples of good practice. Such reviews should also include recommendations for educational policy, and practical advice for schools on how to correct common weaknesses in provision. All such reports should be publicised through the media and should be easily accessible on ETI's website. Ideally, ETI should also carry out additional surveys of key areas of provision where inspection data alone provides an insufficient basis for a robust review (e.g. careers guidance).

Recommendation 21: ETI should make every effort to publicise the achievements and qualities of schools which are awarded an 'outstanding' grade.

12. Benchmarking the quality of ETI inspections

- a) We believe it is extremely important that the quality and rigour of ETI inspections are benchmarked against those of the comparable bodies in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. We would like to see the creation of a British-Irish partnership between these organisations which meets regularly to review best practice. We would further like ETI to invite senior inspectors from the other bodies to take part in a sample of school inspections on a regular basis, and provide feedback to ETI on any differences in the approach to inspections and the expectations of inspectors between their own body and ETI.
- b) In particular, this process should help to ensure that a school which is judged 'outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' or 'inadequate' in an aspect of its provision in one of the other territories would also be judged in a similar way here. As an example, is there any difference between the weight accorded to the importance of teachers initiating their own teaching materials (and robust evidence thereof) between Ofsted and ETI? We would regard this aspect of quality of teaching as of fundamental importance but, without such a process, it is very difficult to judge whether such differences exist.

Recommendation 22: We would like to see the creation of a British-Irish partnership between the school inspection bodies in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. This would enable these organisations to meet regularly to review best practice. We would further like ETI to invite senior inspectors from the other bodies to take part in a sample of school inspections on a regular basis, and to provide feedback to ETI on any differences in the approach to inspections and the expectations of inspectors between their own body and ETI.

Dr Liz Fawcett,
Northern Ireland Representative,
ParentsOutLoud
24th January 2014

Follow-up letter to Education Committee from ParentsOutLoud - 22.01.14



Peter McCallion,
Clerk to the Committee,
Committee for Education,
Northern Ireland Assembly

24th January, 2014

Dear Peter,

Re: ParentsOutLoud oral evidence to ETI inquiry – further information

On behalf of Roisin, Sir Robert and myself, I would just like to thank the Committee very warmly for the very positive response which we received from Committee members to our oral evidence on 8th January, and the Committee's kind letter of 10th January. Further to that letter, I enclose the following:

- Responses from each of ETI, Ofsted and Education Scotland to a number of similar questions which we put to each body¹
- Addenda to their responses from Ofsted and Education Scotland
- Our transcript of an interview which the Chief Inspector of ETI gave to BBC Evening Extra on 8th January which we believe may be of interest to the Committee
- The comments of ParentsOutLoud on the above documents

Please do let me know if you require any other information. We look forward to reading the Inquiry report in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz Fawcett'.

Dr Liz Fawcett

Northern Ireland representative, ParentsOutloud
Encs.

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These varied a little, depending on what information was easily available on their websites.

Analysis of ETI, Ofsted and Education Scotland responses by ParentsOutLoud

Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Education – Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Further comments from ParentsOutLoud

Introduction

The comments below were compiled in response to a request by the Committee to forward information, obtained by us through Freedom of Information requests, from ETI, Ofsted and Education Scotland, and to provide the Committee with an analysis of that information.

Our analysis is below. However, as we undertake our work for ParentsOutLoud in an entirely voluntary and spare-time capacity, we cannot guarantee that the analysis is entirely comprehensive, and we would urge the Committee to study the responses provided by the three bodies, in addition to considering our comments below.

We would also like to highlight some evidence of the positive potential which external evaluation – when combined with self-evaluation – can have on the overall standards of a school's provision. There is recent research evidence that schools in England which are judged by Ofsted to be in need of improvement do subsequently improve, although the change may take a few years.¹ There is also recent research evidence that schools in England judged to be 'satisfactory' were more likely to improve if they had follow-up inspections than if they were not followed up.²

We also believe that Ofsted has been instrumental in helping to create a climate in which many schools judged to be 'good' are very anxious to further improve to become 'outstanding'. Indeed, the CfBT Education Trust has produced a report which demonstrates how schools are doing this.³ At Appendix 1 and as an example of this ethos, we enclose a copy of a recent letter to parents from an Oxford secondary school which had just been rated 'good', and which explained to parents how it was immediately embarking on efforts to make the school 'outstanding' by addressing issues highlighted by Ofsted.

Accessibility of information

ETI's procedures for informing parents of a forthcoming inspection appear to be similar to those of Ofsted and Education Scotland, although Ofsted requires that all schools provide certain information about the inspections system on the school's website at all times.

Unlike Ofsted, ETI does not require schools in Northern Ireland to publish a link to a copy of their most recent inspection report on the school's website. (It is also not required in Scotland, but is considered good practice). As per our previous submission, **we believe this should be mandatory.**

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- 1 Allen, R. and Burgess, S. (2012) "How should we treat under-performing schools? A regression discontinuity analysis of school inspections in England." Working paper. Available at: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmpo/publications/papers/2012/wp287.pdf>
 - 2 Preliminary results from one part of the European Inspection Project. See: <http://schoolinspections.eu/preliminary-results-from-the-head-teacher-survey/>
 - 3 Dougill, P et al. (2011) To the next level: good schools become outstanding. CfBT Trust. Available at: <http://cdn.cfbt.com/~media/cfbtcorporate/files/research/2011/r-to-the-next-level-good-schools-become-outstanding-2011.pdf>
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Schools in Northern Ireland and Scotland are required to inform parents, once an inspection report is published, how that report can be accessed. **Ofsted requires schools to provide all parents with a copy of the report within five working days of the receipt of that report. We consider Ofsted's practice in this regard to be desirable, if feasible, as it would encourage schools which have achieved less than an 'outstanding' rating to outline to parents how they plan to improve, and, where some concerns have been raised by the inspection report, to outline to parents how they intend to address those particular issues** (as in the example in Appendix 1). It also enables parents to appreciate the strengths of a school, whatever rating is achieved. However, we consider ETI's current practice to be acceptable.

Criteria used to assess schools/inspection type

Framework for inspections

ETI has confirmed that the document *Together Towards Improvement* is its framework for inspections. While this is published on its website, the document's subtitle and introduction both state that it provides guidance for schools on self-evaluation. While we feel that the guidance for self-evaluation is valuable, and must be retained and disseminated to both schools and parents, we remain of the view that ETI must publish a separate document which sets out the criteria for school inspections, which is clearly labelled as such, and which can easily be found by parents seeking such information. We believe that Ofsted represents best practice in this regard, as per our previous submission.

However, we are impressed by the self-evaluation guidance produced by Education Scotland, *How Good is our School?*⁴ As this contains helpful examples of good and poor practice for each quality indicator, we feel its content would probably be of more value to most schools than *Together Towards Improvement*. It is also more attractively presented which may help motivate schools to practice self-evaluation.

Full primary school inspections

We would ask the Committee to note ETI's response to Q6 'Does ETI carry out any full, standard inspections (as opposed to focused inspections) of primary schools?' As the Committee will see, ETI does not answer 'yes' to this question. In short, the answer would appear to be 'no'. This is quite contrary to the practice of Ofsted and Education for Scotland. We are especially concerned at the following extract from its response to this question:

The focused inspection (typically five days) of primary schools and a short inspection (typically two days) conducted in small primary schools or in those deemed to be low risk have been replaced since September 2013. There is just one approach to primary school inspection with the differentiation being between low risk/small schools (2 days) and higher risk/larger schools (5 days).

We are concerned that this may amount to a 'rebranding' of what were previously short and focused inspections, without actually ensuring that full inspections take place. We carried out an analysis of 10 short inspection reports published in 2013 (taking the first 10 listed alphabetically on ETI's website). We found that, **while they covered the same areas as the focused reports, they were only about half the length.** Moreover, there were no comments on the specific quality of teaching in literacy, numeracy and ICT in any of the short reports. Indeed, **in eight of the ten short reports, no more than four to six lines of print was devoted to overall teaching quality.**

We accept that a larger school will take longer to inspect than a smaller school. However, the resulting report should be consistent in the level of detail and analysis.

We would also ask how schools are deemed 'low risk' or 'high risk'. At present, there is no transparency surrounding this definition. Many primary schools have not been properly inspected for many years. In those instances, we fail to see how ETI could determine whether a school is 'low risk' or 'high risk'. Moreover, we do not believe that it is sufficient for ETI to rely a school's results and the views of the District Inspector in making this assessment. A school might be proficient at ensuring that its pupils perform in standardised tests, but still have poor quality teaching e.g. teaching which fails to really engage pupils. Moreover, we do not believe that one person, making occasional visits to a school, can properly assess the effectiveness of that school on an ongoing basis.

Inspection of specific subjects and the development of skills at primary level

All three inspection bodies were asked whether they inspected the quality of provision with regard to a number of specific curriculum areas and areas of communication during full primary school inspections (or focused primary school inspections in the case of ETI). Only Education Scotland gave an unequivocal 'yes' in respect of any of the areas we listed. This was with regard to play-based learning in P1 and 2. ETI states:

The provision for numeracy and literacy is evaluated on all primary school inspections. Other areas of the curriculum are evaluated as a matter of course through observation of lessons.

As it did not answer 'yes, we take this to mean that the teaching of other areas of the curriculum are inspected if a teacher happens to be covering that area of the curriculum while the inspection is taking place. With the exception of Education Scotland on play-based learning, we do not think the responses of the other inspection bodies are any more satisfactory in this regard. **We believe it is vital that the delivery of the full breadth of the curriculum is assessed at primary level. We are especially concerned that the delivery of science, physical education and the development of key generic skills (e.g. ability to work in group, research skills, creativity) should be assessed.**

Inspection of parental and student communication at primary and post-primary level

We are heartened that ETI states

All inspections include an evaluation of the extent to which children are consulted about the ongoing development of the school.

However, we would like the results of that analysis to be reflected in all inspection reports. We are less satisfied with ETI's response with regard to the assessment of a school's communication with parents. **We believe that ETI should have a similar commitment to that given by Ofsted:**

Inspectors must consider how effectively the school engages with and promotes the confidence of parents, including how well the school gathers, understands and responds to the views of parents.

The results of that analysis should be included in all inspection reports.

Post-primary inspections

We were confused by inconsistencies in the information which ETI sent us with regard to post-primary inspections. Firstly, at one point it stated that post-primary inspections generally took 3 days (Q18), whereas, elsewhere, it stated that they generally took 5 days (Q22). Moreover, at one point in its response, ETI stated post-primary inspections were 'tailored to a school's priorities for improvement' and that a 'range of subjects' is investigated during post-primary inspections (Q14) while, elsewhere, it stated that a 'whole school approach' is now taken (Q22), and that all or most teachers are observed (Q20).

We believe that ETI needs to be questioned more closely on the extent to which it is assessing the delivery of all areas of the curriculum when it inspects post-primary schools. However, we note that neither Ofsted nor Education Scotland assess the delivery of the full range of the curriculum either.

Only Education Scotland stated that its post-primary inspections always assessed the quality and quantity of physical education provision. We believe that ETI must do likewise, given the prevalence of child obesity and overweight.

We believe that the delivery of all key areas of the curriculum should be properly assessed. **We are particularly concerned that the provision (including teaching quality) of science, ICT, Design and Technology, careers advice, and the development of skills relevant to employment and business should be assessed at post-primary level in all inspections.** This is especially important in the light of continual complaints from employers about the lack of sufficient relevance of the school curriculum to the needs of employers and business, and in the light of the fast-changing nature of our increasingly technology-driven world.

Input to inspections by parents and pupils

Input by parents

ETI has now published on its website (as of 4th December 2013), a copy of a sample parental questionnaire. This is a very welcome development. We believe that the sample questionnaire is very good, although we remain unclear from ETI's response why this is labelled 'sample', and whether this does represent the questionnaire which is used.

Education Scotland appears to provide a copy of the questionnaire to each parent. **While we think ETI's questions in its sample questionnaire are better (being slightly more comprehensive), we think the positive and informative style of the covering letter which is issued to parents by Education Scotland is one which should be emulated by ETI,** especially in the light of recent poor parental response rates to surveys.⁵ If ETI is only achieving low parental response rates, then we think it should issue a similar hard copy letter and questionnaire to all parents. We further believe the results of this survey should be published as part of the inspection report.

In our submission, we emphasised that parents often feel daunted at the idea of approaching the principal, Board of Governors (and/or Education Board) with concerns. We would like to make a new proposal in this regard, further to our previous submission. **Where a concern is serious and a parent feels they cannot approach the school, or where the parent has approached the school to no avail, we believe that parents should be able to contact the relevant District Inspector direct about their concerns, without having to make a formal complaint to the relevant Education Board or be identified to the school, if they are concerned about the consequences of being identified.**

Where the concern is serious but non-urgent, the District Inspector should follow up on the matter on his/her next visit to the school and report back on the outcome of his/her own inspection of the issue. He/she should seek to make his/her own assessment with regard to the concern raised, rather than simply relying on what the school states it is or is not doing. **Where parents remain dissatisfied with the response of a District Inspector, we believe that parents should be able to contact ETI direct. Ideally, however, we would still like all parents to be able to contact ETI direct with serious concerns if, for any reason, they are unhappy about pursuing other avenues.**

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See: http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/ParentQuestionnairePrimary_tcm4-684853.pdf

Input by pupils

We welcome the fact that ETI speaks to a random selection of pupils and not those simply selected by the school. However, we would like ETI to incorporate the following good practice from the other bodies:

- Ensuring the full range of different types of pupil are spoken to (Ofsted)
- Issuing a pre-inspection questionnaire for pupils (Education Scotland)
- Speaking to a larger number of primary pupils than ETI does currently at primary level (Education Scotland, although this depends on the size of the school)
- Speaking to a number of focus groups of post-primary pupils (Education Scotland)

Inspection resources

Table 1 overleaf provides a comparative analysis of the expenditure by ETI, Ofsted and Education Scotland on school inspections in a recent 12 month period. We believe that ETI should improve its financial reporting system so that it knows how much is being spent on each type of inspection in any given year. We note that there are significant differences between Ofsted and Education Scotland in terms of the average expenditure on full primary and post-primary inspections. This may be accounted for, to some extent, by the fact that Education Scotland's inspections appear to be wider-ranging and more intensive than Ofsted's.

Table 2 overleaf provides a comparative analysis of the number of primary and post-primary school inspectors which work for each body, and the ratio of staff inspectors to full school inspections. It should be noted that media reports state that Ofsted contracts out its school inspections to three private companies. It is not clear from Ofsted's response to our questions whether its staff inspector figures include inspectors working for these companies. However, although the figures in Table 2 suggest that Ofsted makes far more efficient use of its inspectors, we would have some concerns about the use of private companies for school inspections. There have been well-publicised complaints about the quality and experience of some of the inspectors employed by these companies. Whether justified or not, the apparent 'privatisation' of school inspections in England does seem to have intensified hostility against Ofsted.

What concerns us about the figures in Table 2 is that **it would appear that each staff inspector in both ETI and Education Scotland is only carrying out a very small number of full school inspections in any one year. This obviously raises two issues – whether resources are being managed as efficiently as they might be, and whether staff inspectors are gaining sufficient ongoing experience of full inspections to ensure that their work is fair and well-informed.** One might argue that the Ofsted inspector who carries out 27 full inspections in one year will have much more relevant experience and a much better overview than one who is carrying out only three full inspections a year.

Table 1: comparative annual expenditure and performance of inspection bodies (2011/12 for Ofsted, and 2012-13 for ETI, and 2013 for ETI's full inspection figures*)

Body/school sector	Total expenditure (£)	Total number of full inspections (as % of all that type of school)	Average expenditure per inspection (£)	% of budget spent on delivering services
ETI	5,747,793			100%
Primary schools full inspections	Not provided	66 (8%)	Unable to calculate	n/a
Post-primary school full inspections	Not provided	32 (15%)	Unable to calculate	n/a

Body/school sector	Total expenditure (£)	Total number of full inspections (as % of all that type of school)	Average expenditure per inspection (£)	% of budget spent on delivering services
Ofsted	178,754,000			73%
Primary school full inspections	30,274,230	4,530 (27%)	6,683	n/a
Post-primary schools full inspections	10,368,742	901 (26%)	11,508	n/a
Education Scotland	29,795,000			73%
Primary schools	1,649,000	101 (5%)	16,327	n/a
Post-primary and all-through schools	728,000	31 (9%)	23,484	n/a

*ETI did supply figures for the number of full post-primary inspections for 2012-13. However, its figure for primary school inspections appeared to include short inspections. Therefore, we used our own figures which covered 2013. Some of the information relating to Ofsted is from its 2011/12 Annual Report.

Table 2: Inspection personnel resources

Inspection body	No of primary & post-primary school staff inspectors	Approx ratio of primary/post-primary staff inspectors to annual no of primary/post-primary full inspections	No of freelance & sub-contracted inspectors
ETI	37	01:03	None*
Ofsted	200	01:27	1
Education Scotland	47	01:03	139*

*Most of the 'freelance' inspectors used by Education Scotland are head teachers and other professionals who join 2-3 inspections annually. While ETI told us that it employs no freelances, it refers elsewhere to Associate Assessors and we assume that they may have a similar role to the professionals used by Education Scotland.

It must be borne in mind that ETI has also been deploying inspectors for short inspections, inspections focused on very specific areas, and follow-up inspections. This is also true of Ofsted, however, as its inspectors also carry out follow-up monitoring visits and inspections focused on specific subjects. **Therefore, it is not immediately obvious why the ratio of staff inspectors to full primary/post-primary inspections is so small in the case of either ETI or Education Scotland. We believe that this is an issue which the Committee should pursue.**

We also asked each body about the personnel resources which they deploy for each school inspection. Ofsted was unable to answer the question in the terms in which we put it. However, it is clear that a comparison could be made if the Committee was able to question it further on this issue. It would appear that the resources deployed by ETI for individual inspections compare well with Education Scotland in terms of the ratios of inspector to size of school, although ETI and Education Scotland presented this information in different ways. We now appreciate that we should have asked about the number of 'inspector days' rather than inspectors for different school sizes. Again, this is an issue which the Committee may wish to pursue.

We should emphasise that **we believe that ETI must be allocated sufficient resources, including personnel resources, to enable all schools to be fully inspected on a regular and reasonably frequent basis.**

We are very satisfied with the extent to which teaching is observed at both primary and post-primary level by ETI during full (or closest to full) inspections i.e. that:

- All teachers are normally observed twice during primary inspections
- All teachers are normally observed at least once and often more frequently at smaller and medium-sized post-primary schools
- Most teachers are observed at least once at larger post-primary schools

We would urge the Committee to ensure that ETI's current budget cuts and its planned increased frequency of inspections do not result in a reduction in the extent and depth of teacher/teaching observation.

This level of teacher observation compares well with that outlined by Education Scotland. The Committee will note that Ofsted's response on this issue completely lacks any transparency. We believe that ETI's approach to the observation of teachers and teaching is very satisfactory, and should be maintained. Teachers can vary widely in their levels of skill, and it is vital that as many as possible are observed directly.

Length between inspections

We are concerned that **ETI was unable to verify the data on the length between the publication of full inspection reports relating to certain Belfast schools which we presented to the Committee**, referring us simply to the website search facility, the accuracy of which we had queried in the first place. (We still await a response from ETI to a similar request with regard to the data we presented on inspection reports relating to schools in the Omagh area). We believe it is essential that ETI has a robust database which enables it to determine the inspection history of all schools.

We think that **ETI's practice and policy on inspection frequency**, as detailed in its response to us and in the Chief Inspector's response to BBC Evening Extra, and as illustrated in our own research, **falls far short of acceptable practice. In particular, its new 'risk-based' approach lacks transparency.** We appreciate that a similar policy is pursued by Education Scotland, and are unconvinced by Education Scotland's 'sampling' model which could leave schools going for many years without an inspection. We note that the ETI Chief Inspector promised, in her BBC interview, that all schools would be receiving an 'intervention' every three years by 2016. However, an 'intervention' may mean an event which is much less than a full inspection.

We still believe that the former Ofsted approach remains the best one i.e. a full inspection of each school every three years. While we would support the close and more frequent monitoring of schools which only achieve satisfactory or less, as practised now by Ofsted, we do not believe that it is sufficient to inspect 'good' schools only once every five years, and 'outstanding' schools potentially even less frequently, as Ofsted now appears to do.

We reiterate that schools can change significantly over the course of a few years, and that we now live in a technology-driven world where the needs of employers and society are changing at an ever faster rate. Moreover, parents need up-to-date, objective information about the quality, strengths and weaknesses of schools when they are selecting a school for their child.

Thematic reviews

As the smallest of the three inspection bodies which we examined, it is to be expected that ETI would produce fewer thematic reviews than the other two. At the same time, principals and teachers in Northern Ireland have the same need for expert advice and dissemination of good practice as their counterparts elsewhere. In addition, parents in Northern Ireland have a right to know about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision of different subjects and the quality of education across Northern Ireland. Moreover, we would expect that the Department of Education would wish to be well-informed about the state of all aspects of

school education across Northern Ireland, so that resources can be effectively targeted on addressing areas of significant weakness.

Table 3 shows the number and type of thematic reviews published in 2013 which focused on primary and post-primary education, and whether or not any press release was published. (ETI was unable to provide any information on publicity, but its press releases are published on its website).

While the Education Scotland and Ofsted subject-focused reviews clearly identified strengths and weaknesses in curriculum delivery, and provided clear guidance on how schools might address common weaknesses, the ETI review focused only on very descriptive examples of good practice, and there was little analysis. The ETI report did not provide any sense of the 'state of play' across Northern Ireland with regard to the two subject areas in question. We felt the report would probably be of limited use to teachers, and was certainly not particularly informative for parents and others with an interest in education.

Education Scotland produced the most attractive reports and made the best use of case studies. These reports are clearly more expensive to produce, but we suspect they are more likely to be read by teachers as a result.

The Department of Education might well have to invest additional resources if ETI is to emulate Ofsted and Education Scotland in the number of reviews it produces on specific areas of the curriculum. However, we believe that this would be a very worthwhile investment.

Table 3: Thematic reviews in 2013

Inspection body	Number of thematic reviews	Subject-based or curriculum area reviews	Reviews of other areas	Number of press releases relating about thematic reviews	Subjects and areas of curriculum examined, and type of schools investigated
ETI	6	1	5	1	• English and Maths at post-primary level
Ofsted	11	7	4	8	• Music – primary & post-primary • Citizenship – primary & post-primary • RE – primary & post-primary • Careers guidance – post-primary • Personal, social, health & economic education – primary & post-primary • Literacy – post-primary • PE – primary & post-primary
Education Scotland	4	4	0	2	• Science – 3-18 years • Social studies – 3-18 years • Health and wellbeing – 3-18 years • Creativity – 3-18 years

Dr Liz Fawcett and Roisin Gilheany on behalf of ParentsOutLoud

24th January 2014

Appendix 1: letter from Oxford secondary school to parents, following an Ofsted inspection report (Matthew Arnold School - published on school website)

OfSTED Inspection February 2013

Letter from the Headteacher to all parents/carers:

Dear Parents and Students

I am very pleased to attach the OfSTED Report on the school's performance following our recent inspection. We are proud of our school and very pleased that the OfSTED Inspection recognised the school's many strengths.

The Inspection is based on our own self-evaluation, the school's results over the past three years and the evidence that the inspectors gathered during their two days in the school.

The inspection concluded that Matthew Arnold School is a very well-led and managed school where students achieve well, are happy and safe. Students' behaviour is respectful and courteous and there are good relationships between teachers and students. The teaching is good and enables students to achieve standards above the national averages. Progress from KS2 to KS4 is well above national average and the students then go on to achieve high academic standards in the sixth form. The school's governance is very strong; supporting and challenging us in our continual drive for improvement.

The school was judged as "good" overall and the inspection showed that we are very effective in meeting our students' needs and that, with the exception of a small number of individuals, students achieve very well.

The two aspects identified by the inspection team that need further work to secure "outstanding" overall are those areas we have also identified and already started to address through our school improvement plan. One aspect for further work is to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching across the school and the other is to make sure that all our students make equally good progress.

I am very confident that we have the capacity and the drive to continue to make improvements to the quality of teaching and to raise the standards of attainment for those few students who are currently less successful.

I want to thank all the parents and carers who have provided feedback, both through the Parent View Survey during the Inspection and also through the Parents' Evening Questionnaires and the Annual Parents' Survey. The views you express are very valuable in helping us to know what we are doing well and where we need to improve. I also want to thank the students and staff who made sure that their pride in our school was very much in evidence during the inspection.

Please do read the full report; it describes the many strengths of the school in detail and highlights those areas where we are already making improvements.

Thank you for your continuing support for the school. I will continue to ensure that we are doing our best for every student.

Yours sincerely

Mrs K J Ryan

Headteacher

ETI response to Parents Outloud 07.01.14



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Dr Liz Fawcett
(By email)

Ref: DE/2013-0230
7 January 2014

Dear Dr Fawcett

Request for Information

Further to your email of 6 December 2013, please see the following response from the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in relation to your request for various information and documentation under the auspices of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000.

A response for each of your queries will be given in numerical order according to the order in which each query was asked in your email.

1) What information, if any, are schools currently required to provide to parents about school inspections (i) when their child enrolls at a particular school (ii) prior to a school inspection?

ETI response

- (i) Schools are not required to provide parents with any information about school inspections when a child enrolls at a particular school.
- (ii) Prior to a school inspection, ETI provides the school with an information pack, which contains a letter for parents providing information on the inspection process and explaining how to access the online parental questionnaire. An example of the letter can be viewed on the ETI website at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-primary/sample-parents-letter.pdf>

2) Are schools required to publish inspection reports relating to their school on their school website in a timely manner?

ETI response

Schools are not required to publish inspection reports relating to their school on their school's website. All published inspection reports can be accessed on the ETI website at: www.etini.gov.uk

3) Are schools required to let parents know how they can access the most recent inspection report relating to the school?

ETI response

Schools are required to let parents know how they can access the most recent inspection report relating to the school. In the letter parents receive prior to the school's inspection, they are made aware of how to access the inspection report of the inspection once it has been published on the ETI website. The principal of the school is required, within ten working days of receiving the report of the inspection, to:

- a. Acknowledge receipt of the report; and
- b. Confirm that s/he has informed staff and parents of its availability on the ETI website.

4) What criteria are used by ETI as the basis for their inspections of primary and post-primary schools?

ETI response

The criteria that ETI uses as the basis for its inspections of primary and post-primary schools can be found in the document "Together Towards Improvement", which can be accessed on the ETI website at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement.htm>.

5) Is the criteria published on the ETI website?

ETI response

Please see ETI's response to question 4.

6) Does ETI carry out any full, standard inspections (as opposed to focused inspections) of primary schools?

ETI response

Using a proportionate risk based approach ensures that inspection resources are targeted to where they are most needed and will have the greatest impact rather than a one size fits all approach. All inspections, irrespective of duration, report on the overall effectiveness of the school, achievements and standards, quality of provision for learning and leadership and management. Follow-up inspections (of schools that are satisfactory or below) are equally robust and re-evaluate overall effectiveness of provision. The follow-up inspection assures parents that the necessary improvements identified at the original inspection have been implemented. There is ongoing monitoring of all schools by the District Inspector which is unique to schools in Northern Ireland.

The focused inspection (typically five days) of primary schools and a short inspection (typically two days) conducted in small primary schools or in those deemed to be low risk have been replaced since September 2013. There is just one approach to primary school inspection with the differentiation being between low risk/small schools (2 days) and higher risk/larger schools (5 days). All of these inspection types included/includes an evaluation of overall effectiveness, achievements and standards, quality of provision for learning and leadership and management.

7) Do all focused inspections of primary schools (other than follow-up inspections and specialist inspections examining only e.g. library provision) examine the following:

- a. The quality of play-based learning at Foundation Stage.
- b. The quality of provision relating to the following subjects and areas of learning:
 - i. physical education, including the quantity of that provision;
 - ii. ICT;

- iii. **science and technology;**
 - iv. **history;**
 - v. **geography;**
 - vi. **art;**
 - vii. **music;**
 - viii. **the development of groupwork skills; and**
 - ix. **the development of research and investigation skills.**
- c. **The quality of a school's communication with parents, including the existence of a parent council through which parents can make their views known to the school.**
 - d. **The quality of a school's communication with pupils, including the existence of a school council through which pupils can make their views known and have an input into the running of the school**

ETI response

All primary school inspections evaluate achievements and standards, quality of provision for learning and leadership and management. The provision for numeracy and literacy is evaluated on all primary school inspections. Other areas of the curriculum are evaluated as a matter of course through observation of lessons.

ETI evaluates quality of provision against the quality indicators which can be accessed at; <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>

There is no requirement for schools to have a pupil council or a parent council. However, parents are represented on the Boards of Governors of schools; ETI accesses parental views via questionnaires, face-to-face meetings with governors and face-to-face meetings with individual parents or representatives of the PTA, on request.

All inspections, include an evaluation of the extent to which children are consulted about the ongoing development of the school, Inspectors meet with groups of pupils in the pastoral care interviews and also discuss their learning with them in class.

8) Do all inspections of post-primary schools examine the following:

- a. the quality and quantity of physical education and sports provision.
- b. The quality of the school's communication with parents, including the existence of a parent council through which parents can make their views known to the school.
- c. The quality of the school's communication with pupils, including the existence of a school council through which pupils can make their views known and have an input into the running of the school.

ETI response

All post-primary school inspections evaluate achievements and standards quality of provision for learning and leadership and management. A separate evaluation of the physical education and sports provision is not included in all inspections however it may be examined when a physical education specialist inspector is assigned to the inspection team. Individual physical education or sports lessons are visited by inspectors and evaluated as part of a class pursuit. In addition, Specialist Inspectors of Physical Education make specialist visits to individual schools.

ETI evaluates quality of provision against the quality indicators which can be accessed at; <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>

There is no requirement for schools to have a pupil council or a parent council. However, parents are represented on the Boards of Governors of schools; ETI accesses parental views via questionnaires, face-to-face meetings with governors and face-to-face meetings with individual parents or representatives of the PTA, on request.

All inspections, include an evaluation of the extent to which children are consulted about the ongoing development of the school, Inspectors meet with groups of pupils in the pastoral care interviews and also discuss their learning with them in class.

9) Could you please supply a copy of the questionnaires which are currently sent to parents whose children attend a primary school or a post-primary school which is being inspected.

ETI response

As outlined in ETI's response to question 1, parents receive a letter prior to an inspection, advising how the questionnaire can be accessed online. A hard copy of the questionnaire is only provided if a parent cannot access the online version. Sample questionnaires can be accessed on the ETI website at:

<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-post-primary/sample-parents-questionnaire-post-primary.htm>

10) Are the above questionnaires sent to all parents?

ETI response

As part of the inspection process, ETI provides the school with letters for each parent, which direct the parents to the online questionnaire on the ETI website.

11) Do parents submit their responses direct to ETI or via the school?

ETI response

Questionnaire responses are submitted direct to ETI.

12) How does ETI select the pupils to whom it talks in both primary and post-primary schools respectively?

ETI response

The reporting inspector, who leads the inspection, takes a random selection of pupils from a list of all the pupils within each relevant year group of the school that is being inspected.

13) Typically, how many primary school pupils and how many post-primary school pupils does ETI speak to when it carries out an inspection?

ETI response

Focus groups of pupils are spoken to as part of the inspection of safeguarding and pastoral care. Typically approximately six to eight, year six pupils would be involved in such a discussion. These pupils are also spoken to in their classroom situation regarding the learning in that lesson and more generally.

ETI values the opportunity to speak to as wide a range of pupils as possible and makes time to do so. Inspectors will also speak to prefects, young people undertaking extra curricular activities and those who are representing their school, for example, in competitions.

14) Are post-primary schools assessed on the provision of all subjects which are taught at that school during full standard inspections?

ETI response

This information can be accessed through the ETI website at; <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-post-primary/information-for-parents-post-primary.htm>

Since September 2013, ETI uses the school development plan as the starting point for the inspection. The inspection is then tailored to the school's priorities for improvement which will always include literacy and numeracy and therefore a range of subjects will be observed.

15) How does ETI select the subjects which it investigates in-depth with regard to each full standard inspection of a post-primary school?

ETI response

This information can be accessed through the ETI website at; <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-post-primary/information-for-parents-post-primary.htm>

Since September 2013, ETI uses the school development plan as the starting point for the inspection. The inspection is then tailored to the school's priorities for improvement which will always include literacy and numeracy and therefore a range of subjects will be observed.

16) What is the ratio of inspectors to teachers which ETI uses to determine how many inspectors are required to visit a particular school?

ETI response

The information below represents 'typical' team size and composition. It should be noted, however, that the size and composition of an inspection team may also be determined on the basis of proportionate risk, and that there may be additional members added to a given team, for example, to facilitate the induction of new inspectors. Associate Assessors are also involved in inspections, survey evaluations and dissemination work.

Primary inspections (2/3 day and 5 day model)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size of the inspection team will be dependent on the size of the school. A general guide is one member of ETI for 3/4 teachers • Minimum team size of 2 ETI • Maximum team size of 7 ETI + AA(s)
Post-primary inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum team size of 4 ETI + AA • Maximum team size of 7 ETI + AA(s) • A post-primary team is based on the size of school.

17) What is the minimum proportion and number of lessons observed by ETI during a focused or standard primary school inspection?

ETI response

There is no set minimum proportion and number of lessons observed during a focused or standard primary school inspection. The inspection team endeavours, over the inspection period, to sample as much teaching as is necessary, commensurate with other activities such as holding discussions with pupils and school staff and reviewing documentation. This usually means that all teachers are observed, at least twice during the period of the inspection.

18) What is the minimum proportion and number of lessons observed by ETI during a full standard post-primary school inspection?

ETI response

There is no set minimum proportion and number of lessons observed during a post-primary school inspection. The inspection team endeavours, over a three-day period, to sample as much teaching as is necessary, commensurate with other activities such as holding discussions with pupils and school staff and reviewing documentation. In a smaller or medium-sized school this usually means that all teachers are observed, sometimes, depending on circumstances and the number of different subjects they may teach, two or three times during the period of the inspection. In large and very large schools, most of the teachers are observed at least once.

19) What is the minimum proportion of teachers whose teaching is observed by ETI during a focused or standard primary school inspection?

ETI response

In a primary school inspection, all teachers are observed by ETI.

20) What is the minimum proportion of teachers whose teaching is observed by ETI during a focused or standard post-primary school inspection?

ETI response

There is no set 'minimum proportion of teachers whose teaching is observed by ETI during a post-primary inspection. As the first day of the inspection involves all inspectors conducting class pursuits the majority of the teachers will be observed during that day. As outlined in ETI's response to question 18, the inspection team endeavours, over a three-day period, to sample as much teaching as is necessary, commensurate with holding discussions with pupils and school staff and reviewing documentation. In a smaller or medium-sized school this usually means that all teachers are observed, sometimes, depending on circumstances and the number of different subjects they may teach, two or three times during the period of the inspection. In large and very large schools, most of the teachers are observed at least once.

21) Could you please provide details of the following:

- any focused or full standard inspection reports published between January 2000 and December 2013 with regard to the primary schools listed in Table 1, p.9 of the attached submission from ParentsOutLoud which are not already listed in that table (in each instance, excluding all follow-up inspection reports and inspection reports which focus on particular, specialist areas e.g. library provision)
- any full standard inspection reports with regard to the post-primary schools listed in the same Table 1 which are not already listed in that table (in each instance, excluding all follow-up inspection reports and inspection reports which focus on particular, specialist areas e.g. library provision)

ETI response

This information is widely available and in the public domain. Previous inspection reports can be accessed on the ETI website, using the search facility at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/search.jsp/search.lsim?sr=0&nh=10&cs=iso-8859-1&sc=&sm=0&mt=1&ha=eti-cms&qt=>

22) How often does ETI carry out a focused inspection of each primary school and a full standard inspection of each post-primary school?

ETI response

Until September 2010, ETI aimed to inspect each school at least once every seven years with more frequent inspection of a school being undertaken where it was deemed necessary. In September 2010, ETI introduced a more proportionate and risk-based inspection strategy whereby the need for an inspection is identified by information from school performance indicators, risk factors including the length of time since the last formal inspection and from on-going monitoring of schools by inspectors at local level.

Using a proportionate risk based approach, ensures that inspection resources are targeted to where they are most needed and will have the greatest impact rather than a one size fits all approach. All inspections, irrespective of duration, report on the overall effectiveness of the school, achievements and standards, quality of provision for learning and leadership and management. Follow-up inspections (of schools that are satisfactory or below) are equally robust and re-evaluate overall effectiveness of provision. The follow-up inspection assures parents that the necessary improvements identified at the original inspection have been implemented.

By the end of the current academic year almost 90% of primary schools and 97% of post-primary schools will have been inspected within seven years. During the last business year alone, 17% of primary schools (144) and 22% of post primary schools (46) had either an inspection or a follow-up inspection. There is ongoing monitoring of all schools by the District Inspector which is unique to schools in Northern Ireland.

The focused inspection (typically five days) of primary schools and a short inspection (typically two days) conducted in small primary schools or in those deemed to be low risk have been replaced since September 2013. There is just one approach to primary school

inspection with the differentiation being between low risk/small schools (2 days) and

higher risk/larger schools (5 days). All of these inspection types included/includes an evaluation of overall effectiveness, achievements and standards, quality of provision for learning and leadership and management.

In the post-primary sector, standard inspections (typically five days) were undertaken evaluating overall effectiveness, achievements and standards, quality of provision for learning, and leadership and management. Two or three subject departments were inspected. The post-primary model of inspection has been revised (still five days) with a stronger focus on self-evaluation and the whole school rather than on individual departments. This was introduced in September 2013. There is no equivalent of a short inspection at the post-primary level.

23) Has the policy with regard to frequency of inspections changed within the past three years and, if so, what was the previous policy?

ETI response

Please see ETI's response to question 22.

24) What was ETI's annual expenditure in 2011-12 and 2012-13?

ETI response

ETI's annual expenditure in 2011-12 was £5,408,696.83 and in 2012-13, it was £5,747,792.59.

25) In 2012-13, what proportion of ETI's annual expenditure was spent on delivery of its services (i.e. inspections and regulatory events)?

ETI response

All of ETI's annual expenditure was spent on delivering its services in 2012-13.

26) What budget has ETI been allocated for 2013-14, and for each of the next five years (if this information is available)? (We understand that there is to be a 20% cut in ETI's budget over the next five years, but this information is not verified).

ETI response

Based on current assumptions, the anticipated expenditure for ETI for 2013/2014 is £5.6m approximately. Currently there is no forecast budget allocation available at directorate level for the next five years.

27) What budget is allocated in 2013-14 for primary inspections, and what budget for post-primary inspections?

ETI response

Please see ETI's response to question 26.

28) How many staff inspectors are employed by ETI to carry out primary and post-primary inspections, respectively, and at what grades?

ETI response

ETI has 37 full time inspectors to carry out primary and post primary inspections; and these are supplemented from time to time by inspectors with the relevant experience from other phases; all of these are Grade 6. Since there is a tendency to work across phases, it is not possible to give separate accurate designations of primary and post-primary inspectors.

29) How many inspectors are employed on a freelance or contractual/sub-contractual basis by ETI to carry out primary and post-primary inspections, respectively, and at what grades?

ETI response

Currently, there are no inspectors employed on a freelance or contractual/sub-contracted basis by ETI to carry out primary and post-primary inspections.

30) How many inspections and regulatory events (of all types of educational and training institution inspected by ETI) were carried out in the financial year 2012-13 (or in 2012 if the information is not available for the financial year)?

ETI response

During the 2012-13 financial year 239 inspections of all types of education and training institutions were completed.

31) How many focused inspections of primary schools were carried out in the financial year 2012 – 2013 (or the calendar year 2012), excluding specialist inspections of e.g. library provision?

ETI response

In total during the 2012-13 financial year, there were 118 primary school inspections (this includes preparatory, primary and independent schools).

32) How many full standard inspections of primary schools were carried out in the financial year 2012-13 (or the calendar year 2012)?

ETI response

Using a proportionate risk based approach ensures that inspection resources are targeted to where they are most needed and will have the greatest impact rather than a one size fits all approach. All inspections, irrespective of duration, report on the overall effectiveness of the school, achievements and standards, quality of provision for learning and leadership and management. Follow-up inspections (of schools that are satisfactory or below) are equally robust and re-evaluate overall effectiveness of provision. The follow-up inspection assures parents that the necessary improvements identified at the original inspection have been implemented. There is ongoing monitoring of all schools by the District Inspector which is unique to schools in Northern Ireland.

The focused inspection (typically five days) of primary schools and a short inspection (typically two days) conducted in small primary schools or in those deemed to be low risk have been replaced since September 2013. There is just one approach to primary school inspection with the differentiation being between low risk/small schools (2 days) and higher risk/larger schools (5 days). All of these inspection types included/includes an evaluation of overall effectiveness, achievements and standards, quality of provision for learning and leadership and management.

In total during the 2012-13 financial year, there were 118 primary school inspections (this includes preparatory, primary and independent schools).

33) How many full standard inspections of post-primary schools were carried out in the financial year 2012-13 (or the calendar year 2012)?

ETI response

During the 2012-13 financial year, 26 post-primary schools were inspected.

34) Could you please provide details of all thematic reviews, relating to schools, which have been published by ETI within the last three years, and of any press releases which were issued with regard to these reviews?

ETI response

This information is available in ETI's annual business reports, which can be accessed on the ETI website at:

- 2009-2010 <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-general-documents-non-phase-related/support-material-general-documents-about-the-education-and-training-inspectorate/annual-business-report-2009-2010.htm>
- 2010-2011 <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-general-documents-non-phase-related/support-material-general-documents-about-the-education-and-training-inspectorate/annual-business-report-2010-2011.htm>
- 2011-2012 <http://www.etini.gov.uk/annual-business-report-2011-2012>

Please note that the 2012-2013 business report is still being finalised and is not yet published on ETI's website.

If you are unhappy with the level of service you have received in relation to your request, you may ask for an internal review within two calendar months of the date of the letters. You may write to Garth Manderson, Departmental Information Manager, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, BT19 7PR, or send an email to garth.manderson@deni.gov.uk if you wish to make a complaint.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a review of our original decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Lynn Hayes' in a cursive script.

Lynn Hayes (Mrs)

Head of Inspection Services Branch

Ofsted response to Parents outloud 08.01.14

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8 January 2014

Liz Fawcett
 liz.fawcett@ntlworld.com

Our Reference: CAS-279674-1R85KV

Dear Ms Fawcett

Your request for information

Thank you for your email of 6 December 2013 to our National Business Unit in which you requested the information set out in Annex A at the end of this letter.

You later clarified that your request relates to the inspection of maintained schools.

Where you have referred to 'post-primary' schools, we have understood this to refer to secondary schools.

The Freedom of Information Act

We have dealt with your request in accordance with the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000.

The first requirement of the Act is that we should confirm whether or not we hold information of the description set out in your request. I can confirm that we hold the information required to respond to your questions.

Under the FOI Act, we are under a duty to provide you with all the information we hold which falls within the scope of your request, provided it is not 'exempt' information.

We will address each of your queries in turn:

1. What information, if any, are schools currently required to provide to parents about school inspections (i) when their child enrolls at a particular school (ii) prior to a school inspection?

In order to provide parents with the information they need at the right time, there is certain information schools must publish online, details of which can be found on the Department for Education website using the following link:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/parents/keepinginformed/a00208536/school-prospectus>

When a school receives notification of an inspection it must take all reasonable steps to tell parents that a school is going to be inspected. Ofsted provides schools with a letter to parents to distribute, which outlines the inspection process. The letter provides information regarding the Parent View online questionnaire, which forms part of the evidence for inspection. Ofsted also encloses a leaflet, School inspections: a guide for parents¹, which must be provided to parents.

Once an inspection is complete a report is produced and provided to the school. The school must take reasonable steps to secure that every registered parent receives a copy of the report within 5 working days of receipt.

2. Are schools required to publish inspection reports relating to their school on their school website in a timely manner?

Schools must provide certain information on their website, a link to the Ofsted report is one of them. For further details please visit the Department for Education website using the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/schoolsadmissions/choosing-schools>. As mentioned in section 1, once the report has been sent to the school and parents¹, it will be published on the Ofsted website.

3. Are schools required to let parents know how they can access the most recent inspection report relating to that school?

Yes – please see the response to question 1

4. Do all standard inspections of primary schools (other than follow-up inspections and specialist inspections examining only e.g. library provision) examine the following:

- The quality of play-based learning in Reception and Year 1

A revised *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*² commenced in September 2012 and the previous six areas of learning became seven. The Department for Education has placed on its website a new document called *Early Years Outcomes*³ as a non-statutory aide to support practitioners. It can be used by child-minders, nurseries and others, such as Ofsted inspectors, as a guide to making best-fit judgements about whether a child is showing typical development for their age, may be at risk of delay or is ahead for their age.

Further guidance can be found in paragraphs 24, 26, and 33 of the *Subsidiary guidance*⁴

- The quality of provision relating to the following subjects and areas of learning:

- i. Physical education, including the quantity of that provision
- ii. ICT
- iii. Science and technology
- iv. History
- v. Geography
- vi. Art
- vii. Music
- viii. The development of groupwork skills
- ix. The development of research and investigation skills

Subject specific guidance relating to the quality of provision for the following subjects and areas of learning is available on the Ofsted website on this link:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/generic-grade-descriptors-and-supplementary-subject-specific-guidance-for-inspectors-making-judgements>

1 <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/school-inspections-guide-for-parents>

2 <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/e/eyfs%20statutory%20framework%20march%202012.pdf>

3 <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/delivery>

4 <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/subsidiary-guidance-supporting-inspection-of-maintained-schools-and-academies>

The guidance is intended only to inform the judgements made by specialist inspectors carrying out subject surveys and not for use in section 5 wholeschool inspections.

- The quality of a school's communication with parents, including the existence of a parent council through which parents can make their views known to the school

Inspectors have a statutory duty to have regard to the views of parents. Inspectors will take account of all results of any surveys carried out by the school or commissioned by the school. It is important schools encourage parents to complete such surveys. Inspectors must consider how effectively the school engages with and promotes the confidence of parents, including how well the school gathers, understands and responds to the views of parents.

- The quality of a school's communication with pupils, including the existence of a school council through which pupils can make their views known and have an input into the running of the school

Inspectors must have regard to the views of pupils and staff when making their judgements. Data from surveys of parents, pupils, or staff should be corroborated with other evidence.

5. Do all inspections of post-primary schools examine the following:

- The quality and quantity of physical education and sports provision

When introducing the new primary school sport funding on pupils' lifestyles and physical wellbeing, inspectors must take account of the following factors;

- the increase in participation rates in such activities as games, dance, gymnastics, swimming and athletics
 - the increase and success in competitive school sports
 - how much more inclusive the physical education curriculum has become
 - the growth in the range of traditional and alternative sporting activities
 - the improvement in partnership work on physical education with other schools and other local partners
 - links with other subjects that contribute to pupils' overall achievement and their greater social, spiritual, moral and cultural skills
 - the greater awareness amongst pupils about the dangers of obesity, smoking and other such activities that undermine pupils' health
- The quality of the school's communication with parents, including the existence of a parent council through which parents can make their views known to the school

Please see response to question 4 above

- The quality of the school's communication with pupils, including the existence of a school council through which pupils can make their views known and have an input into the running of the school

Please see response to question 4 above.

6. Could you please supply a copy of the questionnaires which are currently sent to parents whose children attend a primary school or a post-primary school which is being inspected.

The letter provided to parents once an inspection is due to take place provides details and options for providing parents' views. Our survey site, Parent View, is the main source of gathering parents' views about a school. The frequently asked questions page provides the list of 12 questions used on the site. The site is accessible on this link: <http://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/>

7. Are the above questionnaires sent to all parents?

Yes

8. Do parents submit their responses direct to Ofsted or via the school?

Parents complete the Parent View questionnaire online: <http://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk>.

9. Does Ofsted talk to pupils when it inspects a primary or post-primary school?

During an inspection, inspectors will talk to pupils about their work, gauging their understanding and their engagement in learning, and obtaining pupils' perceptions of typical teaching, including those with special needs.

10. If it does, how does Ofsted select the pupils to whom it talks in both primary and post-primary schools respectively?

Each inspection is different and ultimately depends on the circumstances. For instance, when inspectors hear children read, they will listen to lower attaining pupils during the inspections and discuss their reading with them. Inspectors take into account the school's progress data on reading and other information such as lesson observations. Overall, inspectors gather evidence from a wide range of pupils, included disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, those for whom the pupil premium provides support, pupils who are receiving other forms of support and the most able.

11. If it does speak to pupils, typically, how many primary school pupils and how many post-primary school pupils does Ofsted speak to when it carries out an inspection?

There is no typical fixed number of pupils inspectors plan to speak, but rather depends on the inspectors during inspection.

12. Are post-primary schools assessed on the provision of all subjects which are taught at that school during full standard inspections?

No. Inspectors will consider the planning and implementation of learning activities across the whole of the school's curriculum, together with teachers' marking, assessment and feedback to pupils. Further information can be found in *The framework for school inspection*⁵ found on the website.

13. Is the provision of some subjects examined in greater depth during full standard inspections of post-primary schools?

No. Please see response to question 12. The specific-subject guidance is intended only to inform the judgements made by specialist inspectors carrying out subject surveys and not for use in section 5 whole-school inspections.

14. If the answer to Q13 is 'yes', how does Ofsted select the subjects which it investigates in-depth with regard to each full standard inspection of a postprimary school?

N/A

15. What is the ratio of inspectors to teachers which Ofsted uses to determine how many inspectors are required to visit a particular school?

The size of the inspection team will vary according to the size and nature of the school. The size of the school is not determined by the number of teachers but the number of pupils on roll.

5 <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-school-inspection>

16. What is the minimum proportion and number of lessons observed by Ofsted during a focused or standard primary school inspection?

In a typical secondary school inspection, about a third of inspection activity involves formal observation of lessons. In primary inspections the proportion appears to be slightly less. However, teaching and learning are also observed in other ways. It is common for inspectors to make short visits to a number of lessons to examine, for example, teachers' use of assessment information across a range of classes. Inspectors may also observe teaching and learning during extra-curricular and enrichment activities or by tracking a particular group of pupils at tutorial sessions, as well as observing the learning which takes place at breaks and lunchtimes.

17. What is the minimum proportion and number of lessons observed by Ofsted during a full standard post-primary school inspection?

Please see response 16

18. What is the minimum proportion of teachers whose teaching is observed by Ofsted during a standard primary school inspection?

Please see response 16

19. What is the minimum proportion of teachers whose teaching is observed by Ofsted during a standard post-primary school inspection?

Please see response 16

20. How often does Ofsted carry out a full standard inspection of each primary and post-primary school?

Under section 5(1) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Ofsted is required to inspect all schools to which section 5 applies at prescribed intervals. With the exception of those exempt from routine section 5 inspection, regulations require that each school must be inspected within five school years from the end of the school year in which the last inspection took place. The inspection arrangements ensure that the frequency of inspection is proportionate to the performance and circumstances of schools. This means that some schools will be inspected more frequently than at five-year intervals.

Detailed information can be found in *The framework for school inspection* on the Ofsted website.

21. What was the total expenditure in 2011-12 for primary school inspections, and for post-primary school inspections respectively?

Based upon financial year 1 April 2011 to 30 March 2012:

The full cost of s5 primary school full inspections was £30,274,230

The full cost of s5 secondary school full inspections was £10,368,742

This represents the full cost of delivering the activity to Ofsted, including indirect costs and corporate overhead, based on the 2011/12 Ofsted Pricing Model. It does not include the inspection of Academies, Special Educational Needs schools or those in the Independent sector. It represents s5 full inspection only and therefore excludes the cost of special measures visits, Grade 3 and Notice to Improve visits.

These costs should be considered in line with the number of inspections undertaken, as in questions 24 and 25.

22. How many staff inspectors are employed by Ofsted to carry out primary and postprimary inspections, respectively, and at what grades?

As at 31 December 2013, Ofsted employed 175 Grade 7 HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectors) and 25 Grade 6 SHMI (Senior Her Majesty's Inspectors) in the Education remit. Please find attached a copy of the HMI job specification to show the types of provision that they are expected to inspect.

23. How many inspectors are employed on a freelance or contractual/sub-contractual basis by Ofsted to carry out primary and post-primary inspections, respectively, and at what grades?

As at 31 December 2013 Ofsted was contracted with one Grade 7 Inspector in the Education remit. For information regarding Inspectors employed by our inspection service providers (ISPs), you would need to contact the ISPs directly.

24. How many full standard inspections of primary schools were carried out in the financial year 2011-12 (or the calendar year 2011)?

4,530 inspections of primary schools were carried out in the financial year 2011-12.

Please note this includes only (and all) section 5 inspections. Therefore independent schools inspected under section 162a are not included, neither are monitoring or survey visits to maintained schools.

25. How many full standard inspections of post-primary schools were carried out in the financial year 2011-12 (or the calendar year 2011)?

901 inspections of secondary schools were carried out in the financial year 2011-12.

Please note this includes only (and all) section 5 inspections. Therefore independent schools inspected under section 162a are not included, neither are monitoring or survey visits to maintained schools.

In addition to the above information, it may be of assistance to you to know that we publish statistics about maintained schools inspections and outcomes on our website here: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/latest-official-statistics-maintained-schoolinspections-and-outcomes> and we also publish a wealth of inspection guidance (some of which has been referred to above) here: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/for-inspectors>.

I trust that this letter clearly explains our position. If you have any queries about our response, please contact us and we will do our best to address them.

Alternatively, if you are dissatisfied with our response or the handling of your request, you may request a formal internal review. In order to do this, please write to the following address, setting out which areas of the response you are unhappy with:

Email: alma.kucera@ofsted.gov.uk or write to:

Head of Information
Ofsted
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you also have the right to apply to the Information Commissioner for a decision as to whether or not we have complied with our obligations under the FOI Act with respect to your request. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

First Contact Team
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Jas Chohan

Schools Policy Team

Annex A – Your request

1. What information, if any, are schools currently required to provide to parents about school inspections (i) when their child enrolls at a particular school (ii) prior to a school inspection?
2. Are schools required to publish inspection reports relating to their school on their school website in a timely manner?
3. Are schools required to let parents know how they can access the most recent inspection report relating to that school?
4. Do all standard inspections of primary schools (other than follow-up inspections and specialist inspections examining only e.g. library provision) examine the following:
 - The quality of play-based learning in Reception and Year 1
 - The quality of provision relating to the following subjects and areas of learning:
 - i. Physical education, including the quantity of that provision
 - ii. ICT
 - iii. Science and technology
 - iv. History
 - v. Geography
 - vi. Art
 - vii. Music
 - viii. The development of groupwork skills
 - ix. The development of research and investigation skills
 - The quality of a school's communication with parents, including the existence of a parent council through which parents can make their views known to the school
 - The quality of a school's communication with pupils, including the existence of a school council through which pupils can make their views known and have an input into the running of the school
5. Do all inspections of post-primary schools examine the following:
 - The quality and quantity of physical education and sports provision
 - The quality of the school's communication with parents, including the existence of a parent council through which parents can make their views known to the school
 - The quality of the school's communication with pupils, including the existence of a school council through which pupils can make their views known and have an input into the running of the school
6. Could you please supply a copy of the questionnaires which are currently sent to parents whose children attend a primary school or a post-primary school which is being inspected.
7. Are the above questionnaires sent to all parents?
8. Do parents submit their responses direct to Ofsted or via the school?
9. Does Ofsted talk to pupils when it inspects a primary or post-primary school?
10. If it does, how does Ofsted select the pupils to whom it talks in both primary and post-primary schools respectively?

11. If it does speak to pupils, typically, how many primary school pupils and how many post-primary school pupils does Ofsted speak to when it carries out an inspection?
12. Are post-primary schools assessed on the provision of all subjects which are taught at that school during full standard inspections?
13. Is the provision of some subjects examined in greater depth during full standard inspections of post-primary schools?
14. If the answer to Q13 is 'yes', how does Ofsted select the subjects which it investigates in-depth with regard to each full standard inspection of a postprimary school?
15. What is the ratio of inspectors to teachers which Ofsted uses to determine how many inspectors are required to visit a particular school?
16. What is the minimum proportion and number of lessons observed by Ofsted during a focused or standard primary school inspection?
17. What is the minimum proportion and number of lessons observed by Ofsted during a full standard post-primary school inspection?
18. What is the minimum proportion of teachers whose teaching is observed by Ofsted during a standard primary school inspection?
19. What is the minimum proportion of teachers whose teaching is observed by Ofsted during a standard post-primary primary school inspection?
20. How often does Ofsted carry out a full standard inspection of each primary and post-primary school?
21. What was the total expenditure in 2011-12 for primary school inspections, and for post-primary school inspections respectively?
22. How many staff inspectors are employed by Ofsted to carry out primary and post-primary inspections, respectively, and at what grades?
23. How many inspectors are employed on a freelance or contractual/subcontractual basis by Ofsted to carry out primary and post-primary inspections, respectively, and at what grades?
24. How many full standard inspections of primary schools were carried out in the financial year 2011-12 (or the calendar year 2011)?
25. How many full standard inspections of post-primary schools were carried out in the financial year 2011-12 (or the calendar year 2011)?

Ofsted Inspector - job specification

Job specification



HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector), Education

Grade: HMI

Section 1: Job description

Context

Ofsted believes that all children, young people and learners deserve the best. Across the whole range of education, learning and skills inspections, our new frameworks are raising expectations and raising the bar. We're determined to make a greater difference: to raise standards and improve lives.

Under the leadership of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, we are challenging those we inspect to improve faster. To do this we are radically changing the way we work, so that inspection can be an even more powerful lever for improvement.

HMI, Education roles will be filled by experienced professionals with the highest levels of skill needed to observe and report objectively on standards and effectiveness, with the capacity to analyse and make sound judgements on the basis of evidence gathered during inspection activity.

Overall purpose

Reporting to a Senior HMI, all HMI, Education are accountable for leading high impact inspection of education in a variety of settings, developing a critical understanding of each provider within a specified caseload, informed by incisive, accurate data analysis.

HMI, Education also work with the Department for Education (DfE) and other government departments.

Key accountabilities

The key accountabilities of the role are outlined below. However, this is an overview of the role and is not exhaustive, nor will all post holders routinely undertake all of the functions. Ofsted reserves the right to assign other duties commensurate with the HMI grade as required.

- Undertaking the lead and team inspector role on the inspection of a variety of education providers, including maintained schools and academies, initial teacher education, children's centres and nursery chains where appropriate.
- Undertaking the lead and team inspector role on the inspection of non-affiliated independent schools including independent schools for pupils with special needs and the quality assurance of the work of the Independent Schools Inspectorate in the schools affiliated to the Independent Schools Council.

Title: Job specification

2 of 5

- Undertaking the lead and team inspector role on surveys and other additional inspection activity including targeted inspections.
- Ensuring that all judgements are rooted in firm evidence and are defensible against challenge; being a role model for Ofsted's values, acting at all times in the interest of pupils, not those of schools and providers, or self.
- Providing information and expertise, contributing to routine analysis of inspection evidence and grade profiles and assisting Senior HMI to consider the issues presented.
- Monitoring schools causing concern, providing reports and updates to Senior HMI, Regional Directors and HMCI as required.
- Providing specialist expertise to colleagues in other inspection remits.
- Participating in monitoring standards in subjects and aspects of the curriculum from the Early Years Foundation Stage to 16-19 education.
- Leading or contributing to the development of projects.
- Contributing to national reviews or surveys.
- Undertaking quality assurance, report moderation responsibilities and complaint investigations.
- Undertaking briefings for HMCI and Ministers and contributing to the evaluation of government initiatives and strategies.
- Contributing inspection-based advice to HMCI and to government; writing and making contributions to reports, including HMCI's Annual Report and publications, and undertaking dissemination on a wide range of Education topics.
- For Early years, advising on decisions with respect to complex Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement (CIE) cases, tribunals and enforcement activity.
- Representing Ofsted locally, regionally and nationally as required.

At all times, the post holder will be expected to operate in accordance with Ofsted's policies, procedures and values and be positive about safeguarding children, valuing diversity, respecting differences and promoting equal opportunities.

Additional requirements of the role

The role is home-based and will require significant travel including overnight stays, evening and occasional weekend working.

The HMI role attracts an annual pensionable allowance for improvement related activity that is in addition to the core role outlined above. It is expected that all individuals who are fully trained and performing to a good standard will be eligible

Title: Job specification**3 of 5**

for this extra responsibility. The role descriptor outlining this additional activity and further accountabilities includes:

- Working flexibly to promote and drive up demonstrable improvements in education through inspection, by monitoring, and sharing best practice.
- Providing support to a case load of the weaker providers, advising governing bodies, management committees and local authority boards on the impact their work is having on improving the quality of provision and standards in schools and childcare providers.
- Providing critical challenge to the relevant authority, ensuring that progress towards improvement is rapid and that support for schools and providers in an area is targeted, cohesive and has sufficient impact.
- Reporting local concerns about individual schools and providers, escalating issues to Senior HMI and Regional Directors, signalling when improvement is not rapid enough ensuring that action is taken and suggesting recommendations where governance is weak.
- Identifying the most successful practice through detailed analysis of inspection data trends and examples.
- Monitoring the quality of additional inspectors' training, assessment and development of inspectors.
- Monitoring and quality assuring inspections and the quality of inspection reports.
- Brokering links between weaker providers and outstanding providers
- Preparing and delivering best practice workshops and seminars to a range of audiences on aspects of practice, leadership, management and governance for authorities and providers.

HMI will also have the opportunity to hold a temporary National Lead responsibility to be an expert in a specialist area; this is additional to the core job role of HMI and attracts an enhanced responsibility allowance alongside the total salary package. All individuals who are fully trained and performing to a good standard will be eligible to apply for this extra responsibility.

Title: Job specification

4 of 5

Section 2: Person specification

Competency	Essential/ desirable	Tested by
Qualifications		
Degree level qualification or equivalent.	Essential	Application form
Must hold qualified teacher status or a recognised teaching qualification.	Essential	
Knowledge and experience		
A minimum of five years' leadership experience at a senior level (2 nd or 3 rd tier) in education provision, with a proven track record of achieving consistent improvement in this sector.	Essential	Application form/ assessment/ interview
A secure, deep and broad knowledge and understanding of current education issues gained in a suitably wide range of settings.	Essential	
An awareness of the current changes taking place in education and inspection and the ability to keep up to date across a wide range of professional matters.	Essential	
An understanding of the key stakeholders in education, and the operational and political context of each.	Essential	
Competency - setting direction		
Ability to use data and other evidence to formulate hypotheses and questions.	Essential	Application form/ assessment/ interview
Demonstrates a strong focus on learners at all times.	Essential	
Ability to hold others to account for priorities and swiftly respond to changing requirements.	Essential	
A role model for Ofsted values; able to hold discussions around challenging topics sensitively but with no room for ambiguity.	Essential	
Ability to establish partnerships and to communicate and establish high expectations of self and others.	Essential	

Title: Job specification**5 of 5**

Competency - delivering results

Ability to weigh up complex and conflicting evidence, reach robust judgements and record these.	Essential	
Ability to prepare effectively and meet deadlines.	Essential	Application form/ assessment/ interview
Ability to adopt a cost effective approach to the use of resources.	Essential	
Ability to assess the impact of evidence on likely outcomes for pupils and identify an appropriate plan taking into account the wider context.	Essential	

Competency - engaging people

Ability to command confidence through being authoritative and influential.	Essential	
Ability to actively build constructive and open relationships with networks of colleagues, contacts and organisational partners.	Essential	
Excellent communicator able to identify and use appropriate styles and methods, including digital channels, appropriate to the audience.	Essential	Application form/ assessment/ interview
Ability to produce clear written records and reports expressing judgements cogently and precisely in writing.	Essential	
Ability to demonstrate resilience, whilst being responsive, open and honest about challenges.	Essential	

Education Scotland response to Parents outloud

06.01.14



Our ref: FOI/13/01927

Dr L Fawcett
By email

6 January 2014

Dear Dr Fawcett

Freedom of Information request

Thank you for your email dated 6 December 2013, in which you requested information under the *Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002* (FOISA).

You requested that we provide you with answers to the questions below. In conjunction with our response, you may find it useful, to look at the Inspection and Review section on the Education Scotland website. Please see the link below.

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/>

I would also suggest you read our publication *Arrangements for Inspecting Schools in Scotland (August 2011)*, which can be found at the link below.

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/SchoolInspectionFramework2011_tcm4-684005.pdf

You have made reference to 'Education for Scotland'. Please note that effective from 1 July 2011 a new Scottish Government executive agency, Education Scotland, took over the responsibilities of HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). I am therefore replying to your request as Education Scotland.

1. What information, if any, are schools currently required to provide to parents about school inspections (i) when their child enrolls at a particular school (ii) prior to a school inspection?

- (i) There is no legal requirement for schools to provide this information. Parents are able to find the school inspection report on Education Scotland's website <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/> or on Scottish Schools Online <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scottishschoolsonline/>. Many schools have a link to their latest inspection report on their own website but this is not compulsory.
- (ii) Education Scotland provides a letter to parents with information about the inspection when it is announced.

Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston
EH54 6GA

T 0141 282 5000
E enquiries@educationscotland.gov.uk
Textphone 01506 600236
This is a service for deaf users. Please do not use this number for voice calls as this will not connect.
www.educationscotland.gov.uk

Transforming lives through learning

2. Are schools required to publish inspection reports relating to their school on their school website in a timely manner?

There is no legal requirement for schools to do this. However, this would be considered as good practice, and many schools do this already.

3. Are schools required to let parents know how they can access the most recent inspection report relating to that school?

There is no legal requirement for schools to do this. However, this would be considered good practice, and many schools do this already.

4. What criteria are used by Education for Scotland as the basis for their inspections of primary and post-primary schools?

The term 'post-primary' is not used in Scotland. Instead we use the term secondary schools which are attended by young people aged between 12 and 18. The criteria used are available in the publications at the links below.

How good is our school?, third edition:

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/HowgoodisourschoolJtEpart3_tcm4-684258.pdf

Inspection Advice Note 2013-14:

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/ESInspectionAdviceNote20132014_tcm4-809751.pdf

5. Is this criteria published on the Education for Scotland website?

Yes, please see links above.

6. Do all full standard inspections of primary schools examine the following:

- The quality of play-based learning in P1 and P2

Yes.

- The quality of provision relating to the following subjects and areas of learning:

- i. **Physical education, including the quantity of that provision**
- ii. **ICT**
- iii. **Science and technology**
- iv. **History**
- v. **Geography**
- vi. **Art**
- vii. **Music**

All of the above are included in the inspection of the curriculum. The criteria used are outlined in the Inspection Advice Note 2013-14. Please see link below.

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/ESInspectionAdviceNote20132014_tcm4-809751.pdf

- viii. **The development of group-work skills**

- ix. **The development of research and investigation skills**

The above are included in the inspection of children's learning experiences. The relevant Quality Indicator 2.1 can be found in How good is our school?. Please see below.

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/HowgoodisourschoolJtEpart3_tcm4-684258.pdf

- The quality of a school's communication with parents, including the existence of a parent council through which parents can make their views known to the school.

Yes. If the school has a Chair of the Parent Council a member of the inspection team arranges a meeting with him/her.

- The quality of a school's communication with pupils, including the existence of a school council through which pupils can make their views known and have an input into the running of the school

Yes. This is included in the inspection of children's learning experiences (Quality Indicator 2.1 in How good is our school?) and their involvement in bringing about improvement in their schools (Quality Indicator 5.9 in How good is our school?). Please see link below.

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/HowgoodisourschoolJtEpart3_tcm4-684258.pdf

7. Do all inspections of post-primary schools examine the following:

The term 'post-primary' is not used in Scotland. The notes below refer to secondary schools in Scotland, attended by young people aged between 12 and 18.

- The quality and quantity of physical education and sports provision

Yes.

- The quality of the school's communication with parents, including the existence of a parent council through which parents can make their views known to the school

Yes, as in question 6 above.

- The quality of the school's communication with pupils, including the existence of a school council through which pupils can make their views known and have an input into the running of the school

Yes, as in question 6 above.

8. How does Education for Scotland seek the views of parents when it carries out school inspections?

We seek parental views through the use of pre-inspection questionnaires. We also arrange for groups of parents to meet with a member of the inspection team during the inspection week.

9. If questionnaires are used, could you please supply a copy of the questionnaires which are currently sent to parents whose children attend a primary school or a post-primary school which is being inspected.

Questionnaires can be found for primary and secondary inspections at the links below.

Primary: <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/about/primaryschoolinspections/questionnaires.asp>

Secondary:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/about/secondaryschoolinspections/questionnaires.asp>

10. Are the above questionnaires sent to all parents?

Guidance about how we issue questionnaires can be found by following the links at question 9.

11. Do parents submit their responses direct to Education for Scotland or via the school?

Parents are sent questionnaires with pre-paid envelopes and respond directly to Education Scotland.

12. How does Education for Scotland seek the views of pupils at primary and post-primary schools which it is inspecting?

We seek the views of pupils through pre-inspection questionnaires. We arrange for groups of children/young people to meet with a member of the inspection team during the inspection week. We also talk to children/young people during lesson observations and through other activities for example, in the dinner hall.

13. If school inspectors talk to pupils, how does Education for Scotland select the pupils to whom it talks in both primary and post-primary schools respectively?

The starting point for school inspections is the school's own self-evaluation. The focus of discussions with pupils will depend on what emerge as the key issues in any given school - but typically inspectors talk to pupils about their learning experiences, their achievements, their role in improving the school and school ethos. The groups of pupils are sometimes selected by the headteacher and sometimes by the inspection team. During lessons, inspectors may ask pupils about what they are working on, or to tell them about work on display.

14. Typically, how many primary school pupils and how many post-primary school pupils does Education for Scotland speak to when it carries out an inspection?

Typically, in an average-sized secondary school (roll 1000), we would have around five focus groups of young people (groups of six to eight, but sometimes much bigger) to discuss various themes, and we speak with many more pupils during lessons and other activities. In an average size primary, we would normally have between one and three focus groups (around six to eight). As with secondary schools we would cover a variety of themes and also speak to pupils through lesson observations and other activities.

15. Are post-primary schools assessed on the provision of all subjects which are taught at that school during full standard inspections?

Provision for subjects in secondary schools is evaluated as part of the inspection of the curriculum (Quality Indicator 5.1 in the Inspection Advice Note 2013-14).

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/ESInspectionAdviceNote20132014_tcm4-809751.pdf

16. How does Education for Scotland select the subjects which it investigates in-depth with regard to each full standard inspection of a post-primary school?

We do not evaluate provision for individual subjects in depth.

17. What is the ratio of inspectors to teachers which Education for Scotland uses to determine how many inspectors are required to visit a particular school?

Appendix 1 shows the formula we use to calculate the size of an inspection team in relation to the size of the school.

18. What is the minimum proportion and number of lessons observed by Education for Scotland during a full standard primary school inspection?

There are no minimum proportion or number.

This depends on what we find in the school, and whether the school can provide us with its own robust evaluation of learning and teaching. Often we respond to requests to see particular lessons to observe good practice, or sometimes we need to see more lessons as the learning and teaching we are seeing is less strong than the school claims. Typically, in a secondary school of 1000 pupils, we do around

50-60 observations of learning, usually half-lessons. In a typical primary school of 200, we might do around 20 observations of learning.

-
- 19. What is the minimum proportion and number of lessons observed by Education for Scotland during a full standard post-primary school inspection?**
See question 18 above.
- 20. What is the minimum proportion of teachers whose teaching is observed by Education for Scotland during a focused or standard primary school inspection?**
In most primary schools, we would see all or almost all teachers.
- 21. What is the minimum proportion of teachers whose teaching is observed by Education for Scotland during a focused or standard post-primary primary school inspection?**
There is no minimum proportion. Typically, we would see around two thirds of teachers, but this varies for reasons explained at question 18.
- 22. How often does Education for Scotland carry out a full standard inspection of each primary school and a full standard inspection of each post-primary school?**
We no longer have a cyclical approach to school inspection. We inspect a statistically valid sample of schools each year. For more information, please see section three of the document at the link below:

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/SchoolInspectionFramework2011_tcm4-684005.pdf
- 23. Has the policy with regard to frequency of inspections changed within the past three years and, if so, what was the previous policy?**
Until 2008, we followed what was known as the ‘generational cycle’ whereby secondary schools were inspected every six years, and primary schools every seven years.
- 24. What was Education for Scotland’s annual expenditure in 2011-12 and 2012-13?**
Net operating costs for 2011-12: £31,139,000.

Net operating costs for 2012-13: £29,795,000.
- 25. In 2012-13, what proportion of Education for Scotland’s annual expenditure was spent on delivery of its services (i.e. inspections and regulatory events)?**
Percentage breakdown below:
- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Service delivery | 73% |
| Software sales | 1% |
| Grant payments | 8% |
| Glow/Interconnect | 18% |
- 26. What budget has Education for Scotland been allocated for 2013-14?**
Current budget is £30,158,000.
- 27. What was the total expenditure in 2012-13 for primary school inspections, and for post-primary school inspections, respectively?**
Primary schools: £1,649,000

Secondary and all-through schools: £728,000
-

28. How many staff inspectors are employed by Education for Scotland to carry out primary and post-primary inspections, respectively, and at what grades?

We do not use the term 'staff inspectors'. We have 49 HM Inspectors (HMI) in the primary and secondary school inspection team. A high proportion of these 49 HMI (40/49) inspect both primary and secondary schools. The primary and secondary school inspection team includes 47 full-time permanent HMI, and two Assistant Inspectors who are deployed on a 'zero hours' basis and are paid at a daily rate. We also have three Health and Nutrition Inspectors (HNIs) who join both primary and secondary school inspections. Our HMI are at Grade C2. Our HNIs are at Grade B3. Assistant Inspectors are at the equivalent to a C2 grade.

29. How many inspectors are employed on a freelance or contractual/ sub-contractual basis by Education for Scotland to carry out primary and post-primary inspections, respectively, and at what grades?

As mentioned above, we have two Assistant Inspectors working for the primary and secondary team.

For information we also have 85 primary school Associate Assessors and 52 secondary school Associate Assessors. Associate Assessors are practising teachers, depute headteachers and headteachers, and education authority officers who join two to three inspections each year.

Associate Assessors are paid by their employer and we don't have a grade for them. Education Scotland reimburses their employer a daily rate for their time on inspections.

30. How many inspections and regulatory events (of all types of educational and training institution inspected by Education for Scotland) were carried out in the financial year 2012-13 (or in 2012 if the information is not available for the financial year)?

We carried out 359 inspections/reviews during 2012-13, details below.

Sector	2012-13
Pre-school*	162
Pre-school Follow-through	12
Day special	16
Residential special	9
Secure accommodation	0
All-through	5
Secondary	26
Primary	101
Learning Community	14
Validated Self Evaluation (VSE)	7
Educational Psychology Service (EPS)	2
College Review	5
Total	359

Note:

*Pre school includes the following

Stand alone	96
Primary NC	61
All-through NC	3
Day Special NC	2
Residential special NC	0
Total	162

31. How many full standard inspections of primary schools were carried out in the financial year 2012-13 (or the calendar year 2012)?

101 Primary schools.

32. How many full standard inspections of post-primary schools were carried out in the financial year 2012-13 (or the calendar year 2012)?

As previously stated we do not use the term 'post-school'. To answer this question please see breakdown below.

Secondary schools 26 inspections

All-through schools 5 inspections

College reviews 5 inspections

33. Could you please provide details of all thematic reviews, relating to schools, which have been published by Education for Scotland within the last three years, and of any press releases which were issued with regard to these reviews?

September 2012: Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/GIRFEC%20FINAL%2024-10-12_tcm4-735258.pdf

Press release enclosed as an attachment.

September 2012: Science 3-18 curriculum impact report

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/Science3to18v4_tcm4-731895.pdf

Press release enclosed as an attachment.

September 2012: Social Studies 3-18 curriculum impact report

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/SocialStudies3to18_tcm4-731894.pdf

Press release enclosed as an attachment.

September 2013: Updated Science 3-18 curriculum impact report

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/Sciences3to182013Update_tcm4-817013.pdf

No press release issued.

September 2013: Updated Social Studies 3-18 curriculum impact report

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/SocialStudies3to182013Update_tcm4-817061.pdf

No press release issued.

September 2013: Health and Wellbeing 3-18 curriculum impact report

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/HealthandWellbeing3to18_tcm4-814360.pdf

Press release can be found at link below:

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/newsandevents/educationnews/2013/education/september/news_tcm4816999.asp

September 2013: Creativity Across Learning 3-18 curriculum impact report

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/Creativity3to18_tcm4-814361.pdf

Press release can be found at link below:

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/newsandevents/educationnews/2013/education/september/news_tcm4816999.asp

If you are unhappy with this response to your request, you may ask us to carry out an internal review. Your request should explain why you wish a review to be carried out. This should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

Vivian Bogle

Business Manager

Education Scotland - Appendix 1 Response to question 17

Appendix 1 – Response to question 17

Primary school with nursery class (NC)

Size	Roll	Managing Inspector days with NC	Team Member days with NC (all in school)	Lay Member (1 day in school)
Very small	1-49	7.5 (4 in school)	n/a	No (1-29) Yes (30-49)
Small	50-74 (3 classes or less)	6.5 (3.5 in school)	3.5(NC)	No
Small	50-74 (4 classes or more)	6.5 (3.5 in school)	3+3.5(NC)	No
Medium	75-249	7.5 (4 in school)	4+3.5(NC)	Yes
Large	250-499	7.5 (4 in school)	4+2+3.5(NC)	Yes
Very large	500+	7.5 (4 in school)	4+4+3.5(NC)	Yes

Primary school without NC

Size	Roll	Managing Inspector days with NC	Team Member days (all in school)	Lay Member (1 day in school)
Very small	1-49	6.5 (3.5 in school)	n/a	No (1-29) Yes (30-49)
Small	50-74 (3 classes or less)	6.5 (3.5 in school)	n/a	Yes
Small	50-74 (4 classes or more)	6.5 (3.5 in school)	3	No
Medium	75-249	7.5 (4 in school)	4	Yes
Large	250-499	7.5 (4 in school)	4+2	Yes
Very large	500+	7.5 (4 in school)	4+4	Yes

Parents outloud transcript Noelle Buick Evening Extra Interview 08.01.14

Noelle Buick Evening Extra Interview with Seamus McKee 8/1/2014

I want to reassure parents tonight that inspection is frequent, robust and absolutely has their children at the heart of all the work that we do.

Not frequent enough according to their figs?

We have a number of models of inspection : for post primary school we have a 5 day model of inspection. For small, low risk schools we have a 2 day model and for larger primary schools a 5 day model.

How often does that happen?

For all those we have a follow up inspection process if the provision is satisfactory or below.

We have a proportionate risk based approach so we target inspections based on a number of risk categories which is around performance, District Inspector intelligence and other information that we have about schools.

So up until 2010 inspections were carried out every seven years but now they're carried out more on a proportionate risk based approach.

That's 7 years for primary and post primary?

It was that prior to 2010.

So why is it not that anymore?

Because we are taking a much more proportionate risk based approach to inspection and I think Parents Outloud are inaccurate to discount the short inspections and the follow up inspections because on those and all inspections we assess the overall effectiveness of provision, achievements and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management. So whether its a 5 day, 2 day or a follow up we evaluate those aspects of provision.

Are they all announced inspections? Yes they are

Why do you tell them you are going in?

There are a number of reasons for doing that but we have reduced the notification period from Sept 2013 from 4 weeks to 2 weeks and we are looking at reducing that further but for the moment 2 weeks works for us and the school. We want to make sure pupils are in the school, that the Principal is in the school when we come to visit so 2 weeks works all round.

Can you tell parents tonight that every school will be inspected without fail no longer than a particular interval. What is the interval that you are telling parents tonight will be the one which elapses between inspections and that will never get any longer

At the moment there isn't a set period between inspections because we are working to this proportionate risk based model. But we implemented this model in 2010 and over a six year period we will get to the point where every school will have an inspection intervention every 3 years. By 2016 that's the model that we are going to be working to. Because you will have your original inspection - if its satisfactory or below you'll have a follow up inspection within 2 years. But if you're a good or better school you will have a sustaining improvements inspection every 3 years

But I think the crucial part for tonight is to reassure parents that inspection is frequent, it is robust and it has their children at the heart of what we do.

Parents Outloud further submission covering letter 11.02.14



From: Dr Liz Fawcett,
Northern Ireland Representative,
ParentsOutLoud,
c/o 48 Ailesbury Road,
Belfast BT7 3FH

Tel: 028 9020 0811

Peter McCallion,
Clerk to the Committee,
Committee for Education,
Northern Ireland Assembly

11th February 2014

Re: Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) – correspondence between DE and ParentsOutLoud

Dear Peter,

We wish to bring to the attention of the Committee a letter from Lynn Hayes, Head of the Inspection Services Branch at the Department of Education, dated 29th January, and our response, which was sent to her today.

As you will see from the correspondence, copies of which we enclose, Mrs Hayes has provided corrected versions of the tables in our submission to the Committee's Inquiry into ETI which highlighted apparent lengthy gaps between full (or closest to full) inspections at schools in both Belfast and Omagh. However, she has corrected the tables to include short and follow-up inspection reports, and inspection reports which focus on very specific areas of the curriculum, such as pastoral care or library provision. In our submissions and evidence to the Committee, we had highlighted the fact that we were not including these as we wished to ascertain how frequently schools were receiving a full, or closest to full, inspection.

Mrs Hayes has asked us to forward the corrected information to any party to whom we have sent what she terms our "invalid data" in the respective tables in our submission. We entirely refute the assertion that these tables were inaccurate – and our reasoning is set out in our letter to Mrs Hayes. However, we are very happy to forward her letter to us and our response to that correspondence to the Committee as we believe the Committee will be able to reach its own judgement on the value or otherwise of the data which we provided.

It does trouble us that the Department appears to consider that short, follow-up or narrowly focused inspection reports represent adequate interventions during the course of a lengthy gap between full (or closest to full) inspections. To illustrate our point, we have highlighted, in an Appendix to this letter, the inspection histories of two of the schools included in our tables (which are not meant to imply that these schools are in any way currently deficient). To summarise these illustrative case studies, they feature:

- A Belfast post-primary school where the only areas which have been inspected in the past 13 years are pastoral care and ICT, and two key areas identified for improvement were not followed up by ETI subsequently in any published report
- An Omagh primary school with 294 pupils (therefore, not a small school) which had its last full inspection in 1999, a short inspection which resulted in a three-page report published in 2009, and a follow-up inspection which resulted in a one-page report published in 2011. The only other available report related solely to library provision and was published in 2004.

We also wish to highlight the much fuller nature of what were called primary school general inspection reports in the late 1990s, which covered a number of key curriculum areas in some depth, including science, technology and PE. Examples include the 1999 general inspection report for the above-mentioned Omagh primary school and a 1998 general inspection report relating to another Omagh primary school.¹ While we welcome the inclusion in more recent primary school inspection reports of clear gradings, we do feel that these old reports provide a good example of how an inspection report can look in some depth at teaching and learning in all the key curriculum areas.

Finally, the Committee may note that the corrected tables provided by Mrs Hayes state “Prior to 2007, records were held manually. Therefore, the cost of providing more detailed information on inspections prior to 2007 would be disproportionate.” This concerns us greatly because it implies that this information has not been fully digitised, and that the Department and ETI are unable to readily access the inspection history of each school.

Yours sincerely,



Northern Ireland Representative,
ParentsOutLoud

Encs.

1 The reports are the 1999 general inspection report for Omagh Integrated Primary School which is available here: http://www.etini.gov.uk/report_detail.asp?id=812 and the 1998 general inspection report for Loreto Convent Primary School which is available here: http://www.etini.gov.uk/report_detail.asp?id=673

Appendix

Methodist College, Belfast

- Last standard inspection – unable to ascertain date from DE and report not available on ETI website
- 2001 focused inspection report on pastoral care – this report highlighted a number of strengths and three areas for improvement²
- 2005 focused inspection report on pastoral care and ICT – this three-page report devoted one paragraph to pastoral care and child protection. Although child protection arrangements were judged effective, the report noted that the school was not yet fully implementing a circular on child protection, issued by the Department of Education two years previously. There was no specific reference to the areas for improvement identified in the 2001 report, and whether or not the school had improved in those areas. The report identified a number of strengths and two areas for improvement in ICT and, in a short appendix, a serious issue regarding accommodation for ICT.³ In this appendix, it states:

Aspects of the accommodation constrain the work of the school and adversely affect the quality of the pupils' experiences. The majority of the ICT rooms, for example, are cramped and in need of improved ventilation.

- 2008 follow up inspection report – this report, which is slightly over one page in length, states that the inspectors were satisfied that the areas for improvement regarding ICT which were highlighted in 2005 have now been addressed. However, there is no reference to the concern regarding ICT accommodation, nor to any measures which have been taken to improve the accommodation. Moreover, the report does not comment on the child protection issue raised in the 2005 report, namely the school's adherence to the DE child protection guidance. As now confirmed by the Department, this is the most recent inspection report of any kind available for this school, although it states that what it terms a "survey/evaluation inspection visit" was carried out in 2009.

Omagh Integrated Primary School

- 1999 general inspection report – the last full inspection report available on this school⁴
- 2004 focused inspection report on library provision – this one-page report highlighted a number of strengths and one area for development⁵
- 2009 short inspection report – this three-page (excluding statistics) report highlighted a number of strengths, but stated that some aspects of leadership and management needed to be addressed⁶
- 2011 follow-up inspection report – this one-page report concluded that the areas highlighted for improvement had been addressed⁷
- (the information supplied by Mrs Hayes refers to a 2006 focused report, which is unavailable on the ETI website – we wonder if this was the 2004 report – and "information on survey/evaluation inspection visits 2007" which is also unavailable on the website)

2 2001 report available at: http://www.etini.gov.uk/report_detail.asp?id=558

3 2005 report available at: http://www.etini.gov.uk/report_detail.asp?id=2881

4 Available at: http://www.etini.gov.uk/report_detail.asp?id=812

5 Available at: http://www.etini.gov.uk/report_detail.asp?id=268

6 Available at: http://www.etini.gov.uk/report_detail.asp?id=4506

7 Available at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/inspection-reports/inspection-reports-primary/inspection-reports-primary-2012/follow-up-inspection-omagh-integrated-primary-school-and-nursery-unit.htm>

Parents Outloud copy of letter to ETI 11.02.14



From: Dr Liz Fawcett,
Northern Ireland Representative,
ParentsOutLoud,
c/o 48 Ailesbury Road,
Belfast BT7 3FH

Tel: 028 9020 0811

Lynn Hayes,
Head of Inspection Services Branch,
The Education and Training Inspectorate,
Department of Education

11th February 2014

Re: Your correspondence ref: DE1-14-42

Dear Mrs Hayes,

Thank you for your letter of 29th January, in response to our FOI queries of 6th December 2013 and 2nd January 2014. We will forward your letter and the information which you have supplied to the Assembly's Committee for Education, to whom we will also forward a copy of this letter to you. We had previously forwarded to the Committee your response of 7th January 2014 to our first FOI query of 6th December 2013, in which you replied to our request for verification of our 'Belfast schools' table by referring us to the search facility of your website – which, of course, is what we had used in the first instance to obtain our data.

We entirely refute your assertion that we presented any party with inaccurate data. The data was presented very clearly to both the Committee and to the media as the information relating to certain types of inspection only (i.e. full inspections or the closest to a full inspection) which we were able to find using the search facility on the ETI website – it was therefore in no way misrepresented, and was entirely accurate in the terms in which we presented it.

Moreover, we feel compelled to point out that your corrected versions of the 'Belfast schools' and 'Omagh schools' tables which you have provided are inaccurate and misleading – as presented by you - because they treat follow-up and other more minor inspection reports as full or focused (close to full) inspection reports when they are not that. In particular, some of the information in columns 3,4 and 5 of your corrected versions of these tables is now inaccurate for this reason (see the wording of the headings for these columns).

Your corrected tables still leaves open the question of exactly when Methodist College actually last received a full inspection (evidently prior to 2001, as we had originally incorrectly included a 2001 report as a full inspection report when it was, in fact, a focused report looking only at pastoral care). The 2005 focused report which you have listed examined only pastoral care and ICT. We feel it would have been more helpful to us and to the Committee if the information which we were actually seeking had been supplied.

For this reason, while we are happy to pass on a copy of your letter and of this letter to the Committee, we do not intend to inform the media that there were inaccuracies as there were no inaccuracies in the press release which we sent them, nor in the written submission to which we referred them in that press release and originally sent to the Committee, nor the updated version of the submission which we sent to the Committee subsequently. For your

information, I enclose copies of the original and updated submissions to the Committee, and of our press release.¹ The text of our oral submission is available online.²

You will see, that in all these documents, we very clearly state that we are including only the following:

- Full standard inspection reports, in the case of post-primary schools, and focused reports which were not focusing on a very specific area of provision only, in the case of primary schools
- Also primary inspection reports and post-primary inspections in Table 3 in our more recent submission, in the light of your new categorisation of reports from September 2013

We note that, in your revised tables, you have included information about other shorter and more specific reports which we stated that we excluded from our data, and you have also included information about other inspection and evaluation visits. We are not aware that any reports concerning these additional visits are published on your website. We did not retrieve any such reports when we carried out our searches, nor is any information on these visits/visit reports available on your website as far as we are aware.

In our written and oral submissions, we also clearly stated that we had included only those reports which we were able to find using the search facility on the ETI website, and that the apparent length of time between full (or closest to full) inspection reports might actually be due to problems with your search facility or website. In our oral submission, we stated that we doubted, however, that any such problems fully explained this gap.

In the light of the information which you have now presented, it would appear that we were right – there are often unacceptably lengthy gaps between full inspections. As we stated at the time, whatever the explanation, the paucity of regular and comprehensive inspection information is quite unacceptable from our point of view. I should add that our press release also made clear that we were referring to published full (or closest to full) inspection reports – and there was a link to our written submission which provided further detail on this as per above.

We very much appreciate the additional information which you have provided about school inspections. We have already forwarded to the Committee the information which you and Ofsted (and Education Scotland) sent us previously, and have highlighted the fact that you observe all or most teachers when you carry out a full inspection, while Ofsted was less clear on this. We also voiced concern that Ofsted's more recent inspection reports do not seem to be as full as those produced previously.

For your information, we made our original written submission to the Committee's inquiry on school inspections at the invitation of the Committee. We did not realise that, in the course of researching our submission, we would discover such lengthy gaps between full school inspections, although we were aware that some inspection reports appeared to be very out of date. We believe, therefore, that our research in this regard has provided a valuable service by informing the Committee's inquiry and by informing public debate about a matter of which most people would have been unaware.

1 In the case of both latter documents, these are marked 'corrected' in the file name – aside from some typos in an initial version of the updated written submission, we also originally erroneously stated that an inspection report relating to Methodist College in 2001 was a standard inspection report when it was, in fact, a focused inspection report relating to pastoral care only.

We also initially neglected to highlight in a footnote that one of the Omagh primary schools in Table 3 had merged recently, but that that merged school had, as far as we were aware, received no inspection. Although we didn't name any schools in our press release, the press release was also corrected to reflect that information.

2 Our oral evidence, presented to the Committee on 8th January 2014, is available here: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2013-2014/January-2014/Inquiry-into-the-Education-and-Training-Inspectorate-and-School-Improvement-Process-ParentsOutloud-and-Sir-Robert-Salisbury/>

We intend to write to the Chief Inspector to request a meeting to discuss the issues which we have raised in our submissions to the Committee. We would also be delighted to meet you along with the Chief Inspector, or in a separate meeting if you would like to discuss these matters further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Liz Fawcett', written in a cursive style.

Dr Liz Fawcett,

Northern Ireland Representative, ParentsOutLoud
Encs.

Parents Outloud copy of letter from ETI



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture Arts and Leisure



Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Balloo
Bangor
BT19 7PR

Tel: 028 9127 9726

Fax: 028 9127 9691

inspectionsservices@deni.gov.uk

Dr Liz Fawcett
(by email) Ref : DE1-14-42

29 January 2014

Dear Dr Fawcett

Request for Information

Thank you for your email of 2 January 2014, in which you asked for verification of the information that you had outlined in 'Table 3' of your email.

You indicated that you intended to present the unverified information to other parties.

The majority of the data within 'Table 3' that you provided was inaccurate. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has validated your data as requested and updated your table with the required corrections. Un-validated data was also supplied to ETI in your previous request of 6 December 2013 regarding schools in South Belfast; this data has also been validated and can be found in 'Table 1' attached.

Could you please ensure that any parties that have been provided with your invalid data (in 'Table 1' and 'Table 3') are advised accordingly of the inaccuracies.

Among the inaccuracies in your information was the fact that you did not include short or follow-up inspections. All inspections, irrespective of duration, take account of the overall effectiveness of the school, achievements and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management. Short inspections (two days) are for small, low risk primary schools. It is right that we take a proportionate approach to inspection to both reduce any burden on the school and to ensure that inspection resources are targeted to where they are most needed and will have the greatest impact rather than a one size fits all approach.

Inspections of other primary schools and all post-primary schools are five days. You compared us to Ofsted but interestingly all Ofsted school inspections regardless of school type or risk are usually two days. Follow-up inspections (of schools that are satisfactory or below), also evaluate the aspects outlined above and are therefore a robust inspection process. The follow-up inspection assures parents that the necessary improvements identified at the original inspection have been implemented. There is also ongoing monitoring of all schools by the District Inspector which is unique to schools in Northern Ireland.

If you are unhappy with the level of service you have received in relation to your request, you may ask for an internal review within two calendar months of the date of the letters. You may write to Garth Manderson, Departmental Information Manager, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, BT19 7PR, or send an email to garth.manderson@deni.gov.uk if you wish to make a complaint.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a review of our original decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn Hayes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lynn Hayes (Mrs)

Head of Inspection Services Branch

Parents Outloud - revised submission Belfast with changes suggested by ETI

PARENTS OUT LOUD ETI RESPONSE TO VALIDATION REQUEST UNDER FOI date 6 December 2013

Note:

1. Primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: primary focused inspection reports and short inspection reports as well as primary follow-up inspection reports and reports on current primary inspections.
2. Post-primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: post-primary focused inspection reports, new model post-primary inspection reports, standard post-primary inspection reports, specialist school post-primary inspection reports, as well as post-primary follow-up reports and reports of current post-primary inspections.
3. Prior to 2007, records were held manually. Therefore the cost of providing more detailed information on inspections prior to 2007 would be disproportionate.
4. **ETI's validation/insertions are in red.**

Table 1: Frequency of sample of school inspection reports published on ETI website (Sept 2013) (Dec 2013) (all schools are situated in south or south-east Belfast)					
Primary School	Most recent focused inspection report (excluding specialist reports e.g. library facilities)	Previous focused inspection report	Length of time between focused reports	Length of time since last focused inspection report	
Forge Integrated PS	2008 2009 Focused Inspection 2008 Follow-up inspection 2009 Additional information on Survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2011 2013	2009 2008	8 years 1 year	5 years 4 years	
Holy Rosary PS	2004 2013 Focused inspection 2004 Primary inspection 2013	Not available 2004	Not known 9 years	9 years 0 years	
Knockbreda PS	2004 (English & ICT)	Not available 2003	Not known 3 years	9 years 7 years	

PARENTS OUT LOUD ETI RESPONSE TO VALIDATION REQUEST UNDER FOI date 6 December 2013

Note:

1. Primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: primary focused inspection reports and short inspection reports as well as primary follow-up inspection reports and reports on current primary inspections.
2. Post-primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: post-primary focused inspection reports, new model post-primary inspection reports, standard post-primary inspection reports, specialist school post-primary inspection reports, as well as post-primary follow-up reports and reports of current post-primary inspections.
3. Prior to 2007, records were held manually. Therefore the cost of providing more detailed information on inspections prior to 2007 would be disproportionate.
4. ETI's validation/insertions are in red.

Rosetta PS		Focused inspection 2003 Follow-up inspection 2006	2013	2003 (English, ICT & pastoral care) 2004	10 years 9 years 0 years
		Follow-up inspection 2004 Additional information on Survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2012	Not available 2006	Not available 2004	Not known 7 years
St Michael's PS		Focused inspection 2004 Follow-up inspection 2006 Additional information on Survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2011	Not available 2006	Not available 2004	Not known 2 years
Post-primary school		Most recent full inspection report		Previous full inspection report	Length of time between full inspection reports
Aquinas Diocesan School	Grammar		2008 2007	2000 Not available	8 years Not available 5 years 6 years
		Standard Inspection 2007			

PARENTS OUT LOUD ETI RESPONSE TO VALIDATION REQUEST UNDER FOI date 6 December 2013

Note:

1. Primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: primary focused inspection reports and short inspection reports as well as primary follow-up inspection reports and reports on current primary inspections.
2. Post-primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: post-primary focused inspection reports, new model post-primary inspection reports, standard post-primary inspection reports, specialist school post-primary inspection reports, as well as post-primary follow-up reports and reports of current post-primary inspections.
3. Prior to 2007, records were held manually. Therefore the cost of providing more detailed information on inspections prior to 2007 would be disproportionate.
4. **ETI's validation/insertions are in red.**

	Additional information on Survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2005 2011				
Knockbreda High School	2009 2013 Standard Inspection 2009 Follow-up inspection 2011 Follow-up inspection 2012 Follow-up inspection 2013 Additional information on Survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2005	Not available (but before 2004) 2012	At least 9 years 1 years	4 years 0 years	
Lagan College	2013 Focused inspection 2003 Additional information on Survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2011 2012	Not available 2003	Not known 10 years	0 years	
Methodist College	2004	Not available	Not known	12 years	

PARENTS OUT LOUD ETI RESPONSE TO VALIDATION REQUEST UNDER FOI date 6 December 2013

Note:

1. Primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: primary focused inspection reports and short inspection reports as well as primary follow-up inspection reports and reports on current primary inspections.
2. Post-primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: post-primary focused inspection reports, new model post-primary inspection reports, standard post-primary inspection reports, specialist school post-primary inspection reports, as well as post-primary follow-up reports and reports of current post-primary inspections.
3. Prior to 2007, records were held manually. Therefore the cost of providing more detailed information on inspections prior to 2007 would be disproportionate.
4. ETI's validation/insertions are in red.

	<p>2008</p> <p>Focused inspection 2005 Follow-up inspection 2008</p> <p>Additional information on Survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2009</p>	2005	3 years	5 years
Wellington College	<p>2008</p> <p>Focused inspection 1999 Follow-up inspection 2001</p> <p>Additional information on Survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2004</p>	<p>Not available 2001</p>	<p>Not known 7 years</p>	5 years

Parents Outloud - revised submission Omagh with changes suggested by ETI

PARENTS OUT LOUD ETI RESPONSE TO VALIDATION REQUEST UNDER FOI date 2 January 2014

Note:

1. Primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: primary focused inspection reports and short inspection reports as well as primary follow-up inspection reports and reports on current primary inspections.
2. Post-primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: post-primary focused inspection reports, new model post-primary inspection reports, standard post-primary inspection reports, specialist school post-primary inspection reports, as well as post-primary follow-up reports and reports of current post-primary inspections.
3. Prior to 2007, records were held manually. Therefore the cost of providing more detailed information on inspections prior to 2007 would be disproportionate.
4. ETI's validation/insertions are in red.

Table 3: Frequency of sample of school inspection reports published on ETI website (Dec 2013) (all schools are situated in Omagh area)

Primary School	Most recent focused or primary inspection report (excluding specialist reports e.g. library facilities, and short inspections)	Previous focused inspection report	Length of time between focused or primary inspection reports	Length of time since last focused or primary inspection report
Omagh Integrated PS	1999 Focused inspection 2006 Short inspection 2009 Follow-up inspection 2011 Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2007	Not available	Not known 2 years	14 years 2 years
St Conors PS	2005 (English, ICT/pastoral care) Follow-up inspection 2007 Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2011	Not available	Not known 2 years	8 years 6 years

PARENTS OUT LOUD ETI RESPONSE TO VALIDATION REQUEST UNDER FOI date 2 January 2014

Note:

1. Primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: primary focused inspection reports and short inspection reports as well as primary follow-up inspection reports and reports on current primary inspections.
2. Post-primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: post-primary focused inspection reports, new model post-primary inspection reports, standard post-primary inspection reports, specialist school post-primary inspection reports, as well as post-primary follow-up reports and reports of current post-primary inspections.
3. Prior to 2007, records were held manually. Therefore the cost of providing more detailed information on inspections prior to 2007 would be disproportionate.
4. **ETI's validation/insertions are in red.**

Loreto Convent PS	<p>Short inspection 2008</p> <p>Note: Loreto Convent primary school closed in September 2012. Holy Family primary school opened in September 2012 as an amalgamation of Loreto Convent primary school and St Colmcille's primary school.</p> <p>Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2005</p>	<p>1998</p>	Not available	Not known	<p>15 years</p> <p>Not Applicable</p>
Omagh County PS	<p>2006 (English, ICT and pastoral care)</p> <p>Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2009 2010 2011 2013</p>		Not available	Not known	7 years
Gibson PS	2009		Not available	Not known	4 years
Sacred Heart PS, Tattyreagh	<p>Short inspection 2012</p> <p>Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2009</p>	2004 (Maths/ICT/pastoral care)	<p>Not available</p> <p>2004</p>	<p>Not known</p> <p>8 years</p>	<p>9 years</p> <p>1 year</p>

PARENTS OUT LOUD ETI RESPONSE TO VALIDATION REQUEST UNDER FOI date 2 January 2014

Note:

1. Primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: primary focused inspection reports and short inspection reports as well as primary follow-up inspection reports and reports on current primary inspections.
2. Post-primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: post-primary focused inspection reports, new model post-primary inspection reports, standard post-primary inspection reports, specialist school post-primary inspection reports, as well as post-primary follow-up reports and reports of current post-primary inspections.
3. Prior to 2007, records were held manually. Therefore the cost of providing more detailed information on inspections prior to 2007 would be disproportionate.
4. **ETI's validation/insertions are in red.**

	2013				
Christ the King PS	Follow-up inspection 2005 Follow-up inspection 2006 Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2007 2008	2004	Not available	Not known 1 year	9 years 7 years
Post-primary school	Most recent full inspection report		Previous full inspection report	Length of time between full inspection reports	Length of time since last full inspection report
CBS Omagh	Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2006 2007 2009	2010	2004 Not available	9 years Not available	3 years
Convent Grammar Omagh Loreto Grammar School	Standard Inspection 2006 Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2004 2007	2013	2006	7 years	0 years

PARENTS OUT LOUD ETI RESPONSE TO VALIDATION REQUEST UNDER FOI date 2 January 2014

Note:

1. Primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: primary focused inspection reports and short inspection reports as well as primary follow-up inspection reports and reports on current primary inspections.
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3. Prior to 2007, records were held manually. Therefore the cost of providing more detailed information on inspections prior to 2007 would be disproportionate.
4. ETI's validation/insertions are in red.

Drumragh College	Integrated	2008	2000	8years	5years
	Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2005 2010 2013				
Sacred Heart College	Follow-up inspection 2003 Standard Inspection 2011 Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2007 2011	2012	2003	9 years 8years	1 year 2 years
Omagh Academy	Focused inspection 2002 Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2006	2013	2002	11years	0 years
Omagh High School	Additional information on survey/evaluation inspection visits: 2006	2013	2003 2006	10 years 7 years	0years

PARENTS OUT LOUD ETI RESPONSE TO VALIDATION REQUEST UNDER FOI date 2 January 2014

Note:

- 1. Primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: primary focused inspection reports and short inspection reports as well as primary follow-up inspection reports and reports on current primary inspections.
- 2. Post-primary inspection reports refer to what were previously known as: post-primary focused inspection reports, new model post-primary inspection reports, standard post-primary inspection reports, specialist school post-primary inspection reports, as well as post-primary follow-up reports and reports of current post-primary inspections.
- 3. Prior to 2007, records were held manually. Therefore the cost of providing more detailed information on inspections prior to 2007 would be disproportionate.
- 4. ETI's validation/insertions are in red.

	2007 2009				
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Phoenix Integrated Primary School

1. The Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement and how/whether ETI properly assesses the value-added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment;

The ETI recently attended our school for a Focused Primary Inspection. It was the school's first inspection and to my knowledge it is not clear whether the school had any informal visits in the 7 years before I joined as Principal. In my opinion the school should have been inspected earlier and 7/8 years is too long to have a newly evolving school with no formal assessment of their overall provision. It was clear to me as Principal that the school had a number of issues which needed improved. The ETI confirmed this and as a result we were categorised as Satisfactory.

Key stage results are not a true indicator of the school's performance. At present the Cross curricular skills are being implemented and the transition takes time. Schools are still measured based on FSM and Key stage results. These are not robust enough to give an accurate picture of attainment in any school. It does not take into account individual pupils issues nor does it take into account socio economic problems which are not measured by official departments.

The inspectorate examined our internal data and tracking procedures. Although non statutory it gives a much truer picture of where the school is performance wise.

Computer Based Assessment is an extra burden for schools in terms of access to reliable technology. On a practical level the number of computer units accessible for Y4-7 is not enough for schools with smaller budgets. The time involved in allowing children to access tests causes an immense level of stress for staff who are busy trying to deliver the curriculum. The usefulness of the tests is minimal. In our experience they usually tell us what we already know about pupils we work with on a daily basis.

Internal assessments should be regulated to allow them to be used as an indicator of performance. Most schools use GL assessment tools such as PIE and PIM.

2. The key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the Education and Library Boards to help schools improve;

There is minimal support for schools who maybe experiencing difficulties and sit outside the review process. Our school is now in a Follow-up phase and we welcome the support of the SELB officers to move the process along in an organised and supportive way. We feel intervention from the SELB is effective and knowledgeable provide support and guidance for our school as we improve our provision.

The level of support for schools from ELBs across NI is totally unacceptable. The establishment of ESA is taking too long and it is schools who are suffering. There is no support out there for schools. The seconded teams have all been disbanded and ELB support officers who remain are working with schools who are in formal intervention or engaged in follow up. This is too late! Schools need support long before they are at this stage.

3. Alternative inspection/improvement approaches which might better assess value-added and recognise improvement by schools;

More regular visits - schools should not have to go for periods of up to 8 years before being inspected.

Remove Computer Based Assessment

Allow ETI to use internal tracking and assessment procedures used in Primary Schools.

Time to talk to teachers about their performance and give feedback on observation visits.

- 4. The priorities and actions which need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process – does ETI need enhanced powers?; should ETI make more/any use of alternative measures of achievement (other than examination performance) to assess school performance?; should ETI be independent of the Department of Education (as Ofsted is)?; does ETI need a better complaints / feedback procedure? etc.; Do schools always understand the conclusions produced by ETI – is more transparency required in this regard?;**

It may be worthwhile considering the benefits of being independent of the Department of Education, but who would regulate it?

The Inspection Process has seen many improvements. It is clear that a number of Inspectors ETI are much more approachable and prefer to be seen as a support to the school encouraging schools to identify areas for improvement from within.

Feedback to teachers – Teaching is naturally a reflective profession, yet the ETI do not give feedback to allow the teachers and school to reflect on performance of the teachers (albeit in a stressful situation) – it would still allow opportunity for discussion and development.

More detailed feedback to Principal to allow them to put support in place for teachers who need it.

More training for Leaders to support teachers and help them move from satisfactory to good, good to very good, etc.

The language used by the ETI although familiar to Leadership could be simplified, although it is important to get the balance right between professional vocabulary and understanding.

- 5. Other matters relating to ETI and the school improvement process that are worthy of further scrutiny.**

None of note

Prof Colin Knox - School Improvement Inquiry

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Education Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly

Submission by Vani Borooah and Colin Knox¹
University of Ulster

August 2013

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Executive Summary

1. The current school improvement process relies on a system of self evaluation and improvement by schools which set their own targets for progression towards better education outcomes. The system offers neither incentives for doing well or penalties for poor performance. School improvement rests on peer 'pressure' to do better judged by benchmarking education performance in one school compared with that of a comparable school. What makes a school comparable, and therefore a useful benchmark is, whether it is grammar or non-grammar, and the proportion of pupils in the school eligible for free school meals.
2. While perhaps laudable in its intent, schools are unlikely to set ambitious targets for improvement and are safe in the knowledge that business will go on as usual regardless of cajolement by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) through benchmarking. The current system is failing to make any significant impression on the huge education attainment gap which exists between grammar and non grammar schools. The average non-grammar school can only offer 36% of its pupils 5+ GCSEs at A* - C grades, including English and Maths.
3. To improve education performance we need to know those factors which influence it. Using multi-variate analysis on data from the Department of Education and Education and Library Boards, this paper uncovers those factors which most impact on education outcomes. Not only should this allow schools to better understand what is important in improving their performance but it also allows us to predict, taking into account the circumstances of each school, **how** schools **should** be performing against their **actual** results. In other words, the model allows us to compare the difference between observed and predicted education results and assess whether a school is 'under' or 'over' performing. Such a calculation, in effect,

1 Vani Borooah is Professor of Applied Economics, Institute for Research in Social Sciences, University of Ulster. Colin Knox is Professor of Comparative Public Policy, Institute for Research in Social Sciences, University of Ulster. Both authors are willing to present oral evidence to the Education Committee.

offers an insight into, and way of measuring, the **value-added** learning offered by teachers in each school and could be used as a way to reward improved performance.

4. Given the differences in current performance between grammar and non-grammar sectors and within these sectors (maintained and controlled schools), there is also an opportunity for peer cross-community learning for which there is research evidence of improved educational and reconciliation outcomes. One mechanism which could be used to operationalise peer learning at the Northern Ireland wide scale is the shared education premium proposed in the *Ministerial Advisory Group on Advancing Shared Education* (2013).
5. Peer cross-community learning offers a significant opportunity to tackle two seemingly intractable problems in our education system in Northern Ireland: (a) a system of two halves – high performing schools which serve some of our pupils extremely well but fails over one-third of school leavers, and (b) a highly segregated system of schools. Through peer learning **all schools** (no matter how good or poorly performing) can engage in incentivised reciprocal learning. Peer learning therefore renders the debate on academic selection superfluous.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper is a response to a request from the Education Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly for written evidence to assist in their inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and its role in the School Improvement Process. Given the breadth and complexity of this topic we have of necessity focused our response on the post-primary sector. The authors of this paper have also completed work on improving performance in primary schools which can be accessed on request.²
- 1.2 The paper is structured in the following way. First, the paper sets out the baseline against which improved performance can be measured, the Department of Education's (DE) current policies on school improvement, and whether they are working. Second, we consider those factors which affect the performance of schools and how these can be used to create a model for assessing and incentivising value-added learning across schools. Third, we consider the role which peer cross-community learning (shared education) could play in improving education performance. Fourth, we demonstrate the strength of association between school performance and parental choice. Finally, we offer some recommendations on an alternative approach to school improvement and raising standards for consideration by the Education Committee.

2. What are we trying to improve?

- 2.1 The first consideration here is what are we trying to improve or what is the baseline against which we seek to improve the performance of schools? There are various education outcome measures at both primary and post-primary levels. For the purposes of this submission to the Education Committee we will use the standard measure of 5+ GCSEs (including English and Maths) at grades A* - C for post primary schools as the baseline. This is a widely used education outcome measure.

2 Borooh, V.K., and Knox, C. (2013) Shuffling desks or improving education performance? Area planning in Northern Ireland. University of Ulster Research Paper.

2.2 The results for the school year 2011/12 are listed in table 1 below and shown in figure 1.

Table 1: Post primary schools performance 2011/12

Type of school	Number of schools	% of pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs at grades A* - C including English and Maths
Voluntary Catholic grammar	29	93.6%
Voluntary (other) grammar	22	93.5%
Controlled grammar	17	91.0%
Other maintained non-grammar (Irish medium school)	1	43.5%
Catholic maintained non-grammar	71	40.9%
Grant maintained integrated ³	15	39.7%
Controlled non grammar	56	30.3%
Controlled integrated	5	25.2%

Total number of schools:

216 post primary schools (68 grammar schools and 148 non grammar)

Total number of pupils:

146,747 post-primary pupils

62,554 attend grammar schools (42.6%)

84,193 attend non-grammar schools (57.4%)

2.3 These results clearly illustrate the differences between education outcomes of grammar and non grammar schools and the fact that there is considerable room for improvement in the latter. The average non-grammar school in Northern Ireland can only offer 36% of its pupils 5+ GCSE passes at A*- C grades, including English and Mathematics – we return to this topic later in the paper. The statistics also demonstrate the significant difference between performance in Catholic maintained non-grammar schools and Controlled non-grammar schools (40.9% and 30.3% respectively). Given that these schools are likely to be drawing from similar social and demographic areas the obvious question is why this is the case? There is also a significant difference between the performance of grant maintained integrated schools and controlled integrated schools (39.7% and 25.2% respectively).

3 Please note that some Grant Maintained Integrated schools such as Lagan College and Slemish Integrated College are bilateral schools (combine grammar and non-grammar) with 35% of Year 8 intake admitted via the higher ability route. These pupils undertake the transfer test (GL assessment) and are streamed within the schools.

% pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs at A*-C with E&M

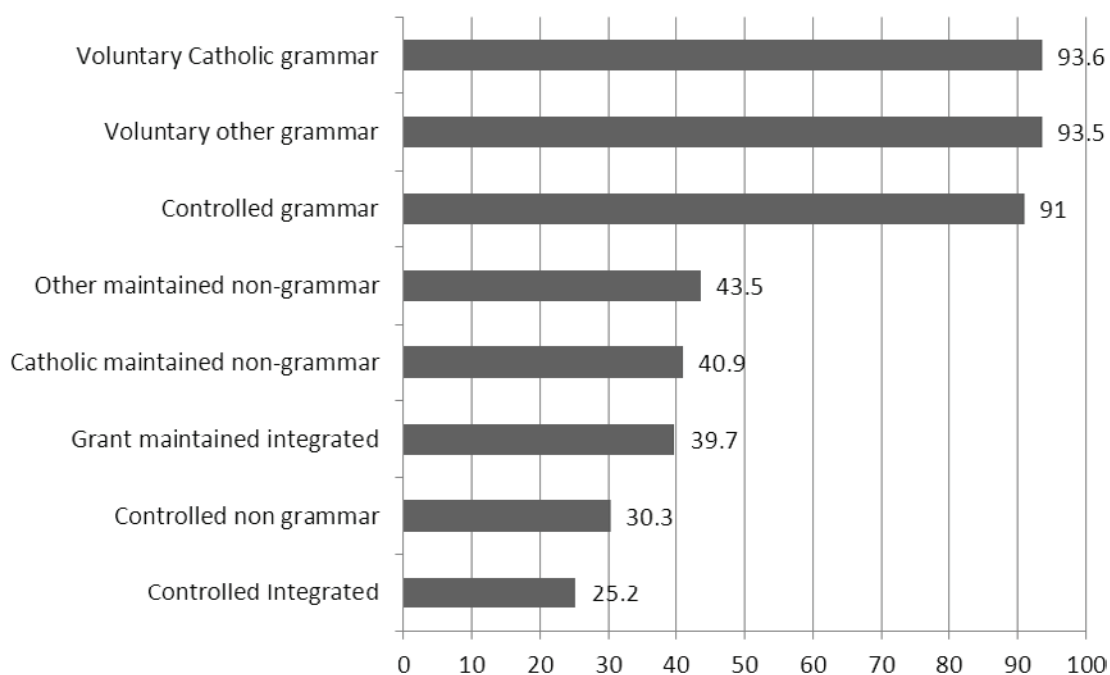


Figure 1: 2011/12

3. School Improvement – the current approach

3.1 The Department of Education's approach to schools improvement is based on their key policy document *Every School a Good School: A Policy for School Improvement* (ESaGS, 2009). The policy aims to support schools and teachers in their work to raise standards and overcome barriers to learning that some pupils may face.

3.2 Central to the ESaGS policy is the process of self evaluation and self-improvement. Specifically the policy document notes:

School self-evaluation and self-improvement (with support) are at the heart of the policy. We believe that schools themselves, through honest and open engagement in self-evaluation, using effectively the wide range of data and information available to them, are best placed to identify areas for improvement and to implement changes that can bring about better outcomes for pupils (ESaGS, 2009: 1).

3.3 The ESaGS policy is based on a number of principles which include, inter alia, the following:

- The interests of pupils rather than institutions must be at the centre of efforts to improve educational attainment and tackle underachievement.
- Equity of access and equity of provision as well as a continuum of provision for a diversity of need.
- A recognition that every school is capable of improvement; that the school is best placed to identify areas for improvement; and that sustained improvement comes from within the school. (ESaGS, 2009: 5).

We will return to these principles when discussing what has been achieved through the DE's work on school improvement to date and how it 'measures-up' against these principles.

3.4 To operationalise the ESaGS approach of self-evaluation and self-improvement, data at, pupil, class, year group, key stage and whole-school levels are collated, from which schools (by legislation) set their own targets for improvements, including targets for literacy and numeracy, and incorporate these into their school development plans. The targets set should

be challenging and based on performance trends and plans for improvement. When setting targets schools are asked to take into account:

- trends in performance by the school over previous years;
- the prior attainment of each year group;
- the likelihood that levels of progression will be more challenging;
- the context within which the school is operating and how it compares to schools in similar circumstances; and,
- the priorities set in the school development plan.

3.5 All schools are provided annually with benchmarking data to enable them to compare their performance in assessment and public examinations with schools in similar circumstances, in terms of enrolment bands and proportions of pupils with free school meal entitlement.⁴ Effective self-evaluation and the actions that flow from this process should, according to DE, deliver educational improvement for all pupils.

3.6 In addition to the above, DE has a strategy which is designed to support teachers and school leaders in raising levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy (*Count, Read: Succeed A Strategy for Improving Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy, 2011*). More recently, OFMDFM and DE have collaborated in a *Delivering Social Change Improving Literacy and Numeracy* signature project (2012) which aims to employ 230 recently graduated teachers on two-year fixed term contracts to enable schools to deliver tuition and support for children in primary and post-primary schools who are having difficulties achieving basic educational standards.

3.7 There have also been structural responses to raising school standards in the form of the area planning process and the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA). Area planning was the DE response to an excess of school places and intended to put in place ‘a network of viable and sustainable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place and have a focus on raising standards’.⁵ Up until now the sense of what is driving the area planning process is that ‘bigger is better’. In other words, treat schools like hospitals – build or amalgamate schools into large units to offer the widest curriculum choice and, as a consequence, pupils will perform better. This will also bring economies of scale and impact positively on school funding. Whilst this may have intuitive appeal it is based on little more than a hunch by senior officials in the Department of Education and school managing authorities.

3.8 Another aspect of this institutional response is the establishment of a new education body entitled the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) which is intended to help improve education standards, promote equality, and enable more resources to be directed to schools.⁶ In a briefing to the Education Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly a senior official of the Department of Education noted:

The Minister is very clear that this particular Bill should focus on improving education rather than on reducing bureaucracy, important though that is. Although much of the focus of the Bill is on ESA as an organisation, ESA is merely a means to an end. That end, the policy goal, is better schools.⁷

3.9 In fact, many of the clauses in the Education Bill are about institutional changes rather than a focus on improving schools. Much of its content is on: the role, membership, and functions of ESA; the functions of the Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment; management of grant-aided schools; new powers and functions for the

4 DE Circular 2013/03, 26th April 2013 School Development Planning and Target Setting.

5 Department of Education (2012) Area Planning Guidance. Bangor: DE.

6 Perry, C. (2012) Education Bill, NIAR 699-12. Northern Ireland Assembly: Research and Information Service.

7 Official Report (2012) Hansard: Education Bill – Department of Education Briefing, 10th October: 3.

Education Inspectorate; and new statutory duties for Boards of Governors. The establishment of ESA may well result in greater administrative efficiency in the management of the education system but there is no guarantee that, of itself, it will improve education outcomes.

4. Have existing policies succeeded in improving schools' performance?

4.1 We argue that existing school improvement policies are failing. The Chief Inspector of Schools in her recent report agreed although is less explicit in her summation.⁸ Focusing on two (of three) themes she reports the following in summary form:

(a) **Achieving value:** overall the education system across Northern Ireland achieves good value but its outcomes are too variable... too many children are failing to fulfil their potential. She identifies key challenges:

- To improve the outcomes for learners in English and Maths across all sectors, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, where only 32% of all school leavers entitled to Free School Meals achieve GCSE grade A*- C (with English & Maths) in 5 subjects.
- Improving the quality of leadership and management across all sectors and particularly in post-primary schools.

(b) **Transforming communities:** the formal and informal education and training sectors can transform lives by challenging the poverty of aspiration and encouraging learners, with the support of parents and carers, to achieve their full potential. She identifies, inter alia, the following challenges: closing the achievement gap and breaking the link between social disadvantage and poor educational performance.

4.2 The Chief Inspector concluded her report by saying:

Some schools are failing to break a cycle of underachievement that has persisted over a period of time. All schools need to work as a united community to share and develop good practices across the controlled, integrated and maintained sectors, as well as further education, work-based learning and the informal sectors, to improve standards and educational outcomes for all learners... More cohesive planning and closer collaboration are required to serve the best interests of the learners through creating more diverse and inclusive educational communities.⁹

4.3 Concurring with the Chief Inspector, we would suggest there are 2 key performance weaknesses in the school system:

- i. **Performance inequalities** between grammar schools and secondary schools. Table 2 shows that there were a total of 21,827 pupils in year 12 in 2011/12 of which 42.1% were in grammar schools and 57.9% in non-grammar. If we consider those students who achieved 5+ GCSEs A*- C grades (including English and Maths), grammar schools accounted for 65.1% of year 12 pupils and non-grammar 34.9%. In addition, the average non-grammar school in Northern Ireland can only offer 36% of its pupils 5+ GCSE passes at A*- C grades, including English and Mathematics. The achievement gap between grammar and non-grammar schools remains significant 61% in 2008/09 and 57% in 2011/12 (see figure 2). This is a major indictment of the education system. There is also a high level of educational underachievement amongst the Protestant population validated by a study which noted that 'there appears to be a tendency towards elitism, and socially imbalanced pupil intakes within schools predominantly attended by Protestants.'¹⁰

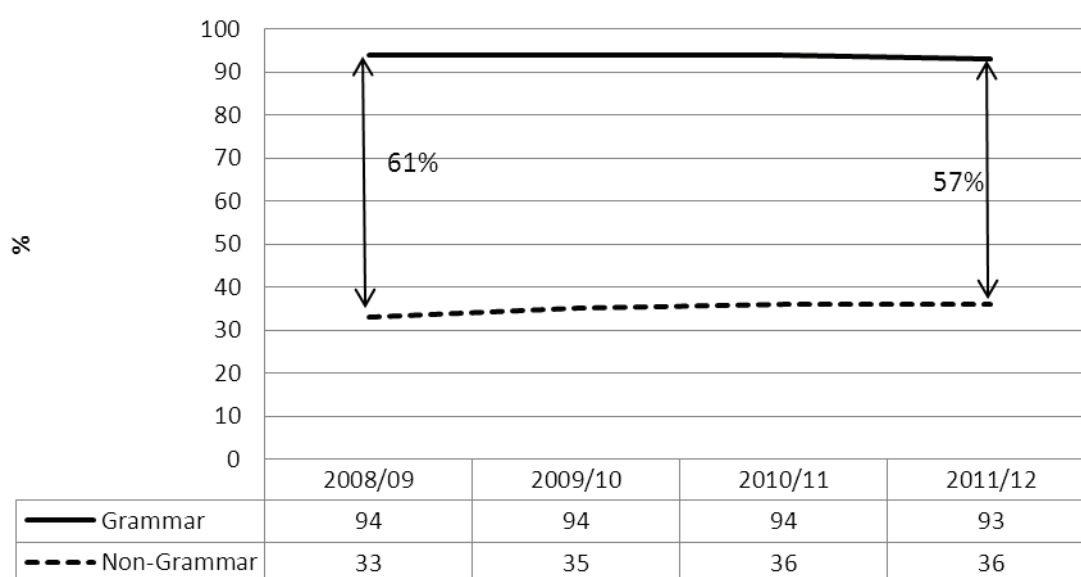
8 Education and Training Inspectorate (2012) Chief Inspector's Report 2010-12. Bangor: Department of Education, Northern Ireland.

9 Ibid pages 25 & 27.

10 Purvis, D. (2011:4) Educational Disadvantage and the Protestant working class: a call to action. Belfast: Purvis Report.

Table 2: Performance Inequalities (2011/12)

	N	%	Number obtaining 5+ GCSE A*-C with E & M	%
Year 12 pupils in grammar schools	9,193	42.1%	8,540	65.1%
Year 12 pupils in non-grammar schools	12,634	57.9%	4,574	34.9%
Total number of Year 12 pupils	21,827	100%	13,114	100%

Figure 2: % achieving 5+ GCSEs A* - C with English and Maths

- ii. **Access inequalities:** Pupils on free school meals (FSM) do not get sufficient access to grammar schools – they constitute 19% of all post-primary pupils but only 7.4% of grammar school enrolments, whereas there are 27.8% of non-grammar school enrolments in 2012/13 eligible for FSM (see table 3 and figure 3¹¹). Similarly, children with special educational needs. There are 19.7% of all post-primary school children with special education needs in 2012/13 Grammar school enrolments comprise only 7.8% of SEN children whereas they make up 28.7% of non-grammar school pupils (table 3). Hence FSM and SEN pupils are disproportionately under-represented amongst grammar schools.

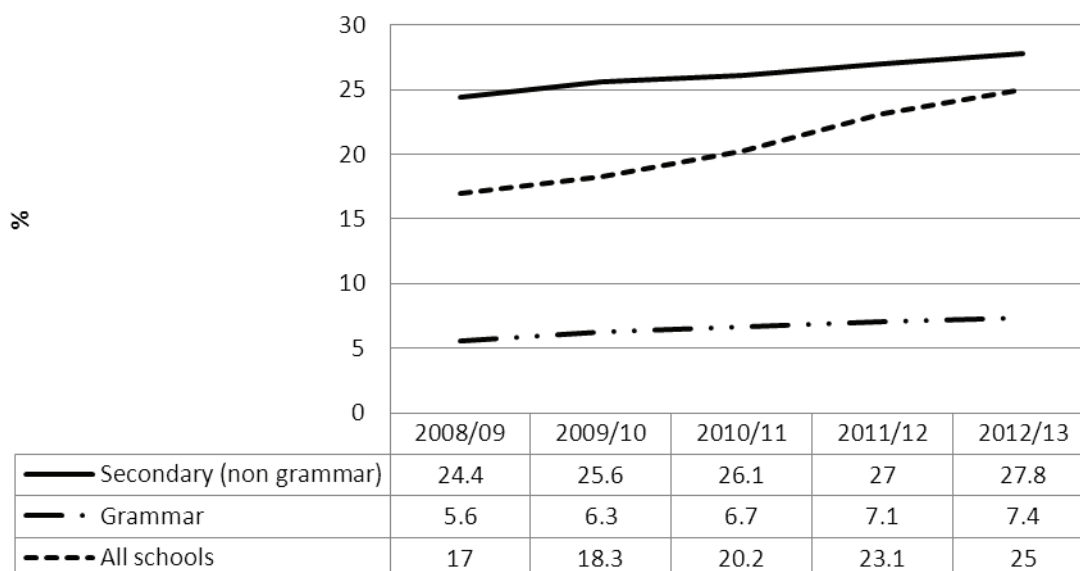
Table 3: Access inequalities

Free School Meals			
2012/13	Grammar schools	Non-grammar schools	Total FSM pupils
FSM pupils (n)	4,607 (16.6%)	23,094 (83.4%)	27,701 (100%)
% of school enrolment	7.4%	27.8%	19% of all post-primary school pupils
Special Education Needs			
2012/13	Grammar schools	Non-grammar schools	Total SEN pupils

11 It is interesting to note from the statistics that there is a year-on-year increase in the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in each sector.

Free School Meals			
2012/13	Grammar schools	Non-grammar schools	Total FSM pupils
SEN pupils (n)	4,882 (17%)	23,828 (83%)	28,710 (100%)
% of school enrolment	7.8%	28.7%	19.7% of all post-primary school pupils

Figure 3: % pupils entitled to FSM by school type



5. What factors influence education performance in schools?

5.1 The Department of Education's approach to raising standards relies on self-evaluation and benchmarking against other comparable schools, disaggregated into grammar and non-grammar schools within various free-school meal bands. There are at least three problems with this approach. First, schools set their own targets for improvements and are therefore unlikely to be overly-ambitious in case they do not meet these targets. Second, there are neither incentives nor sanctions for meeting or failing to meet targets, respectively. Third, self-evaluation and benchmarking do not offer guidance to schools on **how** to improve their performance but rather how their education outcomes compare with other schools from the same management type and with a similar free school meals profile. This assumes that the only two factors which influence performance are, whether a school is a grammar or non-grammar school, and the percentage of FSM pupils which make up a school's constituency.

5.2 In fact, we can be more scientific about how we determine factors which best explain education performance in both our primary and post primary schools. We draw on several data sets relating to (in this case) all post primary schools to enable us to do this:

- Education performance: percentage of pupils obtaining 5+ GCSE at A* - C grades with and without English and Maths
- School characteristics: school management type; pupil numbers of various year groups; FSM and SEN pupils; and gender breakdown of the school.
- Financial status: level of financial stress as judged by the viability audit criteria (levels 1 – 4).
- Teacher numbers: number of full-time equivalent teachers in post primary schools.
- Attendance: pupil attendance record in schools.

5.3 Using these data, a regression equation was estimated with the dependent variable 5+ A*-C [E&M]. The estimation results are shown in appendix 1. The equation explained 95%

of the variation in results between schools. The results show that the most important variables determining educational performance in a school in respect 5+ A*-C [E&M] were, in *descending* order of importance:

- i. Being a grammar school
- ii. The school attendance rate
- iii. The proportion of free school meal children in the school
- iv. The size of the Sixth Form
- v. Being a Catholic Maintained school
- vi. Being a Grant Maintained Integrated school
- vii. The Education and Library Board within which the school resides
- viii. The proportion of special educational needs pupils in schools
- ix. Being a girls' only school

5.4 From this analysis we can draw a number of conclusions about post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. It is immediately obvious that the size of the school and its budgetary status are **not significant** when it comes to educational attainment. Yet, these are the factors most often cited by education officials as important target variables when rationalising the schools estate – small schools and those with budget deficits are easy targets for the reformers. A key variable in improving educational performance in post primary schools is attendance, perhaps indicative of wider issues within the school boundaries (pupils behaviour, teaching standards) and beyond (pupils called on to help with siblings or family duties where pupils help out on farms). It is also unclear why, for example, Catholic maintained schools out-perform their Controlled counterparts. But this could offer significant opportunities for shared or peer learning across the sectors – we will return to this point.

6. Value-added measurement

6.1 As a result of understanding the relationships between those variables which explain education performance we can use the regression equation (appendix 1) to predict, within a range of significance levels, what results schools **should** achieve, given their circumstances. We can then examine the difference between actual results achieved against those which we can predict. This allows us to say whether a school is **'over-performing'** or **'under-performing'**. The corollary of this point is that we can estimate the **value which teachers add** to their pupils' performance through good teaching, leadership, expertise and so on. The value added is therefore the difference between the observed and predicted values of educational performance in each school.

6.2 We can contrast the DE's approach to measuring educational underperformance with ours. Like us, the DE recognises that there is an inverse relation between the proportion of FSM pupils in a school and its educational performance. Consequently, to facilitate inter-school comparison, schools are grouped by the DE into seven bands by the percentage of FSM pupils in the school (0-9.99; 10-19.99; 20-29.99; 30-30.99; 40-49.99; 50-50.99; over 60). Unlike the DE, however, we make explicit the relationship between schools' educational performance and their proportion of FSM pupils and, in addition, moderate this relation by including other variables (inter alia the proportion of SEN pupils, the number of teachers, attendance rates).

6.3 Consequently, using our regression model, we are able to measure the absolute performance of a school (how a school is doing without reference to other schools) as well as its relative performance (how a school is doing with reference to other schools). The DE construct is only able to identify schools in the lowest quartile. In consequence, the DE comparison is purely

relative: a school may be improving in absolute terms but the fact that it is in the lowest quartile of educational achievement for three successive years is sufficient to label it as an 'underperforming' school.

- 6.4 There is also a range of commercial tools available to schools to assess the value they add to pupil outcomes (e.g. Yellis, MidYIS).¹² These can provide teachers with information which helps to target their efforts on pupils who are underachieving but they tend to be used inconsistently across schools rather than at system-wide level.

7. Peer learning as a way of improving performance

- 7.1 One of the striking features of educational performance in post primary schools is the variation in results across the sectors. This offers real opportunities for peer learning. Why is it, for example, that Catholic maintained schools, drawing from similar demographics and pupil profile, out-perform Controlled non grammar schools and is there an opportunity for cross-sectoral learning here?

- 7.2 Much of the theoretical and research underpinnings for peer learning draw on the extensive literature on how collaboration and networking between schools in Great Britain can enhance school effectiveness and improvement. Work by Lindsay et al (2005) and Chapman and Allen (2005), for example, examine the potential for stronger schools being matched with weaker schools to help improve their performance¹³. Muijs et al (2010) argue that networking is differentially effective in meeting different educational goals and set out the circumstances under which it is more likely to enhance school effectiveness and improvement:

Where improvements in pupil performance have been seen, this is often where more effective schools have paired with less effective schools to help them to improve, where leadership has been strong and supportive of networking, and where the number of schools involved has been limited. External support may also be helpful in cases where internal capacity or trust between schools may be lacking.¹⁴

- 7.3 Chapman's research (2008: 415) highlights key levers for improvement where networking takes place in a context of challenging circumstances which he argues should include: generating positive relationships; focusing on teaching and learning; understanding, leading and managing changes; committing to continuous professional development; building community; and, drawing on external support.¹⁵
- 7.4 An example of this type of peer learning is the Shared Education Programme supported by Atlantic Philanthropies and the International Fund for Ireland. Shared education refers to schools from different sectors working together in a sustained process ranging from two or more schools making shared use of specialist facilities, through to coordinated timetabling, and pupils taking classes across a network of schools.
- 7.5 The focus of shared education is delivering core curriculum activities where teachers and pupils work together across schools to achieve higher quality educational experiences. Shared education recognises that schools have interdependent relationships and promotes positive collaboration to support the common good. Ultimately it is about creating interdependencies between schools and making boundaries porous – it isn't about threatening anyone's identity or the creation of a Catholic/Protestant hybrid.

12 Perry, Caroline (2011) Valued Added Measures. Research and Library Service Briefing Paper 39/11 NIAR 93-11.

13 Lindsay, G., Harris, A., Chapman, C. and Muijs, D. (2005) Schools federations. Preliminary report to the DfES. Coventry: University of Warwick.
Chapman, C. and Allen, T. (2005) Partnerships for Improvement: the specialist schools achievement programme. Coventry: University of Warwick.

14 Muijs, D., West, M. and Ainscow, M. (2010) 'Why network? Theoretical perspectives on networking' School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice 21 (1): 5-26.

15 Chapman, C. (2008) 'Towards a framework for school-to-school networking in challenging circumstances' Educational Research 50 (4): 403-420.

- 7.6 We know from existing research that shared education, by extending curriculum choices for pupils on a cross-community basis, results in significant, measurable educational and reconciliation benefits.¹⁶ This research evidence is affirmed in the recently published Ministerial Advisory Report (2013) on Advancing Shared Education which states:

Schools that work together in relation to the sharing of resources, expertise and good practice, and that bring their children together to engage in meaningful educational activities, have been shown to produce clear and measurable improvements in outcomes compared to those that do not. Similarly, there is overwhelming evidence internationally that when meaningful and sustained opportunities are provided for children and young people from different backgrounds to learn together then this can result in improved attitudes and relationships.¹⁷

- 7.7 OFMDFM has expressed an interest in working with DE to scale-up shared education as a Delivering Social Change flagship project. An integral element of this is to incorporate a shared education premium under the revised common funding formula now under consultation following the Salisbury Report.¹⁸

8. School improvement and parental choice

- 8.1 Schools which improve their educational outcomes become more popular with parents. Using 2013 admissions data to post-primary schools¹⁹ in which parents express their first preference when completing transfer forms, we can examine variations in popularity across schools.
- 8.2 We examined variations in popularity across schools, as measured by the number of their first-preference applications, and asked, in particular, whether variations in popularity are associated with variations in schools' educational performance? In the analysis, educational performance is measured in two ways: (i) the proportion of pupils obtaining 5+ GCSE grades at A*-C and (ii) the proportion of pupils obtaining 5+ GCSE grades at A*-C, including English and Mathematics.
- 8.3 The results of our analysis (see appendix 2) show that both types of GCSE performance significantly and positively affect the number of first preference applications expressed by parents for a school. Performance, including English and Mathematics, had a stronger effect than performance which does not include these subjects. In short, better performing schools influence parental choice for their children. This is hardly surprising but the strength of this relationship is compelling. The evidence shows the variation in parents' first preference choice for a post-primary school is explained by the school's education performance. Parents therefore 'vote with their feet' and choose schools largely based on educational performance.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 To summarise, the Department of Education's response to school improvement has been: through schools participating in self-evaluation and self-improvement; a policy on literacy and numeracy; and, a review of organisational delivery structures (area planning, ESA, Education Bill). It is clear that so far these have had limited or no impact on the key problems facing the education system in Northern Ireland and there is a need to consider some creative alternatives.

16 Boroah, V.K. and Knox, C. 'The Contribution of Shared Education to Catholic-Protestant reconciliation in Northern Ireland: a third way?' (2013) British Educational Research Journal DOI: 10.1002/berj.3017.
Hughes, J. (2010) 'Are separate schools divisive? A Case Study from Northern Ireland'. British Educational Research Journal 37 (5): 829-850.

17 Report of the Ministerial Advisory Group: Advancing Shared Education (2013, xvi).

18 An Independent Review of the Common Funding Scheme (2013) Salisbury Report.

19 See Kathryn Torney 'The supply and demand for places: check out your local schools' The Detail, Issues 235, 1st July 2013

- 9.2 The Education Minister recently proposed a series of school improvement measures aimed at addressing the concerns raised by the Chief Inspector's Report (above). In a statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly he indicated that he was 'determined to retain a clear and unapologetic focus on raising educational standards'.²⁰ He intends, inter alia, to:
- Support continuing professional development of teachers through a new strategy for teacher education that will focus first on attracting the right people in to teaching and then to support them as they prepare to become teachers and as they go through their professional career.
 - Develop fit-for-purpose leadership programmes for principals and vice principals – leaders who will work in alliance with their peers to meet the education needs of young people.
 - Reward principals who undertake leadership roles in under-performing schools, not based on the number of pupils in their school but on the size of the challenges they face and on their success in overcoming these challenges.
 - Stimulate mobility in the profession to create a breath of experience, including employment outside the school system.
 - Enhance the professional standing of teachers by strengthening the role of the General Teaching Council as the professional body involved in supporting teachers and upholding the highest professional standards.
- 9.3 We are supportive of the Minister's measures particularly the principle of incentivisation which links rewards with results. We think this principle should pervade school improvement policies but argue that the Minister does not go far enough. For example, leaving schools to self-evaluate and self-improve as a central plank in school improvement stimulates little momentum for change.
- 9.4 Similarly, structural policies such as area planning are based on little more than hunch and intuition such as, large intra-sectoral schools will improve educational standards, when there is no empirical evidence to support this contention. In the same vein it is unclear how the establishment of ESA, in itself, will improve educational standards. These are structural 'solutions' to systemic problems of access and performance inequalities in education.
- 9.5 Based on the analysis (and underpinning research) in this paper, we recommend the following:
- (i) **Access inequalities:** grammar schools should be set quotas by DE for selecting FSM and SEN pupils which requires them to better reflect the communities which they serve. This should result in an even distribution of pupils from these categories across grammar and non-grammar schools. This will help to address the key problem of access inequalities in the current system of education and open up greater opportunities for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.
 - (ii) **Performance inequalities:** there are major opportunities for peer learning and improving educational outcomes between schools which from performance data are likely to mean collaboration across controlled and maintained schools. Peer learning will therefore result in both education and reconciliation benefits. The process through which this could happen is shared education and the mechanism to incentivise schools to become involved is the shared education premium as an integral part of the common funding formula. The premium would link financial incentives to the number of pupils and classes involved in shared education and improved educational outcomes of such classes.
 - (iii) **Added value:** Self-evaluation and self-improvement needs to be replaced by a mechanism which explicitly measures added value in schools. Using a model based on

20 O'Dowd, J. (2012) Putting Pupils First: improving outcomes; improving opportunities. A statement by the Minister for Education to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Bangor: Department of Education

the type of regression formula developed for this paper, we recommend a value-added approach which allows us to **predict** the results of schools (based on the variables which explain education performance) against the **actual** results. Incentives could be linked to those schools which 'over-perform', and help, advice, guidance and support offered to schools which 'under-perform'. For example, the role which absenteeism plays in lowering educational outcomes has been highlighted in this research, yet it doesn't feature to any extent in DE's approach to improving performance.

- (iv) **Academic selection:** the political and public debate on academic selection has become increasingly toxic and is stymieing opportunities to move forward with education reforms. We start from the same principle outlined in ESaGS, namely: 'a recognition that every school is capable of improvement.' Peer cross-community learning offers a significant opportunity to tackle two seemingly intractable problems in our education system in Northern Ireland: (a) a system of two halves – high performing schools which serve some of our pupils extremely well but fails 38% of school leavers,²¹ and (b) a highly segregated system of schools. Through peer learning, operationalised via shared education and incentivised by a shared education premium, **all schools** (no matter how good or poorly performing) can engage in incentivised reciprocal learning. Peer learning therefore renders the debate on academic selection superfluous. All schools which are educationally proximate, geographically close (to avoid transport costs) should be incentivised to engage in cross-community peer learning to improve education and reconciliation outcomes.
- (v) **Future role of ETI:** school inspections need to change in order to reflect the proposals suggested here which are aimed at overall school improvement. The ETI should have a clear role in monitoring and addressing access and performance inequalities, seeking significant changes over time. The reduction in the large performance gap since 2008/09 of 4% between grammar and non-grammar schools is inadequate. There needs to be a shift in focus within inspections to the value which schools add to pupils' learning rather than a reliance on self-evaluation and improvement, a system which lacks incentives or punitive measures for poorly performing schools. The ETI should oversee a new system of peer cross-community networked learning, incentivised through a shared education premium, aimed at raising educational outcomes for all schools.

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A total of 38% of school leavers in 2011/12 left full-time education without 5 GCSE A*-C including English and Maths. Source: Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers 2011/12. Belfast: NISRA.

Appendix 1:

Regression Estimates for 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE, Including English and Mathematics

Explanatory Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	t value	Prob>t	Beta coefficient
Grammar School	38.889	2.255	17.25	0.00	0.614
Number in Sixth Form	0.025	0.006	4.18	0.00	0.098
Proportion of Free School Meal Pupils	-0.432	0.080	-5.38	0.00	-0.188
Proportion of Special Educational Needs Pupils	-0.085	0.060	-1.43	0.16	-0.036
Southern Board	4.965	1.299	3.82	0.00	0.068
Western Board	6.365	1.439	4.42	0.00	0.079
Grant Maintained Integrated	8.495	2.271	3.74	0.00	0.069
Catholic Maintained	6.420	1.693	3.79	0.00	0.093
Boys' only School	-3.540	1.684	-2.10	0.04	-0.037
Girls' only School	3.503	1.606	2.18	0.03	0.038
School Attendance Rate	2.156	0.315	6.85	0.00	0.213
Intercept	-156.452	29.305	-5.34	0.00	
Equation Statistics					
Observations = 211	Adjusted R ² =0.945	F(11, 199) = 330.4	$\hat{\sigma} = 7.3$	$\hat{\sigma}^2 = 52.8$	

Appendix 2

Regression Estimates for Number of First Preference Applications to post primary schools

	Coefficient	Standard Error	T value	Prob>t
Proportion of 5+ A*-C including E&M	0.864	0.229	3.78	0.0
Proportion of 5+ A*-C	0.696	0.187	3.73	0.0
Equation Statistics				
	Number of Observations = 200	R ² adjusted = 0.795	F(2,198)=389	Root MSE = 52.9

Professor John Gardner

ETI and School Improvement Inquiry Submission by Professor John Gardner (Deputy Principal, University of Stirling)

This inquiry is evaluating the role and activities of the Inspectorate; assessing whether it remains fit for purpose in today's society. For any organization such an inquiry would be momentous and so it is for ETI, despite its long established and largely successful monitoring of the quality of Northern Ireland schooling over 178 years. In those early days, as is the case today, there was considerable sensitivity around the whole notion of inspecting schools though perhaps with different emphases. Back then, the original remit of inspectors was to :

- promote the general intelligence and good conduct of the poorer classes of this country;
 - allay animosities, and to cultivate good feelings between the parties that may have been at variance;
 - introduce as much of religious instruction as can be done without exciting jealousy and contention, and hostile feeling, either towards government and [sic] towards one another.
- (Hyland and Milne, 1987)

Inspection began a little later in England (1939) on a somewhat different basis, i.e. to ensure that monies granted to schools by government was '*properly spent*'. The sanctions were plain: '*no further grant – unless right of inspectors be retained*'. These early days witnessed considerable opposition from the churches whose schools were the focus of inspection. The first concordat was reached with the Church of England in 1840, followed by the Methodists and Catholics in 1847. Such were the sensitivities that the small number of appointed inspectors were sent out with the clear instruction that they should not: '*... interfere with the instruction, management or discipline of the schools or to press upon them any suggestion that they may be disinclined to receive*'. Notwithstanding this, however, the early inspectors '*interpreted their duties liberally*' and quickly established the reputation for an independent and objective voice, with '*... fearless and outspoken reporting without minding too much whose toes were trodden on*' (quotes taken from Blackie 1970).

Value for money may have been an underpinning rationale for setting up the inspectorate in England but the clear focus of the early inspectors was the education and well-being of the nation's children, many of whom were experiencing atrocious conditions and treatment by today's standards. Educationally the inspectors brought experience and good practice to ill-trained or non-trained teachers, variously opposing corporal punishment, recommending the provision of books, promoting nature study and seeking to deter the excesses of rote learning. Clearly, in the fledgling context of organizing the early school system (remembering that education provision for all children was only mandated in England in 1870 and in 1892 in Ireland), there were huge benefits in having a team of experts charged with visiting schools and helping them to improve the education of children. But is it necessary today with highly qualified and trained teachers in most schools?

In my view, the answer is an unequivocal yes. The alternatives that are often proposed are for the teaching profession to perform a continuous review and self-improving function; or for schools to do it themselves. There is no space here to analyse these alternatives in any detail but aspects already exist and they are very important dimensions of the school improvement process (e.g. school-based whole school evaluation and the professional development provisions of the various professional associations). However, no group of people in any organized entity can confidently say that their own processes of self-evaluation and internal reflection are sufficient to ensure effective quality monitoring and assurance.

It is simply too difficult to protect these processes from the damage that can be caused by unwarranted self-justification or inappropriate self-indulgence. Judging by the periodic revelations of bad management and pupil experience that we hear about in schools across the country, there is an absolute need for an external and expert review of provision that is independent of vested or other interests. And the evidence from research (e.g. my own and Dr Gray's study of 1999, and the Mathews and Sammons Ofsted evaluation of 2004) suggest that teachers and schools, whilst being apprehensive and finding inspection a stressful experience, are on the whole satisfied with it.

A question often asked is whether the process of inspection actually causes improvement in schools. The typical answer to this is that there is insufficient evidence to draw, incontrovertibly, a causal relationship between the two. So many factors contribute to the process of improvement (or decline) and it is almost impossible to zero in on one or another as the defining influence. However, it is reasonable to argue that the process of inspection can promote reflection and change in teaching approaches and the organization and management of schools. I believe that it is reasonable to argue that this *should* rather than *can* happen, the only exceptions being those circumstances in which the inspecting process is mishandled and is ultimately counterproductive, or the school is beyond improvement and more drastic action is required. It is a truism, however, that any improvement is actually achieved by the teachers and school managers themselves. This underpins the facilitative dimension of the inspection process inasmuch as the Inspectorate can indicate what needs to be improved, and can even suggest how it may be improved, but it is the school that must take the improving actions. That said, I would augment the recommendation of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO 1999) that ETI should monitor the performance of schools subsequent to their visits by suggesting that such monitoring should be focused on what has changed (for better or worse) and that ETI should publish collections of such evidence to inform the public and the inspection process.

The issue of whether improvement in a school is needed has an interesting dimension related to the concept of 'performativity'. Essentially, for an 'announced' inspection, schools will naturally try to be on top of their game; but some take this a step further and will 'perform' another type of game: 'the good school'. Perryman (2009) describes this phenomenon with experience from one school under special measures in England: *'The staff ... became adept at playing the game. Documentation was enhanced, lesson plans created, pupils temporarily disappeared. Briefings were rehearsed, displays embellished and meeting records amended. A distorted, yet successful school is presented to inspectors, who write their report accordingly.'* Most school managers and staff reading this would be scandalized by any imputation that it is widespread practice but only the most naïve would deny that everyone in an inspected school does try to present their best side. How then can such an inspection capture the real learning, teaching and related experiences of the pupils at the school? Announced inspections are by no means useless but a truly authentic view is more likely to be had from an unannounced visit. I believe that such a visit must be ultra-careful in terms of sensitivities to staff but it is the assessment of the experiences of the young people attending the school that must be the priority. Unannounced inspections should, in my view, be the norm, not only for the more authentic results but for relaxing the build-up of stress that is well-known to develop among staff as the announced inspection date looms.

The terms of reference of the inquiry refer to international approaches to inspection. I am sure the Committee has initiated a review of international variations and I suspect they will conclude that broadly speaking most national inspectorates operate in similar ways. Recent papers by Ehren et al (2013 covering the Netherlands, England, Sweden, Ireland, Austria and the Czech Republic) and Grek et al (2013, covering Scotland, Sweden and England) offer up-to-the minute analyses that confirm this observation and may be found useful in the deliberations. I can speak to these in more detail when I attend the meeting but in essence I would be confident that the ETI are on a par with our UK, RoI and European neighbours, and in some respects possibly more proficient. All of these inspectorates operate in cycles (typically all schools on 4/5 year intervals) with differentiated inspections of one kind or

another interspersed among the standard cycle. There may be thematic inspections, subject-based inspections (post-primary) and whole school inspections. Selection of schools for differentiated inspection outside of the typical cycle is usually on a risk-assessed basis (e.g. poorly-performing schools are seen as higher risk and consequently with more frequent visits including follow-ups than their better-performing peers). Grek et al (2013) argue that the management of schooling in an inspection context might be considered to follow a governing formula which I would paraphrase as comprising processes of regulation (e.g. defining what should be done), audit (e.g. assessing what is being done) and development (e.g. reflecting on how strengths can be consolidated and weaknesses improved). The inspection process operates primarily in the two latter categories and it is often the balance between these audit and developmental dimensions that defines how positively schools will perceive the process.

Whilst the types of analysis above necessarily focus on the bigger picture of inspection processes, there is less known about the variety of lower level activities such as the provision of feedback to teachers, to parents and to pupils. Many communities have deep emotional ties to their schools and should therefore be fully informed about the results of an inspection, and about any commendations and recommendations arising from it. There is an obvious responsibility on schools to do this but I am not sure that this is carried out uniformly and monitored by ETI. However, there is little impediment with today's technology to prevent the reports being sent by the Inspectorate directly to parents using school communications systems. Having the reports on a web database is important but arguably many of them languish there with only a tiny proportion of parents and pupils taking the time to visit the site and find them.

My final point for now is the issue of establishing the competence of the inspection teams and members. Northern Ireland is not short of people who will dismiss a report with an off-hand 'What do they know anyway?' remark. Teachers receiving an inspection team, and parents receiving an inspection report, rarely know anything about the inspectors other than what is gleaned from staffroom or schoolyard chat. The school will have clear communications of course but I am not sure to what extent the information provided in relation to the inspectors is merely a name. It is the case that all of the inspectors of ETI have considerable expertise and experience in their fields. Given that the public perception of the competence of a judge in any sphere is usually based on their 'credentials', the expertise of inspectors should be published and disseminated in inspection visits as a positive and ultimately reassuring ('They know what they are talking about') public face of the Inspectorate.

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Sir Robert Salisbury

ETI and School Improvement Process Very Brief Notes.

Overwhelmingly worldwide research into raising standards in our schools states very clearly that there are four main elements which need to be addressed:

- 1 **Improving the quality of the teaching.**
- 2 **Improving the quality of the school leadership.**
- 3 **Raising the expectations of everyone involved.**
- 4 **Sharpening the inspection process.**

- 1 In order to improve the quality of teaching the first requirement of any new system is to try to build a culture which sees regular inspection as an integral part of life in schools. This of course begins with much better **'self-evaluation'** schemes where teachers, Governors and parents regard it as normal and expected that they will work together to build up a true picture of the teaching quality, ethos, financial status etc of the school and how that effort impacts on individual children. The most important part of this process is that schools must have a clear strategy for addressing any areas that have been identified as in need of improvement. In schools of all types where self evaluation is carried out honestly, fully and regularly and can be endorsed by ETI only **'light touch'** inspections need to follow which would reduce costs and workload for ETI. Self evaluation which is found to be misleading or limited should automatically trigger a full inspection.
- 2 It is totally unacceptable that some schools can go many years (up to nine years) without experiencing an external inspection.
- 3 Notice of an inspection should be shortened to a few days if a **true picture** of the school is to be ascertained. At the moment feverish activity takes place in the weeks running up to inspections and teachers and school leaders frequently tell me that they are 'stressed out working nights and weekends to get ready'. **My question is what are they doing specifically for the inspection which they know they should be doing anyway?**
- 4 We said in the LIT/Num Review that much more notice should be taken of parental input and there is clearly work to be done in making available to parents the parameters of the inspection, the key findings and the expected follow up actions. It is vital to include parental perceptions and views in the report because these will reflect the life of the 'normal school' rather than the often artificial gloss which is evident during the inspection week.
- 5 It is vital that the ETI identify 'best practice' in our schools and work out a way to disseminate this to others. There is real expertise amongst many of our teachers and school leaders but at the moment this is not recognised and therefore not shared.
- 6 In England where there has been marked improvement in recent years the categories in Post Primary schools are 'Outstanding' or 'Good' there is now no 'Satisfactory' and any school with 40% A-C or below automatically triggers an inspection response which 'Requires Improvement'; 'Gives Notice to Improve' or puts the school in 'Special Measures'. Applying these criteria in NI would put 87 post primary schools out of the 215 in the failing category!
- 7 Lit/Num Review also said inspections should comment on 'value added' and staff specialisms, or lack of, in primary schools.
- 8 More should be made of the follow-up to inspections with a time-line introduced for whatever action is required. Currently it seems too easy to get the inspection out of the way and then

continue as before. It is a little like a seesaw as the inspection approaches energy levels and commitment go up once it is over the seesaw swings back down, often finishing up at a level lower than it was before the process started.

I would not be surprised if many of the submissions support fewer inspections with much less rigour. A culture exists at present where schools and their unions often regard inspections not as a positive audit, as they are viewed in the commercial world, but as a fearful exercise which sets out primarily to criticise and pillory teachers.

In short we need to build a culture of 'self evaluation', have more frequent and more searching inspections, triggered at short notice and more rigour in terms of the follow up process. We need to create a culture where every school operates as if they will be inspected tomorrow!

Bob Salisbury Nov 2013

South Eastern Education and Library Board

South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) response to Northern Ireland Assembly Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

1. Within the SEELB the CASS service oversees school improvement. CASS provides support for schools to help raise standards. CASS also ensures that all schools located in the Board Area, that are required to do so, have an agreed action plan in place to address areas for improvement identified by the Education and Training Inspectorate within the required timescales. Furthermore, CASS provides support to help schools deliver progress against the action plan and in the case of catholic maintained schools, this is taken forward in liaison with the CCMS.
2. Within existing resources, the CASS service prioritises support for schools using the following criteria:
 - i. Schools in the Formal Intervention Process
 - ii. Schools who have received a grade 4 in their recent inspection
 - iii. Schools where performance improvement will have the most effect in closing the gap between the highest and lowest achieving pupils, prioritising Programme for Government requirements
 - iv. Other schools in support of their self-evaluation and school improvement plans
3. The SEELB have considered the terms of reference for the Education Committee's Inquiry and given the degree to which the CASS service works to support schools experiencing difficulties, it was felt that the SEELB could submit written evidence with respect to point 2 namely:

'Identify the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps ... in terms of the... support services provided by the ... Education and Library Boards.'

Key Issues Impacting on Schools Experiencing Difficulties

A. Leadership/Governance

- The quality and stability of the Senior Leadership Team (including the Principal) tends to vary leading to inconsistencies and difficulties with providing and sustaining a strategic direction to sustain improvement, and to inspire confidence amongst staff.
- There can be difficulties with the recruitment and retention of effective governors.
- There is a lack of flexibility in the principal recruitment process particularly around the terms and conditions of employment.
- There is a shortage of high calibre candidates applying to principal positions in schools in challenging circumstances.
- There are particular challenges experienced by teaching principals in smaller schools.
- There are challenges for leadership teams with capacity and capability issues in the requirement to address a range of issues identified through inspection within a tightly defined timescale of 12-18 months.
- There are pressures on schools particularly in areas of social disadvantage, targeted for participation in a wide range of educational and/or community initiatives, to ensure that

this does not impact adversely on the core business of providing high quality teaching and learning.

- There are challenges within schools to effectively engage in sustained, systematic and rigorous self –evaluation processes to inform school development planning to effect improvement, whilst ensuring accountability at all levels.
- Poor pupil and staff attendance can often impact on the school's ability to improve.
- School policies and procedures may be incomplete, not current, or are being inconsistently implemented.
- There are often poor relationships and/or poor channels of communication, including a lack of effective consultation and dissemination.
- There is often a lack of robust and effective continuous professional development (CPD) in the context of school development planning priorities and the use of school development days.

B. Standards and Attainment

- The overall standards achieved by pupils, particularly in external examinations, is often well below the Northern Ireland average.
- It is often difficult to demonstrate 'value added' within the context of a range of factors e.g. a high percentage of newcomer children, children with special educational needs, which may impact on the overall standards achieved.
- For primary schools in particular, the lack of standardised baseline assessment for children on entry to school makes the measure of 'value-added' more difficult to compare across schools.
- For post primary schools, an inherent tension often exists between improving standards system wide to meet PfG targets and providing courses to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- The use of data, particularly to plan interventions for under-achievement, is not always utilised to optimum advantage.

C. Learning and Teaching

- There is often a mismatch between the pedagogy of the revised NI Curriculum at key stage 3 and the examination courses at key stage 4 and 5.
- There can often be differing expectations of teachers and pupils and difficulties with challenging all pupils by matching the curriculum provision and teaching and learning strategies to their abilities and interests.
- The quality of learning and teaching in literacy/English and/or numeracy/mathematics are often identified as priority areas for improvement.
- There is a lack of a robust procedure to effectively support schools to identify and support teachers whose work is borderline satisfactory or inadequate.
- There is a lack of a rigorous and robust procedure for dealing with teachers whose work is identified as unsatisfactory.

D. Sustainability and Financial Planning

- Sustainability of the school is often linked to schools experiencing difficulties, including pupil enrolment trends, the school's financial position, and standards achieved.
 - Financial planning can be less than effective in securing school improvement whether in deficit or surplus.
 - Entry in to the Formal Intervention Process, in some instances, may lead to negative media attention which may be detrimental to the profile of the school in the local community and the longer term sustainability.
4. In terms of support services provided for schools experiencing difficulty, it is important that the support services are resourced adequately to meet the challenges of the wide range of issues impacting on these schools. The SEELB CASS service continues to provide high quality support to schools against a backdrop of reduced resourcing and the uncertainties surrounding the introduction of ESA. The proposed new regional governor support service and regional school development service should go some way to addressing these resourcing issues.

Southern and Western Education and Library Boards

Southern and Western Education and Library Boards

Response to Northern Ireland Assembly Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

1. Introduction

This paper is being submitted on behalf of the Southern and Western Education and Library Boards (SELB/WELB). The Education Order 1989, Article 29 states that each Board shall prepare and submit to the Department a scheme for the provision of advisory and support services in relation to the curricula and staff of schools. In this context, both Boards have well established Curriculum Advisory and Support Services (CASS). However, as a result of Savings Delivery Plans imposed by the Department of Education these services have been considerably reduced.

The key principles underpinning the work of these Services are based on current research evidence on School Improvement, ETI identified good practice, and our experience of supporting schools in School Improvement initiatives. They are founded on the belief that school improvement is most effective and sustainable when it is driven from within.

These principles are:

- sustainable improvement needs to be inclusive of all stakeholders, both internal and external to the school;
- regular and rigorous self-evaluation using performance and other data is central to school improvement;
- priorities for action should be limited and focused;
- targets must be set at pupil, year group and whole-school level with detailed plans drawn up;
- quality teaching and learning must be at the heart of such plans;
- success criteria should measure performance against pupil outcomes;
- learning from monitoring and evaluation should inform the next cycle of improvement;
- learning and best practice should be shared, both internally and externally; and
- contextualised school-based support for strengthening leadership at all levels, including governance, is essential to improving the quality of leadership and management at all levels within schools.

These key principles are underpinned by the following key practices:

- in collaboration with employing authorities and sectoral support bodies the targeting of support for schools based on evidence from ETI inspections, performance data and local knowledge;
- the deployment of trained and experienced officers to support the schools in the key processes of self-evaluation, data analysis, target setting, action planning, monitoring action and evaluating impact;
- the strengthening of leadership within the schools through sustained and regular support, with the objective of supported autonomy;

- the sharing of good practice from those schools deemed, through inspection, to be outstanding/very good to support those schools with less effective practice to improve, including the use of ESaGS TV;
- a coherent continuum of support within available resources, clearly linked to DE priorities, for the professional development of personnel within the school;
- contextualisation of school improvement plans within the parameters of sustainability, i.e. finance, staffing levels, enrolment, curriculum provision; and
- development of the potential of Area Learning Communities for school improvement.

Key Priority Areas:

In order to ensure that support resources are effectively deployed in a manner which maximises the opportunity for the key outcomes to be achieved, support will be differentiated to meet the specific needs of schools in addressing this agenda. The nature and intensity of support provided to schools will be based on a wide range of evidence, i.e. DE statistics, assessment outcomes, ETI inspection reports, and information from employing authorities. Support will embed the process of School Development Planning with a focus on improving practice, including outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy (DE's *'Count, Read: Succeed'* Strategy).

As a consequence, support is provided to the following spectrum of schools:

- schools in the Formal Intervention Process (FIP);
- schools found to be Satisfactory in inspection and thus addressing improvement issues identified by ETI;
- schools where performance improvement will have most effect in closing the gap between highest and lowest achieving pupils, prioritising Programme for Government requirements; and
- other schools in support of their self-evaluation and school improvement plans.

2. Effectiveness of ETI's Current Approach to School Improvement

SELB/WELB staff at all times endeavour to work in partnership with ETI colleagues, particularly post inspection, to ensure that areas for improvement are clearly articulated and understood by schools. As appropriate, SELB/WELB staff will then support schools in the construction and implementation of an improvement action plan.

However, the current School Inspection process appears to place an over-emphasis on school performance both in terms of identifying schools for inspection and reporting on inspection outcomes. School performance is too often measured using only raw examination outcome data which is neither contextualised nor referenced in any way to social disadvantage. Also, there is an over reliance of reference to Northern Ireland (NI) averages as a bench-mark for school performance where, for some schools, achieving the NI average is an unrealistic and unachievable goal whilst for others it should be considered failure. This raises a fundamental issue – the lack of reliable and robust value added measures for schools. The current practice of using purely numerical data is crude and unreliable and does not take into account the major determinant of educational performance that is social advantage.

In this respect, there is an urgent need for the development of robust, system-wide approaches to measuring “value-added” in schools, not least to give proper recognition to the impact which schools, serving areas of social disadvantage, are making (or are not making) on pupil attainment.

Finally, schools report a desire to develop a more sustained and formative link with a “district inspector” and have expressed concerns about inspection teams with little or no prior knowledge of a school carrying out inspections and making evaluative judgements within a very short timescale. Some schools report that in the past they were able to develop a very

effective working relationship with their “district inspector” and they regret that this approach appears to be disappearing

3. Key Issues Impacting on Schools Experiencing Difficulties

Leadership and Governance

- The quality and stability of the Senior Leadership Team. This is critical in order to inspire confidence amongst staff and provide and sustain a strategic direction for the school.
- Recruitment and retention of effective governors.
- The shortage of high calibre candidates applying to principal positions in schools in challenging circumstances.
- Challenges for leadership teams with capacity and capability issues in the requirement to address a range of issues identified through inspection within a tightly defined timescale of 12-18 months.
- Pressures on schools in areas of social disadvantage, targeted for participation in a wide range of educational and/or community initiatives.
- Challenges within schools to effectively engage in sustained, systematic and rigorous self – evaluation processes.
- Ability to ensure school development planning processes to effect improvement, whilst ensuring accountability at all levels.
- Poor pupil and staff attendance which often impacts on the school's ability to improve.
- School policies and procedures that may be incomplete, not current or are not being inconsistently implemented.
- Poor relationships and/or poor channels of communication, including lack of effective consultation and dissemination.
- A lack of robust and effective continuous professional development (CPD) in the context of school development planning priorities and the use of school development days.

Standards and Attainment

- The overall standards achieved by pupils in schools in challenging circumstances, particularly in external examinations, is often well below the Northern Ireland average.
- The lack of a reliable value-added measure for school performance.
- The lack of standardised baseline assessment for children on entry to school makes the measure of ‘value-added’ more difficult to compare across schools.
- An inherent tension exists between improving standards system wide to meet PfG targets and providing courses to meet needs of individual pupils.
- The use of data, particularly to plan interventions for under-achievement is not always used to optimum advantage.

Learning and Teaching

- The pedagogy of the revised NI Curriculum and the Entitlement Framework may be inconsistently implemented. There can often be differing expectations of teachers and pupils and difficulties with challenging all pupils by matching the curriculum provision and teaching and learning strategies to their abilities and interests.
- The quality of learning and teaching in literacy/English and/or numeracy/mathematics are often identified through inspection as priority areas for improvement.
- The lack of robust procedures to effectively support schools to identify and support Principals/teachers whose work is borderline satisfactory or inadequate.

- A lack of rigorous and robust procedures for dealing with teachers whose work is identified as unsatisfactory.

Sustainability and Financial Planning

- Sustainability of the school, including pupil enrolment trends, the school's financial position, and standards achieved.
- Entry into the Formal Intervention process, in some instances, may lead to negative media attention which may be detrimental to the profile of the school in the local community and the longer term sustainability.

4. Gaps in Review Process and Services Provision Include:

- Lack of strategic direction for Education Northern Ireland.
- The need for the establishment of an educational infrastructure that is fit for purpose and functional.
- Delay in Review of Teacher Education.
- Reduction in ELB support services, particularly CASS. This promotes a deficit model of support where services engage with only 'at risk' or intervention schools. It stymies on-going professional development of teachers and schools, hinders innovation and promotes inward looking institutions.

5. Alternative Approaches and Models of Good Practice

There should be greater use made of the wealth of international school improvement data that is currently available. A Northern Ireland Research and development unit might be established to ensure that the best practice of other countries is considered in terms of application in a local context. Links with other countries should be established with a view to longer term working relationships rather than information sharing only. Good practice from within the region needs to be disseminated and shared locally and promoted beyond Northern Ireland.

6. Priorities and Actions to be taken to improve ETI's approach to school improvement

Consideration must be given to providing greater opportunity, within the inspection process, for greater in-depth discussion regarding standards and achievements and the reasons which may contribute towards them in a specific school context. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of school improvement professionals in such discussions, in the situations where such staff have been involved in working with the school to bring about improvement.

Greater attention might be given to mitigating the emotional impact upon school staff of less than positive inspection outcomes.

Introduction of a more inclusive and collaborative approach to post-inspection improvement work, involving greater consultation and discussion with school staff, governors and support services throughout the improvement programme

Consideration should be given to an "appeal" mechanism through which schools which feel that an inappropriate evaluation may have been arrived at by ETI have an opportunity to engage in discussion and provision of appropriate evidence in advance of the publication of an inspection report.

Schools report concerns in relation to consistency of approach across inspections and inspection teams. This is a crucial issue for the credibility of any inspection system which should be addressed

St. Colman's PS Lambeg

28th October 2013

Mr P McCallion
NI Assembly

Dear Peter

I write to you on behalf of the entire learning community of St Colman's Primary School. I am aware that there is an ongoing debate with regard to the ETI and the future provision for the inspection process. Speaking as a teacher of 36 years (19 of which have been as a Principal), I have witnessed the inspection process in a variety of schools as an assistant teacher, curriculum coordinator and Principal. The process that schools face today is hugely different from the inspections of the late 1970's and early 1980's in that they are much more transparent and inclusive in their approach. The old fear of inspectors coming into schools have been replaced by an atmosphere of support, advice and recognition of what is good about schools, as well as suggestions on how we can improve.

I have no doubt that the system of having a district inspector that we can contact and invite in to discuss where we are at that time, has taken a huge amount of stress out of the process of inspection. I have been very privileged to work with a number of different district inspectors during my time as a Principal. However I should highlight the pioneering work in the area of self-evaluation carried out by **Dr Paddy Shevlin**. Dr Shevlin (along with **Heather Jackson**) has transformed our attitudes in St Colman's with regard to improvement from within. We have developed a capacity to reflect – a task that has been led by senior staff who in turn were guided through this process by Dr Shevlin. Gone is the attitude of **'have we done enough to get through'** - this has been replaced with an attitude of **'how can we improve our school for everyone within it?'**

This attitudinal change cannot happen overnight – it takes time, patience and a sense that our district inspector is working alongside us. Dr Shevlin has been tremendously influential in helping us achieve this.

I am aware that we are far from the finished article and like all good self-evaluating schools we must always strive to continue improving. To that end we have linked with 3 local schools to form a cluster in which we share good practice and learn from each other in so many different spheres. This cluster has been guided by Dr Shevlin and our district inspector, Heather Jackson. The feedback sessions have been led by subject coordinators and those that have been led by my coordinators have come with the proviso that the inspectors be present. **What a change in attitude!!**

Like all good self-evaluation processes, I know the ETI is going through a period of reflection. Indeed I recently contributed to the debate by completing the GTCNI questionnaire on the whole subject of the inspectorate and the inspection process. I can only conclude with the assertion that I made at the beginning of this correspondence, i.e. the process of inspection as it currently stands using a district inspector approach, has not only supported schools but in my professional opinion it has really assisted school improvement.

The work that Dr Shevlin and his colleagues have embarked upon over the last 10/15 years has undoubtedly changed how schools view the school improvement process – I would plead with those in a position of directing future policy to take on board the experiences of the extended St Colman's School community. Improvement has come through self-evaluation – self evaluation has been led by district inspectors.

Yours faithfully

G McVeigh
Principal

St. Colm's High School

Response to: Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

- Clearly there is a need for rigorous but realistic baselining to measure performance in literacy and numeracy at transfer to Post Primary School supported by other measures of innate ability and progress throughout Post Primary School.
- An objective measure needs to be adopted which teachers, parents and pupils both understand and have confidence in.
- The use of standardised testing is preferable to Key Stage Two results as a measure of progress as the latter is subjective. However, there are issues concerning duplication of standardised tests at both primary and post primary level.
- GCSE achievement should be measured against this baseline of ability/performance to indicate value added.
- Valued added should take account of more than just academic results. Value added can be measured in terms of pupil attitude, retention, attendance and should take account of the number of young people with social service involvement, mental health issues and behavioural challenges. It should also take account of parent, staff and Governors attitudes.
- Use of FSM entitlement as a measure of social deprivation is a good indicator in the absence of any other standardised measure.
- Downgrading of some subjects in terms of performance points is discriminatory and unjust and has caused total confusion for staff, pupils and parents. There needs to be clarity about the value of all Level Two subjects and consistency of approach in terms of policy and procedure regarding this.
- Where schools have a high percentage of young people with additional complex needs often the support services required are inadequate or oversubscribed. Funding should be directed to the schools to provide the necessary intensive support on site.
- Need for analysis of alternative approaches and models of good practice of the school inspection process in other countries to be identified.
- ETI support and advice is welcome, but clarification is needed on how the ETI having enhanced powers in the school improvement process will support schools is needed.

Yours sincerely

Cathy McMurray

Principal

St.Colm's High School

St. Dominic's Belfast

St. Dominic's Belfast

ETI Inquiry

Response by Carol McCann, principal of St. Dominic's, Belfast

Thank you for the opportunity to take part into a consultation regarding ETI.

VALUE-ADDED

1. I believe that there is a need for ETI to give cognisance to value-added outcomes as this is one of the most significant factors in school effectiveness. One might expect that schools focused on self-improvement should be able to demonstrate for ETI how they are committed to value-added provision leading to improved outcomes for pupils and that this would be reflected in inspection reports. There is undoubted value in benchmarking graphs as they clarify how School A compares to comparable schools and indeed identifies School A's areas of strength and for development. Notwithstanding their value, the context of comparable schools can vary significantly eg. challenges of an inner city school vs a school in a suburban or rural area. FSME is the main indicator of disadvantage and while it is a significant factor, many disadvantaged pupils do not have access to FSM. Entry levels in terms of levels of achievement can also vary greatly across schools in all sectors. These aspects should be taken into consideration.
2. As stated above FSME is one of the main indicators of deprivation. It can be a crude indicator. As principal of a school where 66% of Post-16 pupils are in receipt of EMA, our FSME while well above the average for grammar schools doesn't reflect that many of our pupils belong to families of the working poor who don't have access to FSM.

SCHOOLS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES

1. There is a need to exercise care that a school should not be destroyed by a negative inspection report. While inspections should be robust and rigorous, it is important that ETI consider the wide spectrum of contexts that schools find themselves in. Constructive criticism and transparency are important but equally so is the need that a school should not be left so demoralised that the community it serves lose faith in the school. The impact of a negative inspection report could be counter-productive to engaging the young people and the parents. It is my belief that there is a need for a robust and rigorous inspection process which challenges but this must be complemented by the provision of effective support, guidance and development for the school. With the changed context of ELBS, I believe that the position and remit of the Area Inspector should be strengthened.

2. Area Inspector Role re support

- As principal of St. Dominic's I have received consistent, excellent support from the school's Area Inspector, Dr Paddy Shevlin. He has challenged and enabled the school to improve its outcomes significantly.
- For the past three years, the school has had the highest performance at A Level in the Belfast area and one of the highest in NI (2011- 90% of students achieved three A levels at grades A*-C, 2012- 92% of students achieved three A levels at grades A*-C, 2013 – 96.55% of students achieved three A levels at grades A*-C). This is despite an average intake of approximately 30% A grade students for each of the years. GCSE performance in 2013 is 99.3% for seven passes at grades A*-C and 98.6% for seven passes including English and Maths.
- Dr Shevlin knows the school extremely well and has provided excellent guidance, support and challenge since I was appointed principal in 2007. While advising and guiding the school by promoting the use of evidence-based self-evaluation, the Area Inspector is always careful to remain within the parameters of his position.
- He has been extremely helpful in directing the school to centres of excellence in specific areas of the curriculum and other processes and has also supported the school in developing effective use of data to improve. This, I believe that the improvement in performance achieved by the school would not have been possible without the challenge and support provided by Dr Shevlin.
- Dr Shevlin doesn't just work with an individual school but rather has embraced the concept of schools working in collaboration to promote improvement and deliver the best outcomes for pupils within an area. I believe that there has been a great improvement in the overall outcomes for young people in West Belfast through close working relationships having been developed between principals /senior leadership teams and the Area Inspector. The Area Inspector has also supported greater links with the BELB advisor, Mark Hewitt and this has been very beneficial for schools.
- The appropriate balance of challenge and support as provided by our school's Area Inspector has been invaluable. I believe that this model of support and challenge by the Area Inspector should be extended across all schools and areas and be a model in proposed changes to the ETI process.

GOVERNANCE

- Governance is onerous as governors have significant responsibility in both challenging and supporting the principal in the leadership and management of the school. I believe that

it is very important that governors do challenge as well as support. Challenge ensures proper accountability and also provides protection for all. Governors currently give generously of their time to schools providing support and guidance across a wide range of important issues including human resource management, recruitment, policy development, finance etc. While it is important for governors to be well-informed, to support and challenge, we must be careful not to put off the most capable and conscientious governors by putting excessive pressure on them. They carry out important work on a voluntary basis.

TRANSPARENCY

- The need for transparency in all spheres of life is of paramount importance. Schools are charged with what is undeniably one of the most important influences on young people's lives. It is important that all processes are transparent.

Carol McCann

St. Gerard's Special School

As a special school we have a different team of inspectors who are mainly focused on special schools and units but also assist with inspections in mainstream.

We welcome their inspections (as much as anyone can!)

Although our inspectors inspect our provisions regularly , they tend to have a wider brief in terms of advising, helping us disseminate good practice among our special schools and indeed mainstream for those mainstream schools who choose to attend our annual conferences. Maybe this is why special schools tend be reported on favourably in the Chief Inspectors Report? Their advisory approach in addition to the formal inspection approach means everyone listens and appreciates the other's point of view while making the necessary changes to effect school improvement

It might be worthwhile talking to the head of the special ETI team- compare and contrast?

Thank You

St. John's Primary School, Swatragh

I have 3 brief points to contribute...

1. Retain the inclusion of the Associates. It's great to have practitioners involved.
2. Glad to see the introduction of two week's notice instead of 4. More accurate picture of the school is given. Less time for staff to stress.
3. Avoid the models in use in England AT ALL COSTS. My sisters teach there and they seem to be inordinately balanced towards policing rather than genuine improvement.

St. Mary's University College, Belfast

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

I note that the Committee for Education is undertaking an inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and its role in the School Improvement process.

It is not feasible to present a well-researched written submission within the period 28 June – 23 August. The teacher educators at our institution take academic leave at various times precisely in this period and I would wish to consult them about a matter of such great importance to the school system in Northern Ireland.

However, I would wish to put a number of observations on the record and I do this from my experience in the field of teacher education.

1. The approach of self-evaluation followed by inspection is entirely appropriate for the teaching profession. It encourages schools and their teaching staff to reflect and evaluate critically, which is what one would expect from a profession.
2. In my experience the Inspectorate go about their work in an exemplary way. They manage to balance their key role of inspection with an input into the provision of much-needed advice and guidance to schools and other educational providers.
3. The reports of inspections are valuable sources of learning for the world of education in Northern Ireland and this applies in particular to the Chief Inspector's Report. The latter is the best source we have for understanding, in a global way, the strengths of the school system as well as the main areas for development.
4. School Improvement is facilitated by the ETI's current approach to inspection. The emphasis on data analysis in recent years has enhanced the approach as it enables a more focussed attention of the outcomes of teaching on pupils' learning.
5. School Improvement is the ultimate aim of Teacher Education provision. The ETI play an important role in teacher education through professional engagement with the HEI providers, either through the medium of link inspection or subject specialist roles. The most recent inspection of ITE which was undertaken by the ETI used the school model with some adjustments and in my view it improved teacher education provision in Northern Ireland.

This is a very brief summary of the views and opinions that I hold of the ETI and its role in the School Improvement process.

St. Patrick's College

St. Patrick's College



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Inspection process needs to consider a number of factors when conducting an inspection:

- Due to falling rolls, grammar schools have lowered their entrance criteria and are now taking students that would normally have chosen St. Patrick's. As a result the academic ability of our intake is gradually declining and this will be reflected in our results at GCSE and beyond.
- Cuts in relation to SEN has meant that less support is available in school. Classroom Assistant support has also been reduced and this has also had a negative impact. Cuts in the support from CASS service has also had a negative impact on school performance. These factors need to be considered when assessing school performance.
- The importance of value added does not feature as part of an inspection process. For some students achieving D and E grades is a great success but in the current process they are regarded as failures, as are the schools they achieve them at. In the current process the 5+ A*-C is the only factor that seems to determine success.
- KS2 results from primary schools are not always accurate and seem to be inflated in many cases. If students do not improve or move up to the level expected they are viewed as regressing or under achieving. How do we correlate performance in the CCS at KS3 with GCSE performance when the assessment mechanisms have changed immensely?
- Exam boards are constantly changing the goal posts in terms of assessment. The move away from coursework to terminal exams is particularly harsh on students in non selective schools.
- Some schools have moved towards BTEC type qualifications even in subjects like Maths and English and this has moved them up the league tables. These qualifications are acknowledged in the Inspectorate R, but are these qualifications really equivalent to GCSEs? Will they change in the same way GCSEs have changed?

Principal: Mrs A. Sands, B.Sc., P.G.C.E.

St. Peter's Cloughreagh

In my experience the members of ETI always act in a professional manner, they follow a strict code and only vary from this by agreement with the school. The inspection process is largely informed by, compliance with regulation, the standard of leadership, the provision in the classroom and the standards achieved by the pupils.

ETI do consider value added if evidence of this is made available by the school.

ETI assess standards of attainment within a benchmarked context that is against schools in similar circumstances.

I welcome the recent development of a model for a Sustaining Improvement Inspection, in my opinion it is better to allow the Northern Ireland system to evolve rather than begin importing models from other jurisdictions.

Many schools have robust systems of assessment, these should be used more by ETI when measuring achievement and this can be done with no extra cost to the Department.

Currently it is for the Employing Authority through the Board of Governors to act once adjudication has been made by ETI; this I feel should remain to be the case.

The current model if for schools to be inspected once in seven years, this I feel should be lengthened for top performing schools and shortened for schools requiring follow-up inspections, in that the seven years should be counted from the date of the original inspection.

The Association of Controlled Grammar Schools

Inquiry Into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Response to Request for Written Evidence

From The Association of Controlled Grammar Schools

The Association of Controlled Grammar Schools is a group which represents the Head Teachers of the sixteen Controlled Grammar School in Northern Ireland. The group meets regularly to discuss issues of common interest many of which have the potential to have important public impact. We welcome this opportunity to respond collectively to the invitation from the Education Committee to express our views on the issues put out for consultation by the Education Committee on the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

We see changes happening to the structure of inspections in Northern Ireland schools, with the apparent intention of making school inspection a much more frequent activity in our schools. We regard inspection on a regular basis for schools that are sustaining healthy intakes and producing good examination results that are above average against the main indicators as not the best use of inspectors' time, unless there are significant changes in the school since the last inspection, such as a significant lowering of results or a change in leadership. The inspection process is often disruptive to the work of teachers and to the day to day running of a school and consequently should not be unnecessarily or overused. The present movement seems to be towards an inspectorate based on the Ofsted model, which has the potential to threaten the good professional relationships that exist in Northern Ireland between schools and the inspectorate and which have effectively quality assured the work in Northern Ireland schools over the years under a number of challenging and demanding Chief Inspectors.

The inspectorate should be using as much data as is available to them and currently value added data is available from most schools. Where it is available it can illuminate the comparative results in the data which the inspectorate collect from schools. In some cases this will show that some schools are achieving far more than is evident from the data the inspectorate collects.

The crude questionnaire used by the inspectorate to survey the staff about the leadership of the school are unreliable and open to abuse by those who have a vested interest in damaging the leadership of the school. This approach within the current inspection framework needs to be reviewed and the expertise of those qualified and experienced in leadership training needs to be used.

The use of free school meals as an indicator of social deprivation is unreliable. Although this is fairly widely known it is still used as a measure when analysing examination results. The inspectorate should look for a more robust measure to use for this purpose.

In an age when examination re-sits alone will not secure either the job or the university course applied for the inspectorate should be much more interested in the evidence of a broad education which encourages a wide range of practical skills, which employers are looking for. The inspectorate process should take account of the enhancement opportunities that are offered by schools, the positive behaviour that is encouraged and the stretch and challenge offered by individual schools. It must ensure that they leave schools no worse off than when they arrived and that they capture those things that schools are doing well as well

as those things that need to be improved. The volume of inspection must be matched by the quality of those same inspections, indeed arguably quality is more important than volume.

The inspectorate must be and be seen to be independent of the Department for Education and The ELBs. They must not be seen to be the servants of either of these two groups in the Local Area Planning discussions. This will not be easy for them but they must be beyond reproach in relation to this matter. Indeed their timing of the increase to the volume of inspections is unfortunate.

The improvements brought about through the inspection process must be real improvements in educational outcomes resulting from real improvements to leadership and teaching and learning. Anything less will not represent real and lasting change. This takes time to effect and the notion that schools can be changed almost instantly is a deception. Schools can improve and will improve but with proper strategies adopted within a sensible timeframe.

- Give priority to quality inspections before rushing to increased volume.
- Find a common value added measure.
- Look at all the outcomes not only examination results.
- Replace free school meals with a more robust measure of social deprivation acceptable to all.
- Review the surveys used as part of the inspection process.
- Provide support from Heads and retired Heads to Heads of failing schools.
- Provide support from successful Heads to new Heads.

Peter McCallion

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The National Association of Head Teachers



Sept 2013

NAHT(NI) Written Submission to the Committee for Education

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process



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1. Introduction

The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) welcomes the opportunity to submit its views on the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and The School Improvement Process.

The NAHT is an independent trade union and a professional association with 28,500 members in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Members include head teachers, deputies, assistant head teachers, bursars and school business managers. They hold leadership positions in early years, primary, special, secondary and independent schools, sixth form colleges, outdoor education centres, pupil referral units, social services establishments and other educational settings. The membership represents 85 per cent of primary and 40 per cent of secondary schools and virtually every special school in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This places the NAHT in a unique position to provide an informed response which covers the viewpoint of leaders across all phases of education.



2. The role and function of the ETI and its impact on the education system and individuals working within the system

2.1 Self Evaluating Schools

NAHT is a Trade Union and a Professional Association. Members are committed to improving the quality of education and the life chances of all children in their care. Members value the contribution which self evaluation makes to school improvement. Inspection teams can not be in every school every day, therefore the aim must be to create, within each school, a self motivated and self sustaining culture which is focused on continuous improvement. To achieve this, evaluation and assessment must be perceived as an ongoing process which involves every member of staff in every school every day.

Recommendation

Training and development must be provided on a regular basis to facilitate a common understanding of what constitutes good education and the tools that should be used to evaluate and assess what is being delivered. As a consequence of the dissolution of Boards, little or no training has been provided over many years.

At a meeting with the ETI it was suggested that the Principal and eventually HoDs could participate in aspects of their school's inspection process. NAHT(NI) believes that this interaction and participation would be a positive development in that it would facilitate a common language and understanding of what constitutes good practice, and a knowledge of the tools used by the ETI to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching and learning. The knowledge gained would also provide a foundation for school based training and development.

2.2 External Evaluation/Assessment

An efficient, effective and respected process of external evaluation is an essential prerequisite if the public is to have confidence in our education system. The role of the external assessor should be to identify and share good practice, promote high quality delivery and ensure consistency across all schools in Northern Ireland.

The ETI has a role to play when poor practice is identified. However, our experience is that in order to avoid conflict with the teachers unions, they are unwilling to identify either the good or poor practice that they have witnessed in classrooms. While they will verbally raise issues of concern about a teacher's practice with the teacher and the Principal, they are reluctant to report formally and in writing on what they have witnessed. This has resulted, on too many occasions, in the Principal finding him/herself in conflict with members of staff who, in the absence of a written report, refuse to accept that there were problems or issues in their classroom(s) and refuse to participate in any programme of support.

It is also of concern to this Association that the ETI does not have the confidence of educationalists in general. The respect which schools in the past had for the ETI has been eroded by the belief that the ETI is no longer an independent organisation which



will report in an open and honest manner on what they witness in schools. The perception is that the ETI now exists to push through Department policy. Indeed, it has been described as “the Department’s enforcement arm”.

While we acknowledge that few schools in the past celebrated notice of an inspection, the fear which it now generates is a cause of concern. Members report that fear of a pending inspection is having a negative impact on the morale of teachers and school leaders and this in turn is having a negative impact on all aspects of the day to day management of a school, including learning / teaching.

In addition, the manner in which the outcome of inspections has been reported over recent years has had a negative impact on the public’s perception of the system as a whole. For example, as a result of the press coverage provoked by the then Chief Inspector, Mr Stanley Goudie, following one inspection, an NAHT member was suspended from school, subjected to ridicule and last year received a death threat. To add insult to injury, the committee will be aware that, as a consequence of the inspection and the manner in which it was reported, pupil numbers declined, standards fell, and the budget deficit increased. The Committee might also wish to note that this school, which in the past had been praised for its work, is now earmarked for closure. What links Crumlin Integrated College and many of the other schools that have been identified as inadequate or unsatisfactory is that although no formal grievances had been raised by staff, there were ongoing staffing issues which had not been resolved.

Unfortunately, the Stanley Goudie interviews and the impact that they had on public perception, and indeed on the profession, could not be regarded as a single error of judgment. NAHT(NI) is also concerned about the manner in which Noelle Buick, the current Chief Inspector, presented her report in the 2011/12 school year. Although, when one read the report there were many positive statistics and examples of good practice, Ms Buick chose to focus, throughout her interviews with the media and during her presentation at The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, on the negative. It is of concern to this Association, that when challenged about why the report was presented in such a manner, one DENI official referred to the fact that previous Chief Inspector’s report had attracted little press coverage. Our assessment of this comment was that the negative tone of Ms Buick’s presentation was intentional and was designed to attract maximum coverage. No consideration had been given to the impact that it would have on parents, the staff who work in the school or indeed public perception of our education system as a whole.

An Inspection Process and the report must be open and transparent if it is to have the confidence of all stakeholders. It is of concern to this Association that the process in place in Northern Ireland is neither open nor transparent. For example, NAHT, on a number of occasions, has found it necessary to refer instances where the ETI refused to provide the evidence base on which they had determined that an individual was unsatisfactory to the Information Commissioner. When the Information Commissioner instructed the ETI to release their “evidence” it was apparent, despite the fact what was provided was heavily redacted, that there was no clearly defined process or procedure for determining the efficiency or effectiveness of a school or an individual. The MARS reports (Monitoring, Assessing and Recording Sheets) which were eventually provided were inconsistent and the grading did not reflect the outcome of the inspection process.



Principals are not alone in voicing their concerns about the process. We are aware of schools where, despite a good assessment, neither the staff nor Governors were at all happy about the manner in which their inspection was carried out. In one school where, as a consequence of the appointment of a new principal and the commitment, dedication and hard work of all staff, standards rose substantially, the Principal and Governors were told that the school could not be assigned the grade at which the school was working because they needed to demonstrate that the progress they had made could be sustained. It is NAHT's understanding that an inspection is a snapshot in time. If that is the case, why was a grade which reflected the school at that point in time not awarded?

Another school which had received a good grade following its inspection was inspected again when the Department and Board received a parental complaint. The determination at this stage was that the school was inadequate. NAHT sought clarification about what had changed in the few months between the two inspections? We also sought clarification on what action, if any, was taken to retrain the Inspectors who carried out the first inspection if they had got it wrong? It is interesting to note that no explanation was received.

NAHT does not challenge the need for external assessment, but if it is to be effective, the process must be open and transparent and must be based on mutual respect and the commitment of all parties to a set of common objectives. The process, as it operates at present, is a closed process. There is no common understanding of what inspectors are looking for or how a school is assessed. While NAHT(NI) would not hold up the inspection process in England as a shining example of how inspections should operate, at least in England there is an inspection framework which outlines what inspectors are looking for and how the process should operate. If an inspection framework exists and is in operation in Northern Ireland, it has certainly not been shared with the schools.

Recommendation

There is a level of mystery, uncertainty and confusion around the inspection process, how it operates and how our schools are evaluated. If teachers, school leaders and the public are to have faith in the ETI and the inspection process, it is essential that all aspects of that process are carried out in an open, honest and transparent manner. The outcome of an inspection should not come as a surprise to anyone.

Where poor practice is identified, the Inspectors should raise their concerns, in the first instance, with the individual, their line manager and Chair of Governors. Inspectors should produce and share with all of these parties a comprehensive and evidence based account of the issues identified and what needs to be addressed to enable the individual/school to raise their performance. The letter which is shared with the individual and their line manager(s) at present does not have the detail necessary to enable the individual to accept the designation or address the issues.

NAHT(NI) would recommend that, in addition to the initial face to face meeting and a comprehensive account of the issues identified, there should be a further opportunity for the individual to meet with their line managers and the Reporting Inspector prior to the publication of the inspection report so that issues of concern can be raised and properly considered and a formal response to concerns provided by the ETI.

The ETI should also provide, on an annual basis, a summary of their work throughout



the year. The summary should include the number of schools inspected and the outcome of those inspections. NAHT(NI) would suggest that this report should also summarise the number of schools inspected in each phase and sector and the outcomes of those inspections. There is concern across the system that some providers are judged differently and more harshly than others. The publication of inspection analysis and results could dispel concerns.

A summary should also be provided on a yearly basis of the inspectors who were involved in the assessment of schools, the number of schools they inspected and an analysis of their determinations. This will ensure that there is consistency within and across inspection teams.

In addition, it is essential that every member of the inspection team formally signs off each inspection report to which they have contributed and that those signatures form part of the formal report. Inspectors are paid a considerable salary and can have a significant impact on our education system. It is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that they, like teachers and school leaders, should be held responsible and accountable for the work which they do.

NAHT(NI) considers that analysis at this level will promote public and professional confidence and will ensure that there is consistency across all phases, sectors and areas of Northern Ireland.

A report outlining examples of good practice should also be produced by the ETI on a yearly basis. This report could be used as the basis for school based training. NAHT(NI) is convinced that the MARS reports, if properly managed, would also provide a common basis against which schools and the ETI could assess the effectiveness of the individual and/or the school.

Members are also convinced that the system as a whole would benefit if more opportunity was provided for Inspectors and teachers/school leaders to work and learn together. Principals are concerned that interactions, which facilitated good practice in the past, have been eroded over recent years. For example, the role played by District Inspectors was highly valued by teachers and school leaders across Northern Ireland. However, this role/relationship has been undermined in many areas by what is frequently referred to as the challenge function. This effectively means that on every occasion when an inspector comes into a school, their role and function is to inspect and report what they see. This acts as a barrier to the establishment of an effective working relationship and prevents teachers and school leaders from seeking advice from the ETI on issues of concern.

2.3 Faith in the Professional Competence of Inspectors

Many of those employed as Inspectors have little or no experience of teaching, leading or managing in schools. It is of concern to NAHT(NI) that in their responses to the Education Committee on this matter, the ETI were vague about the number of Inspectors who have school based experience. Indeed, we are convinced through our research that few of the permanent Inspectors who work in schools have any school based Senior Leadership experience. This inevitably calls into question their ability to evaluate work at this level.



In addition, this Association often receives comments from Principals who have concerns that ETI inspectors have exceeded their remit and commented verbally on management issues such as staff rotas, schools meals provision etc. The inspectors often propose a pastoral follow up visit to ensure that the changes they suggest have been implemented. These issues do not impact on the teaching and learning within the school nor do they impact on educational standards. They relate solely to the management of the school and should not be the concern of ETI. Such excessive attempts at micromanagement by inspectors, who have acknowledged that they have had no experience of leading and managing in a school environment, serves only to reinforce the profession's concerns about the role and competency of ETI.

Recommendation

It is essential that those who are tasked with evaluating and assessing the work of our schools have substantial school based experience in teaching, leading and managing and can evidence their role in the delivery of education which is of a high quality.

Inspectors tasked with the inspection of a school must also have relevant experience of teaching and leading in the phase being inspected. In other words, Inspectors with experience only of teaching and leading in Secondary Schools or Technical Colleges should not be tasked with assessing and evaluating the work of Nursery schools. Inspectors placed in this position have neither the knowledge or understanding necessary to do the job.

It is also essential that Inspectors assigned to evaluate the work of a school have an understanding of the culture and ethos of that school. For example, it is of concern to this Association when Inspectors who are not competent Irish speakers are assigned to Irish Medium Schools. NAHT is of the view that this demonstrates a total lack of respect to those who work in this sector.

In addition, NAHT(NI) is convinced that all inspectors should have recent and relevant school based teaching/leadership experience before they are permitted to participate in a school inspection. The basis for this recommendation is that the school environment has changed radically over recent years. Consequently, even those Inspectors who, in the past, had some experience of leading and managing in a school, could find themselves out of touch with today's education environment. It has been suggested that appointments to the Inspectorate should be on the basis of a secondment or fixed term contract. NAHT(NI) believes that this would ensure that all inspectors have the level and quality of experience necessary to assess the work which is ongoing in our schools.

In the interim, and on the basis of the Nolan Principles of openness, honesty and transparency, the ETI, in their pre-inspection information pack, should list the members of the inspection team and should provide for the school a pen portrait outlining each inspector's education/career experience. This would serve to reassure teachers and school leaders that the people coming in to assess their work have the knowledge, experience and background to do the job.



2.4 Assessing Schools in the context of their working environment

NAHT(NI) is concerned that inspection teams do not always assess schools in the context in which they are working. For example, it would appear that the level of social deprivation is assessed solely on the basis of FSM. This provides an inaccurate assessment of the catchment area and, ultimately, an inaccurate assessment of the school.

In addition, the ETI's over reliance on data impacts negatively on schools in our most deprived areas. Recent FOI requests highlight the correlation between lower inspection grades and the level of deprivation within the catchment area and school community. While they pay lip service, it is of concern to this Association that the ETI make no allowance for value added and do not acknowledge that some of our children face a harder route to educational attainment. For schools struggling to raise parental aspirations for the children, negative inspection reports are extremely damaging. Everything that our schools do is reflective and respectful of the communities that they serve. ETI should do likewise.

In addition, no cognisance is taken of the school environment. For example, although credence is always given to staff questionnaires, the ETI appear uninterested in the impact which industrial action has had on planning, the training and development of staff or, ultimately, school improvement. School leaders are held responsible and have been deemed incompetent on the basis that:-

- sufficient progress has not been made in relation to school improvement or
- measures are not in place to address a teacher's incompetence or
- communications in the school are ineffective

when, in reality, all attempts to move these issues forward were blocked by union action and the employer/ DENI's reluctance to address ongoing issues.

Indeed, it is of concern to this Association that while mention will be made in the report of management's failure in relation to communication, the management of staff or the management of the curriculum, no comment is made about the environment in which the Principal and staff are required to function.

Recommendations

NAHT(NI) believes that inspection reports should be a reflection of what is happening in the school at a point in time. Factors which have impacted on a school's ability to make progress should be reported. It is unacceptable that school leaders are held responsible and accountable for situations which are outside their control. For example, in assessing the school, the ETI must be sensitive to the context in which the school functions and should acknowledge the school's contribution to the overall development and attainment of the children without a blinkered reliance on data profiles which are inappropriate in certain areas.

Although responsibility for the management of industrial action rests with the employers and DENI, we have yet to see any report which outlines the impact which industrial action has had on a school or any comment about the action or inaction which DENI/the employers have taken to address such issues.



In addition, staff in many of our schools are working in sub-standard accommodation. It is of concern to this Association that issues relating to the quality of the buildings are rarely highlighted in Inspection reports. On those occasions where these issues are highlighted, they are written in a way which castigates the school. On other occasions, and with the support of a sympathetic inspector, deficiencies are sensitively identified and the report can then be used by the Principal and Governors to ensure that essential work is completed. NAHT(NI) believes that there ought to be consistency about the manner in which such issues are reported. We are also of the view that accommodation issues should not have an adversarial impact on the evaluation of the work of a school.

2.5 Questionnaires

Leading and managing in a school environment is challenging. School leaders are rarely given credit when things go right but are always held responsible and accountable when they go wrong. In the day to day management of their school, Principals and other school leaders often have to tackle difficult issues. For example, Principals are expected to challenge underperformance and poor attendance. However, managing such situations can create unease across the staff as a whole. This unrest frequently stems from the Principal's inability to share with the whole staff the basis of such action as this would be perceived as breaching the individual's right to privacy. It is therefore of concern to this Association that in the aftermath of such action, a concerted and coordinated campaign has, on many occasions, been launched by members of staff who appear to regard the inspection process and staff questionnaires as an opportunity for pay back. NAHT(NI) has expressed, over many years, our concerns about the use of anonymous staff questionnaires and the ETI's apparent willingness to accept, at face value, all staff responses. It is also of concern to this association that, on the basis of these anonymous questionnaires, school leaders have been deemed incompetent and have been placed on the Unsatisfactory Teacher Procedure.

There are also issues in relation to the interpretation of parental questionnaires. NAHT believes that parental input into the inspection process is vital. It is of concern to this Association that not every parent is provided with an opportunity to input their views. In addition we are concerned that, given the limited input permitted, that ETI appears occasionally to focus on individual comments instead of the majority view. Opportunity must also be provided for school staff to respond to such comments and it would appear that no attempt is made by the ETI to put such comments into context. This is unfortunately yet another example of the ETI focusing on the negative and refusing to acknowledge the many positive developments that are ongoing in schools.

Recommendations

Staff should be provided with opportunities to input into the inspection process. However, staff questionnaires should be signed off and staff should be advised from the outset that the ETI and or Governors may require staff to produce the evidence necessary to support their responses. NAHT(NI) is also convinced that the content of questionnaires should always be shared with the Board of Governors and school leaders so that they are aware of issues of concern and can address those issues.

When NAHT(NI) raised concerns about the use of anonymous questionnaires, the ETI stated that questionnaires need to remain anonymous because some staff are afraid



that there would be reprisals if information was shared with the Principal. However, this issue is actually about natural justice. Providing the individual with an opportunity to respond to allegations made against him/her is a basic human right.

Article 6 of the Convention of Human Rights states that:-

- (2) Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.*
- (3) Everyone charged with a criminal offence has the following minimum rights:*
 - (a) to be informed promptly, in a language which he understands and in detail, of the nature and cause of the accusations against him;*
 - (b) to have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence;*
 - (c) to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing or, if he has not sufficient means to pay for legal assistance, to be given it free when the interests of justice so require;*
 - (d) to examine or have examined witnesses against him and to obtain the attendance and examination of witnesses on his behalf under the same conditions as witnesses against him;*

There is something very sad about the fact that while these rights are enshrined for those subjected to criminal charges, they are denied to hard working and committed school leaders who are not advised of the nature and source of the allegations and are not given an opportunity to respond to such allegations. NAHT would also urge the panel to ensure that if questionnaires are to be used in the inspection process, all allegations should be properly investigated and individuals making the allegations should be required to substantiate their allegations with appropriate evidence.

We would also ask the panel to note that the ETI's concerns about the well-being of staff are unfounded. Members of staff are protected from victimisation or reprisal. In situations where false allegations have been made against a Principal or other school leader, the individual(s) should also be held responsible and accountable for their actions. The procedure, as it operates at present, is very one sided.

All parents should be given the opportunity to input into the inspection process as this would give ETI a fuller picture of school life than their current restricted focus groups. This is already the case in Nursery schools and in the opinion of this Association should become normal practice. All staff in schools receive questionnaires. All parents should be afforded the same opportunity. Anonymous questionnaires should not be accepted and when considering parental questionnaires, the ETI should be as quick to comment on the positive responses as they are the negative responses.

2.6 Inspection Reports

Inspection reports are now public documents. The ETI, on this basis, sought to ensure that while reports reflected a school's strengths, challenges and its grading, teachers were not identified or identifiable in the report. NAHT(NI) appreciates the sentiment behind this determination. However, it is interesting to note that while the ETI is reluctant to name or identify teachers, Principals are not treated in the same manner. NAHT(NI) is very concerned that personal and private information about members is shared freely with the general public. For example information about a Principal's



absence from school is often included in the report. We have raised our concerns about this difference in treatment with the Chief Inspector but have yet to receive a satisfactory response.

Schools are also increasingly concerned that inspection reports are now so short and general that they are meaningless. The ETI have explained that they are produced in this manner to protect teachers. However, we note that other jurisdictions have found ways to manage confidentiality without undermining the value of the report. For example, Inspectors in Scotland produce a document similar to our ETI report for public consumption and an in-depth report that identifies not only school based strengths and challenges, but comments individually on teachers and school leaders and the effectiveness of their practice. The full report is used internally by teachers, school leaders and Governors to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

NAHT(NI) is of the view that our inspection process could only be deemed value for money if the information received was sufficiently detailed that it could be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Recommendations

If they are to fulfill their role and function, the ETI must produce reports that are meaningful and informative and which confirms strengths, clarifies the issues which need to be addressed and supports the school as it engages in an improvement process.

We believe that two reports should be provided at the end of each inspection. A public report should be produced in the present format. The internal report should identify and celebrate the good practice witnessed in classrooms so that those teachers can share their experience and good practice with other members of staff and in so doing, can play an active role in whole school improvement.

The report should also highlight those situations where a teacher's practice is not up to standard and where there are areas for improvement.

The cost of retaining an ETI is considerable. They should not be permitted to hide behind generalities.

2.7 Appeals

NAHT(NI) notes that while schools can lodge 'concerns' about the manner in which members of the ETI carry out their duty, there is no appeal in relation to the outcome of an inspection. NAHT(NI) acknowledges that in most situations it is better for a school to accept the outcome and plough their energies into addressing the issues identified in the report. However, it is of concern to this Association that, even in those situations where a school has serious concerns about the basis of the assessment and believes that the outcome is wrong, there is no right or process of appeal.



Recommendations

Inspectors are not infallible. They can get things wrong and it is important that on those occasions where they have made a mistake or have not taken into consideration all of the evidence available, that there is a process which will facilitate professional dialogue and resolve concerns. Where a school continues to have concerns about the process or outcome of an inspection, there should be opportunity for appeal. We would ask the panel to note that the process, as it exists at present, does not even facilitate professional exchange.

School teachers and leaders, on a daily basis, are subject to challenge and are required to deal with concerns raised by a range of stakeholders in a professional manner. It is therefore of concern to this Association that the ETI regards all exchanges as an attack on individual inspectors or their organisation and responds accordingly.

It is of even greater concern that when a complaint is lodged, the ETI refuses to delay publication of the report. NAHT believes that if a complaint about the manner in which an inspection has been carried out is registered, the report should be held at least until there has been an opportunity for professional dialogue or until an investigation has been carried out.

When a complaint is lodged, it is investigated in-house. Bearing in mind the potential impact of a negative report and the fact that it could close a school and be career ending for a school leader, it is imperative that all complaints regarding the conduct of an inspection are investigated by an independent body which has access to all of the appropriate documentation. It is also essential that an opportunity is provided for witnesses to make their presentation to this panel.

Publication of the report should be delayed until this investigation is complete.

2.8 NAHT(NI) notes that the ETI has been tasked with providing the evidence which will result in schools that are less than satisfactory, entering FIP (AQW22129/11)

NAHT(NI) is concerned that an inspector's assessment of a teacher or the work of a school leader appears too often to be subjective in its determination. NAHT welcomes the fact that the ETI will now be required to produce an evidence base to support these determinations.

Recommendations

NAHT would seek the panel's assurance that the evidence collected and collated by the ETI will now be shared with all relevant bodies and an opportunity will be provided to enable schools to challenge the evidence presented.

NAHT is also concerned by what appears to be an undermining of the role and function of the Board of Governors. The ETI's role and function is to produce the evidence base and present its recommendations to the Board of Governors. On the basis of the evidence presented, the Board of Governors should determine which course of action a school will follow.



2.9 Inspecting Governance

While NAHT(NI) would not underplay the importance of good governance, members and experienced governors have expressed their concerns about the ETI's intention to inspect and report on the effectiveness of Governance in inspection reports. Members have reported that a number of their more experienced governors have already advised them that, on the basis of this new development, they will not seek re-election when BoGs are re-constituted in the new school year.

Recommendations

NAHT would ask the panel to note that Governors are volunteers. We would also ask you to bear in mind that not every governor has a professional background. That does not mean that their contribution to the effective working of a school is any less valuable. However, the prospect of their work being inspected is terrifying for many of these individuals. Schools find it difficult enough to attract good governors. We would seek the panel's assurance that, before we lose the services of committed governors, an impact assessment is carried out to review the implications of this proposal.

2.10 Value Added

Schools are not all the same. Research has highlighted the devastating impact which social deprivation can have on predicted outcomes. However, NAHT(NI) is concerned that the ETI's present reliance on FSM (free school meals) places some of our schools at a considerable disadvantage. The use of FSM to determine the level of social deprivation in an area is, at best, a very blunt tool. However, we are concerned that its use effectively skews outcomes, impacts adversely on rural schools and places many of our schools at a financial disadvantage.

The ETI do not recognise children's achievements. Instead, the impact of level scores means that classes and children are pre-judged and because of this, the ETI do not objectively look at the quality of the lessons or the depth of learning that is being achieved.

The failure of ETI to view schools within the context of their local environment will, in the opinion of this Association, also have a detrimental long term effect on recruitment of staff in areas of significant disadvantage. Fewer aspirant or experienced Principals are likely to apply to a school where there is a significantly higher risk of lower inspection grades, regardless of the many improvements that they support in enhancing a child's life chances. The Minister for Education has expressed his desire to recruit our most capable professionals into our most challenging areas. This will not happen whilst the likelihood of only ever achieving a lower inspection grading is associated with these schools.

Recommendations

Our statisticians are already aware of the limitations of using FSM as the sole indication of Social Deprivation. They persist with this approach because it is relatively easy to use. NAHT(NI) would urge the panel to insist on the use of measures which are more reliable and which do not disadvantage sectors of our community.



The ETI should assess children's progress on measures wider than level scores. Taking schools own data into account gives a fuller picture of children's achievements from within their community context. The ETI should never lose focus on the individual child. It would appear that the ETI find it difficult to acknowledge the very difficult lives some of our children experience and the obstacles they must overcome to achieve educational successes.

2.11 Welfare

NAHT is concerned that the inspection process has become more stressful for all school staff. NAHT receives many reports from Principals whose mental and physical health has suffered as a consequence of the inspection process. These reports are received from all Principals regardless of the grade that they achieved. Even those who received glowing and outstanding inspection reports talk about the mental and physical exhaustion they experienced and the related health problems which they attribute to the stress involved in the process. The ETI seem reluctant to acknowledge or address this issue. This is not specifically an issue for school leadership as all school staff report similar experiences. This issue arose in prominence in Scotland as a consequence of the tragic suicide of a head teacher following an inspection.

Recommendations

Research should be conducted into the impact of inspection on staff health and wellbeing and to ascertain which aspects of the inspection process should be modified to minimise stress and maximise the opportunity for school improvement.

People today lead increasingly complex and stressful lives. We all have a duty of care to ensure that the process of inspection is there to develop the individual and the school and is not a process which destroys confidence, self esteem and morale.



3. The School Improvement Process

The impediments to School Improvement and what NAHT(NI) believe needs to be in place to ensure that education delivered in Northern Ireland is consistently of a high quality.

3.1 Introduction

NAHT(NI) believes that all children should be entitled to an education which is of a high quality.

If this objective is to be achieved, factors that impact adversely on a school's ability to deliver a quality education experience for all of our young people needs to be openly acknowledged and addressed. It is of concern to this Association that this has not been the practice to date. Indeed, it would appear that, on too many occasions, our decision makers have chosen to;

- ignore issues which are impacting on the quality of teaching and learning
- place obstacles in the path of effective management of our schools
- refuse to support good and effective management
- opt for compromise and an easy solution instead of focusing on what is right for our children and then,
- blame school leaders when things go wrong.

Recommendations

If we are to tackle under achievement, develop the education process and improve the life opportunities of our young people, the Nolan Principles of openness, honesty and transparency should be applied to all aspects of the management of our education system. We need to face up to the challenges and be willing to do what is right even in those situations where this would place the service in conflict with established sectors. The interests of our children should be paramount.

3.2 What are we seeking to achieve?

It is essential that we are very clear about what we want from our education system, what we want for our children, how we measure success and how we manage those situations where the education that is being delivered is not of sufficient quality. NAHT(NI) is convinced that the level of clarity necessary to enable school leaders to lead and evaluate teaching and learning is not in place at this point in time.

The two documents normally referred to in discussions about school improvement '*Together Towards Improvement*' and '*Every School a Good School*' do not have common objectives and offer, in some instances, conflicting advice. The incompatibility of these documents was referred to in a report commissioned by DENI and produced by PWC in 2009. However, it would appear that none of the issues identified in this report have been addressed.

It is also of concern to this Association that, instead of paring back on administration costs, it would appear that the new structures that have been proposed will deliver less



support for schools at a considerably greater cost. This will inevitably have an adverse impact on school budgets and ultimately on our children and their learning.

When she announced RPA, Angela Smyth talked about creating an education system suitable for the 21st century. She talked also about the importance of putting the interests of our children before sectoral interests. It would appear that in the intervening years we have lost sight of that objective.

Recommendations

Teachers, school leaders and other educationalists have urged the decision makers to focus their policies on our children and their needs. If we put the child first and focus our educational budget on those initiatives which improve their learning experiences, educational outcomes will improve automatically.

Our administrative structure should be tailored to reflect the needs of schools. At present, the tail is wagging the dog.

3.3 Managing the process

If we want to improve the quality of education in our schools we need to go back to basics and determine;

- what do we want to achieve?
- the resources required to achieve our objectives
- how success will be evaluated
- the measures which must be in place to support those children who are not achieving
- the measures which must be in place to enable teachers to deliver, and
- the support systems which schools need to address under-performance

Recommendations

It is essential that those tasked with the job of supporting teaching and managing school improvement have had the experience of teaching, leading and managing in successful schools. Teachers, school leaders and Governors find it difficult to place their trust and confidence in people whose only experience of leading and managing is theoretical and comes from the book which they have read. Only those who have done the job should be tasked with supporting teachers and school leaders in the management of school improvement.

3.4 Managing Staff

The staff in our schools should be held responsible and accountable for the quality of education that they deliver.

If this is to be achieved, school leaders must be given the authority to manage and should be confident in the knowledge that, providing they have not behaved in an unreasonable or inappropriate manner, the Board of Governors and their employers will



support them in their endeavors. That is not the situation at this point in time. Although school leaders are responsible for the day to day management of their school, they are, on too many occasions, prevented from managing effectively. For example, although in 2009, DENI, the employers, confirmed that school leaders should observe teaching and learning, this is still not happening in many schools across Northern Ireland. On the advice of their unions, teachers in those schools have refused to teach when the Principal or a colleague comes into their classroom to observe teaching/learning. It is of concern to this Association that where teachers have refused to participate in the process, school leaders have been advised to back off on the basis that pushing ahead with classroom observation could impact on staff relationships in the work place.

NAHT(NI) wrote to the ETI to express concerns that school leaders were being harshly judged in the inspection process because they were not engaging in classroom observation, a situation which had been created by industrial action and was therefore outside the control of Principals and other school leaders. We asked the ETI to put out a statement which would make clear to all teachers the ETI's expectation that observation would be an integral part of school life. The response we received from the ETI was in the negative. The letter stated that while the ETI expected school leaders to have knowledge of what was happening in their school, it was up to the school leader to determine how that knowledge would be achieved.

In addition to the restrictions on classroom observation, teachers, on the advice of their union, have refused, in some schools, to hand in lesson planning. The argument here is that lesson plans are there to facilitate the teacher and should not be reviewed by the Principal. Once again, and despite having been made aware of the situation, the employers have simply ignored the issue. While the ETI will report on the lack of co-ordinated planning and will refer to the importance of leadership, they refused to outline, in school reports, the barriers which have prevented this from happening.

Although 'The Jordanstown Agreement' makes it clear that teachers are required to teach any class allocated to them, many teachers across Northern Ireland refuse to move class, even when the purpose of the re-organisation is explained to them. This effectively prevents staff development. While the ETI will frequently complain to the Principal about a teacher being too long with one age group, they have consistently refused to place on record their support for staffing flexibility.

Boards of Governors and the employers on too many occasions trade the efficient and effective management of our schools for what initially appears to them to be a quiet life. However, this quiet life is often at the expense of quality and the improvement of teaching and learning.

One of the biggest obstacles to school improvement is staff absence. While NAHT values the systems in place to support colleagues who are ill, we are concerned that the Managing Attendance Policy is not fit for purpose and does not enable school leaders to address persistent absence. The Employers and DENI must ensure that the procedures in place to manage persistent poor attendance are suitably rigorous and fit for purpose.

It is of concern to this Association that while the Board of Governors and the employers play lip service to school improvement, they are reluctant to challenge poor attendance or poor performance. For example, NAHT(NI) is very aware of the number of school leaders who, when they attempt to address these issues, suddenly find themselves



facing allegations of Bullying and Harassment or, alternatively, concerted and orchestrated industrial unrest. NAHT(NI) believes that all members of staff should be treated with respect. Bullying and harassment can not be condoned in any workplace. However, if school improvement is to be achieved, and if all children are to receive a quality education, school leaders and Governors must be given the powers, authority and support that will enable them to deal effectively with the very small number of staff who abuse the system, disrupt the education of our children and, on occasion, put children at risk.

In addition, allegations of bullying and harassment must be properly investigated and managed. Asking a member of staff to fulfill his or her contract is neither bullying nor harassment. Expecting teachers to teach the class allocated to them, plan their lessons and mark books should be the norm in any school. Indeed, NAHT(NI) would regard this as a pre-requisite to any effective education process. However, the need to fulfill these key functions is challenged daily in some schools. It is therefore of concern to this Association that instead of referring to 'The Jordanstown Agreement', which outlines what can reasonably be expected of any teacher, and dealing with the allegations accordingly, Board of Governors/employers, on too many occasions, side step formal procedures and attempt to facilitate a compromise. This results, quite often, in that small number of disgruntled teachers not fulfilling their contracts. This ultimately impacts on the morale of their teaching colleagues who work hard to improve the life opportunities of the children in their care and school leaders who are not permitted to manage and are constantly subjected to challenge and poor educational standards.

NAHT is also concerned about the time it takes to address competence issues. The new 'Managing Effective Teaching Procedure' was designed to speed up the process but will only be fit for purpose if Principals and school leaders receive the advice and guidance they need and if the teacher is able and willing to avail of support.

The situation at present is that attempts to address competence issues are resisted and cause so much additional pressure for all of the stakeholders that they are only implemented as a last resort. We need to put in place systems and structures which will enable teachers themselves to avail of support in situations where they feel that they are under pressure and before their issues impact on children in the classroom. This intensive support should be for a limited period and should be regarded as a positive process of professional development.

Despite these, and indeed many other restrictions on the management of schools, school leaders are held responsible and accountable for the quality of teaching and learning in their school.

Recommendations

If school leaders are to fulfill their role and function and do the job allocated to them, it is essential that they are given the support and the tools which will enable them to deliver. That is not the situation at this point in time. It is essential that the needs of our children are put first.



3.5 Industrial Action

NAHT(NI) is both a union and a professional association. We respect the right of any employee to take industrial action and, where they consider it appropriate, to withdraw their labour. However, responsibility for managing industrial action rests with the employers and DENI.

One would therefore expect DENI and the employers to play a leading role, particularly in those situations where Industrial Action has been ongoing for a number of years. However, we are unaware of any action which DENI or the employers have taken to resolve the difficulties which industrial action has caused in many schools across Northern Ireland. We are also unaware of any support and/or offer of advice issued to schools and Governors to enable them to manage their schools despite ongoing action. We are also unaware of any challenge issued to the unions who have engaged in action and/or any sanctions which have been imposed on the basis of that action.

School leaders have been advised that they should not challenge teachers who are engaged in industrial action. Consequently, in many schools across Northern Ireland, teachers consistently walk out of school at 3 o'clock. Directed time does not exist, staff meetings do not happen or happen only infrequently and, in many of these schools, teachers refuse to participate in any form of training and development. "Baker Days", if they happen at all, are un-directed and are used by teachers to prepare for the new school year. There is no forward planning and no opportunity for professional dialogue. It is also of concern to this Association that while the ETI in school reports will refer to poor communications within the school, no account is taken of the impact that industrial action will have had on communication and no reference is made to ongoing industrial action and the impact that it will have had on teaching or learning. It would appear that the ETI, once again, finds it easier to blame school leadership than allocate blame appropriately. School leaders find this extremely frustrating and demoralising.

Recommendations

We need to be open, honest and transparent about the factors which are impacting on school improvement and on how we address those issues.

3.6 School Closures and Amalgamations

In many of his recent statements, the Education Minister, John O'Dowd, stated that the purpose of Area Planning is not to save money but to improve the quality of education in our schools.

NAHT(NI) is concerned about this stated objective. While we acknowledge and accept that the reorganisation of our school estate is essential if we are to continue to meet the needs of communities, we are concerned that Mr O'Dowd appears to automatically link the size of a school to the effectiveness of that school. That link is not borne out by evidence. Indeed, an analysis of inspection reports would suggest that the percentage of small schools rated good, very good or outstanding is higher than the percentage in larger schools. If the aim of re-organisation is to improve the quality of education, we need to go back to stage one of the process and ensure that the criteria used to identify schools at risk reflects outcome as opposed to size.



It is also important to recall that the process of re-organisation can in itself have a negative impact on school improvement. NAHT's General Secretary, Russell Hobby, in his previous career carried out research into the impact of school closures and amalgamations. His report concluded that far from improving the quality of provision, many school closures and amalgamations impacted negatively on outcomes. Indeed, as a consequence of the disruptions caused by re-organisation and the impact that it has on staff morale and relationships, it was found that many of these new schools had failed to reach the level of delivery/quality of their component parts through the process. In other words, it is likely that in the short term at least, standards, as a consequence of the re-organisation process, will go into decline. That does not mean that we should avoid the re-organisation of our school estate. However, we need to be very clear about the basis for that re-organisation and we need to factor in the impact that it is likely to have on school improvement.

Recommendations

The present process is fundamentally flawed. Each sector carried out a review of its own schools. There has been very little cross sector co-operation. In addition, there has been only limited cross board co-operation and no consideration at all of other types of school structures in place in other jurisdictions. NAHT(NI)'s concern is that if the proposals which have been presented will create a school estate which will disadvantage pupils and parents and effectively block any movement towards a shared future. NAHT(NI) is of the view that we need to go back to stage one and establish, in the first instance, an acceptable administrative structure. Our school estate should be reviewed again in its entirety and should focus on the needs of children and communities in Northern Ireland and not on sectoral interests.

Summary

2. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)

- 2.1 Self evaluation is effective in promoting school improvement. However, training and development must be provided to foster a common understanding and ensure that there is consistency across all schools.
- 2.2 An efficient, effective and respected process of external evaluation is an essential prerequisite if the public is to have confidence in our education system. However, our ETI does not have the confidence of the profession or the community.
- 2.3 It is essential that those who are tasked with evaluating and assessing schools have recent and relevant school based experience in teaching, leading and managing. Many of those employed by the ETI have little or no experience of teaching, leading or managing in schools.
- 2.4 Schools must be assessed in the context of their working environment. Factors including social deprivation, culture and industrial action will have had an impact on the learning environment and must be considered in the context of the report.
- 2.5 Staff and parents should have an input into the inspection process but the use of anonymous questionnaires is contrary to the concept of natural justice. In addition, the ETI report should seek to present a balance of opinion.
- 2.6 The reports which are produced at present are so general that they are of little use to anyone. Inspection teams should continue to produce a report in the present format for public consumption. They should also be required to produce a report on every class/teacher/department inspected. These reports should be made available to the teacher, his/her line manager, the Principal and the Board of Governors and should form the basis for training and professional development.
- 2.7 Inspectors are not infallible. They can get things wrong and it is important that, on those occasions where they have got it wrong, or where a school is concerned, that they have not taken into consideration all of the evidence available, that there is an appeals process and that no report is published until this process has been completed.
- 2.8 The ETI's role and function is to produce the evidence base and present its recommendations to the Board of Governors. The Board of Governors should determine how issues identified in the report will be addressed. NAHT(NI) is concerned that the ETI are over-stepping their remit and have been undermining the role and function of Boards of Governors.
- 2.9 Governors are unpaid volunteers. NAHT(NI) is concerned that proposals to subject governors to the inspection process will make it very difficult to attract governors.
- 2.10 FSM is a very blunt tool when used to measure social deprivation. There is concern that the use of FSM means that many schools are being unfairly



assessed and are failing to attract the resources available to others.

- 2.11 Research should be carried out into the impact of our inspection process on staff welfare and school improvement.

3. *The School Improvement Process*

- 3.1 All children should be entitled to an education which is of a high quality.
- 3.2 What are we seeking to achieve? It is essential that we are very clear about what we want from our education system, what we want for our children, how we measure success and how we manage those situations where the education that is being delivered is not of sufficient quality.
- 3.3 It is essential that those tasked with the job of supporting teachers, school leaders and the school improvement process have recent and relevant experience of teaching, leading and managing in successful schools. That is not always the case at present.
- 3.4 The staff in our schools should be held responsible and accountable for the quality of education that they deliver. School leaders must be given the authority to manage and should be confident in the knowledge that, providing they have not behaved in an unreasonable or inappropriate manner, the Board of Governors and their employers will support them in their endeavors.
- 3.5 Responsibility for managing industrial action rests with the employers and DENI. However, it is of concern to this association that these situations are not properly managed. No consideration is given to the impact that industrial action will have had on the day to day management of the school and it is not mentioned in ETI reports.
- 3.6 The present Area Planning process is fundamentally flawed. Each sector carried out a review of its own schools. There has been very little cross sector co-operation. In addition, there has been only limited cross board co-operation, other types of school systems/structures have not been considered at all. NAHT(NI)'s concern is that if the proposals which are in place at present are permitted to go ahead, we will have created a school estate which will disadvantage pupils and parents and will effectively block any movement towards a shared future.
- DENI appears to automatically link the size of a school to the effectiveness of that school. That link is not borne out by evidence. Indeed, an analysis of inspection reports would suggest that the percentage of small schools rated good, very good or outstanding is higher than the percentage of larger schools. If the aim of re-organisation is to improve the quality of education, we need to go back to stage one of the process and ensure that the criteria used to identify schools reflects outcome as opposed to size.

It is also important to recall that the process of re-organisation can, in itself, have a negative impact on school improvement.

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The Royal School Dungannon

The Royal School Dungannon

Inquiry into the ETI and the School Improvement Process

Submission by Dr D Burnett, Headmaster (The Royal School Dungannon)

1. The ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement and how/whether ETI properly assesses the value-added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment

It would be helpful to all schools if the ETI was in a position to utilise pupil and institutional value-added data and not reliant upon the current approach of measuring achievement by school type and in relation to the average for that school type (see 3 and 4 below).

2. The key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the ELBs to help schools improve

As a general rule in education we should expect school improvement to come from within a school or in cooperation with another school. The actions and resources of support services may provide additional help and guidance but the emphasis should be on schools bringing about their own improvement.

Where a school lacks the capacity to bring about improvement on its own then the experience in England of joining successful schools and schools in difficulty within federations or similar relationships has produced some significant results which are worth investigating. Although such arrangements are not always cheap and do often require short term injections of funding, in the long term stability is created by the new procedures and approaches enacted on the ground by staff and governors - by the rhythms of school life changing for the better.

See for example:

Ronald Arnold, 'Schools in collaboration: federations, collegiates and partnerships', by (2006) -<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/EMI15/EMI15.pdf>

Ofsted report on federations (2011)

<http://www.thegovernor.org.uk/freedownloads/newmodelsofschoolleadership/Leadership%20of%20more%20than%20one%20school.doc>

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/news/federated-schools-see-improved-outcomes-%E2%80%93-ofsted> (Ofsted press release)

3. Alternative inspection/improvement approaches which might better assess value-added and recognise improvement by schools

The most important point is to introduce value-added data for all Northern Ireland schools. This was promised in 'Every School a Good School' in April 2009 (see page 27, "In pursuit of this goal we will: introduce a contextual value-added measure to be

used alongside other performance data in assessing the performance of schools”). In addition ESaGS promised to “require the Education and Skills Authority to develop and deliver a training programme for governors, principals and teachers in the effective use of data, including benchmarking and the new value-added measure”. Neither promise has been delivered. The non-appearance of ESA is not a sufficient reason for the absence of value-added data from the schools system. There are a number of important consequences which follow.

The ETI are left with a limited model for making judgements about school performance based upon comparing the performance of any school to the average at GCSE and/or A Level. This model is predicated on the idea that schools fall into two types, selective and non-selective, and that each school should only be compared against schools which have the same designation. The key assumption is that all selective and non-selective schools are similar in terms of pupil intake and by the time public examinations come along at GCSE then salient judgements are being made by comparing any school within a category with the average for the entire category. This assumption is flawed in a number of ways.

First, the intake of schools within the selective and non-selective groupings varies significantly. A non-selective school in an area without a selective school nearby will have a higher ability intake than a non-selective school in an area with a selective school next door yet both will be labelled non-selective and treated the same by ETI in terms of comparing examination outcomes to the non-selective school average. The first school has an in-built advantage. Similarly, in a divided community, a selective school situated in an area with a large potential intake will have a higher standard of intake than a selective school with a small potential intake. This can be seen in the scores/grades for the selection tests used by selective schools more so than in the end of Key Stage 2 data provided by primary schools but even here there can be significant variation. As both are selective schools they will be treated the same by ETI although the first school has an in-built advantage over the second school when comparing outcomes to the grammar school average. It is the institutional designation which takes priority rather than the ability levels of the pupils. In the examples above it is entirely possible that value-added data would show the second school in each instance to be helping pupils to achieve greater progress relative to their starting point. This would allow ETI to make more sophisticated judgements about schools and pupils' progress than at present. Without value-added data it is not possible to address such issues.

Second, the data indicating the ability levels of pupils entering Year 8 in any Northern Ireland school prior to September 2013 have been based upon teacher assessed levels of English and Mathematics in primary schools at the end of Key Stage 2 which are not moderated or standardised and may vary considerably from year to year and between schools. This difficulty has been compounded by the production of a further set of teacher assessed judgements at the end of Key Stage 3 which are similarly not moderated and not standardised. Therefore, data on pupils' ability levels when beginning Year 8 and at the end of Year 10 cannot be considered reliable or valid. Even if the data were reliable and valid then there is no mechanism for calculating the progress made by individual pupils beyond an assumption that a pupil should make at least one level of progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. And even if that mechanism was found to produce valid and reliable data then there is no way to correlate teacher assessed levels in Mathematics and English at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 with expected GCSE outcomes for an individual pupil across a range of subjects.

Third, the introduction of new statutory assessment levels at Key Stages 2 and 3 based upon Communication (instead of English) and Using Mathematics (instead of Mathematics), and in 2013-14 Using ICT, has compounded these problems. At Key Stages 2 and 3 the assessment levels remain as teacher assessed levels, with one third of the post-primary cohort earmarked for external moderation by CCEA. Trade Union action has undermined that outcome and the moderated cohort is much reduced. There has been no moderation of primary school assessment levels. Moreover, the assessments in relation to Using Mathematics, Communication and Using ICT are based upon the aggregated outcomes from work undertaken in a range of subjects and are not directly comparable to GCSE subjects such as Mathematics or English Language or ICT. Indeed, the emphasis for what is to be assessed at Key Stages 2 and 3 in Using Mathematics, Communication and Using ICT is often very different to the assessment demands found in GCSE Mathematics, English and ICT. No direct correlation is possible. Such data are therefore not reliable or valid for comparative purposes between schools or for measuring progress by pupils from Key Stages 2 to 3 and then GCSE at Key Stage 4.

The best solution to these problems is the introduction of a value-added data system for all schools based upon an externally standardised “low stakes” test at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3. This would provide outcomes showing pupils’ ability levels at these points and enable projections for public examination performance at GCSE (and subsequently at A Level) that might be expected in the future. It would enable the focus for every school to be upon each individual pupil’s progress. As a result, the focus of ETI judgements could shift away from institutional judgements in comparison to the average and towards the same issue of pupil progress. This would allow ETI to make a judgement based upon learning demonstrated by pupils relative to their starting point and allow ETI to challenge schools where value-added is consistently low. Currently, some schools are purchasing value-added packages to enable them to track pupils’ progress and to focus upon individual needs but this raises further issues.

An obvious problem arising is that some schools have access to value-added data systems and some do not. For schools which have purchased value-added data systems, from the likes of CEM or GL Assessment, there is the potential to benchmark pupils against a national cohort and to project typical future outcomes in public examinations. Schools can then track which pupils are on target and which need help; and they can also measure the value-added when actual GCSE/A Level results are known. ETI would also be in a position to see the value added per pupil and would not be reliant upon the current benchmarking process of ‘above or below the average’. There is no clear message in current ETI reports that, where schools have purchased and utilised value-added packages, such data is a considered and consistent part of ETI judgements.

Schools without value-added data cannot currently operate in this manner. As a result, all schools continue to be judged by ETI inspectors in terms of benchmarking against average outcomes by school type as this is the only common data available. The problem is that the current benchmarking data is so limited that it could be possible for ETI to judge a school as failing (for being below the average for that school’s designation) when value-added data would show the school to be adding considerable value in terms of pupils’ progress. In short, that no school could have achieved any more with those pupils. Conversely, a school which is consistently above the average may be adding little or no value to pupils’ outcomes. In short, that the same pupils in a

different school would have achieved even more highly. These would be more meaningful judgements to make about schools in terms of performance and success.

There are no short-cuts available to ETI using the current assessment procedures and data. Any effort to tally the levels of progress made from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and then from Key Stage 3 to GCSE and to declare such to be value-added measure would not be legitimate. The only option is for DENI to deliver the value-added package promised in ESaGS in April 2009. The process used in England, known as 'Raiseonline', has been available to all schools in an online format for several years. An online model would be an ideal delivery method for Northern Ireland schools.

The final problem currently is that without a value-added data system provided by DENI for all schools there is a burden of the annual cost to a school which chooses to fund its own value-added system. In the current financial climate that is a difficult position for any school to maintain and it creates differences in provision amongst schools. This could be perceived as unfair and, more importantly, unhelpful in addressing DENI's key priority of raising standards for pupils. It may be that schools which currently purchase value-added data packages are forced to give up this practice for reasons of cost. That would be a backward step for pupils and schools.

The advantage of value-added data is that it can show the 'trend over time' outcomes for a school based upon the progress made by pupils; and also how that school compares to all other schools in the cohort. The school's designation as selective or non-selective is irrelevant as the key question for all schools is, "how well did pupils perform given where they started from?"

4. The priorities and actions which need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process
 - a. Does ETI need enhanced powers?
 - b. Should ETI make more/any use of alternative measures of achievement (other than examination performance) to assess school performance?

Schools will generally welcome the opportunity to demonstrate the value of extra-curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils. Data for such is not usually empirical but ETI could make more use of 'soft' data which allow the qualitative aspects of school life to be included in judgements more consistently and with greater emphasis.

- c. Should ETI be independent of DENI (as Ofsted is)?

The only answer to this question is 'yes'. It is imperative that the ETI are seen as independent in every regard.

- d. Does ETI need a better complaints / feedback procedure?
 - e. Do schools always understand the conclusions reached by ETI - is more transparency required in this regard?

Having read a great number of 2012 and 2013 ETI reports it is difficult to spot a consistent language for judging schools. For example, take the following extracts about the quality of teaching and learning from four inspections in 2012/13. One is from a school with a top ranked 'outstanding' judgement while the others are from schools with third ranked 'good' and fourth ranked 'satisfactory' judgements but which is which?

Extract 1

In three-quarters of the lessons observed, the quality of the learning and teaching was good or better.

In the one-quarter of the lessons observed which were less than effective, the pace of learning was too slow with insufficient challenge for the pupils, resulting in a considerable lack of progression in their learning.

Extract 2

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to satisfactory with most of the lessons seen being good or better. [The term most is defined by ETI as "75% - 90%"]

Extract 3

The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; in three-quarters of the lessons it was good or better and in one-third of the lessons it was very good or outstanding.

Extract 4

The quality of the teaching observed in nine-tenths of the lessons was good; in just over one half of these lessons it was very good, and a small number were outstanding.

In the less effective practice, in one-tenth of the lessons observed, the outcomes were unclear, there was over exposition by the teacher and fewer opportunities for the pupils to develop confidently as independent learners.

It would be helpful to schools if ETI reports could use standard terms which have a defined meaning.

5. Other matters relating to ETI and the school improvement process that are worthy of further scrutiny

I would be willing to give oral evidence to the Committee.

Dr D Burnett

26 September 2013

Ulster Teachers' Union

Ulster Teachers' Union Written Evidence to the Assembly Education Committee

August 2013

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement System

1. The Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU) is the only locally-based teachers' union. With its Headquarters in Belfast, it has a membership of over 6,000, including teachers employed in the nursery, primary, post-primary and special sectors by all the employing authorities in Northern Ireland.
2. The UTU has an elected General Secretary and a Central Executive Committee (CEC) of elected members who are serving teachers and principals from all areas in the north. The UTU prides itself on the democratic nature of its decision-making process, with the CEC meeting at least monthly during the academic year to progress the policy decisions of its Annual Conference and to discuss matters that require instant response during the periods between Conferences.
3. The UTU has for some time been concerned about the direction the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has been travelling in relation to the inspection of schools and indeed discussion of school inspections has featured regularly at CEC meetings during the past 2-3 years. In addition the Officials of UTU have noted an increase in the amount of anxiety generated by the announcement of a school inspection, as reported by members. There has also been an increase in the support requested by members before, during and after inspections, in some cases requiring Officials to be engaged in quite lengthy counselling of members following on from an inspection. The UTU is therefore very pleased that this inquiry is taking place and is very keen to contribute to providing evidence to the Assembly's Education Committee.
4. The UTU wishes to state that it fully endorses the submission made by GTC(NI) and commends the work that was done by the Registrar of GTC, in collaboration with representatives of NITC, to present a very full picture of the current position, including references to academic research and comparisons with other countries.
5. The UTU in this submission will therefore simply summarise the main issues of concern as reported by its members and comment on the very useful fact-finding visit its General Secretary made to its sister union, the EIS, earlier this year to investigate the inspection system in Scotland.
6. The UTU has noted the following issues of concern that have emerged during the recent past in relation to the ETI.
 - 6.1 Members have reported that the pressure they feel in relation to the announcement of an inspection is now much higher than it was. This is due in part to the rationalisation agenda which makes inspection reports much more high stakes but also to the perceived change in the role of the inspectorate. Where in the past teachers were obviously concerned that the school would get an acceptable outcome, there is now a feeling that the ETI are there to be critical and this is fuelled by the experiences of schools that have had lower than expected outcomes.
 - 6.2 This fear of inspections has been further aggravated by the statements made publicly regarding "failing schools" and "failing teachers". The identification of the number of principal teachers who are "failing" in their leadership role has had a very detrimental effect on morale of principals and has resulted in many cases in the teaching staff coming under severe

- pressure to produce an unrealistic and unsustainable “performance” for the ETI. It has also created situations where a wedge has been driven between the leadership of a school and the rest of the teaching workforce.
- 6.3 The very public nature of inspection reports has resulted in situations where individuals have been “named and shamed”. An example of this was the very public humiliation of the Principal of Crumlin High School who was subjected to a campaign against her, including death threats, following an Inspection carried out by the ETI. There needs to be a more professional way of dealing with such matters. In Scotland the school receives a detailed report which can be dealt with internally while the public report is much shorter and less likely to provoke such disproportionate reaction.
- 6.4 In the past teachers were generally quite accepting when the ETI announced their intention to inspect a school as they felt it was a good method of quality assurance and they felt it would be carried out in a supportive manner. Unfortunately recent experience has been that this spirit of support has been diluted and there is a definite feeling that the ETI are there to criticise rather than support. As all teachers know, you get the best performance from pupils where they feel supported, not threatened, and where their morale is high, not low. The current Inspection system is not supporting professional self-esteem for the vast majority of teachers.
- 6.5 The disjointed relationship between schools and the ETI is very evident, even at policy level. By its own admission, the ETI states on its website that “it is not the duty of the Education and Training Inspectorate to provide extended support for teachers and schools”. Reports from teachers indicate that inspectors give little or no feedback on lessons. This clearly undermines any claim by ETI to any commitment to supporting school development. Instead ETI rhetorically allocates the responsibility of school improvement to the Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS). In a financial climate that has both crippled and restricted CASS across the five Board areas to schools falling into special measures, not all schools will in fact be able to avail of support to attain the desired “very good” and “outstanding” rankings which ETI are pressing schools to achieve.
- 6.6 The District Inspector role has been viewed in the past as a very important one, but it has been reported that the very supportive relationship between the District Inspector and school principals is under threat. This was confirmed to the teaching unions at a meeting with the Chief Inspector who stated that District Inspectors were inspecting from the minute they walked into a school. Many principals valued the informal chats they had with District Inspectors and used them as a tool for improvement. If they feel that they are under full professional scrutiny they may feel inhibited in sharing their concerns honestly, which will be to the detriment of the school. The UTU would suggest that the role of the District Inspector should be restored to its previous status.
- 6.7 The grading system for school inspections has been the subject of concern for the UTU and other teaching unions for some time. Where a school has been deemed “satisfactory” then that should be regarded as a positive, albeit there may be some areas which could be addressed in order to improve. Unfortunately the ETI appear not to have the same interpretation of “satisfactory” as everyone else and actually feel that a school falling into this category is not satisfactory. (This was confirmed by comments made by the Chief Inspector.) As stated previously, teacher morale suffers in such a critical atmosphere. Schools in Northern Ireland produced wonderful international results in the TIMS and PERLS study announced earlier this year. It is difficult to match this up with the negativity that is generated through the Inspection system.
- 6.8 Following on from this, there seems to be a concerted effort to divide schools into the “good” schools and those that are not good. This has been exacerbated by the invitations extended by the ETI to those schools who have achieved “outstanding” or “very good” Inspection outcomes to celebratory ceremonies. The UTU believes that this an entirely inappropriate way to divide the profession and that it again impacts on teacher morale. Since there are

- indications that the socio-economic intake of a school impacts on the Inspection outcome (as per statistics requested by the teacher unions) it disadvantages very good teachers who choose to teach in the more challenging schools but who are never likely to be lauded in this way due to the in-built bias within the system.
- 6.9 The process for arriving at a final grading for a school seems to be unclear. It has been reported that some schools are led to believe that they have performed at a certain level but when the final Report appears this seems to have changed. The UTU is concerned that there may be influences on the outcome of an Inspection that are not directly related to what has been observed by the inspectors who visited the school.
 - 6.10 The pressure placed upon schools by the current inspection model's desire for copious evidence and increased accountability has at times put intolerable pressure on staff. Staff who are on leave due to illness or other leave feel under pressure to co-operate at full capacity in order to avoid the prospect of a re-inspection caused by teacher absence. Moreover the additional workload placed on schools in preparation for inspections is at tension with the values of the Teacher Welfare Strategy and contravenes the terms and ethos of the Teacher Workload Agreement.
 7. During the tenure of the previous two Chief Inspectors (and indeed before that) there was a good professional working relationship between the teaching unions and the Chief Inspectors. There were regular meetings where issues were raised and genuine professional dialogue took place. Since the appointment of the current Chief Inspector this process has been seen by the unions as less effective.
 8. The UTU was very disappointed at the way the ETI reacted during the recent period of Industrial Action in schools. In some instances very positive relationships between the ETI and schools that had been developed over many years were put under great pressure due to the directions given to Inspectors and to the correspondence sent to schools from the Chief Inspector. This has not been typical of similar situations in the past where the ETI showed sensitivity in order to ensure that relationships were maintained.
 9. The UTU would suggest that the Education Committee examine the ethos and operation of the equivalent service to the ETI in Scotland which seems to command the full support of the teaching force. The UTU also suggest that there should be an immediate review of how schools are graded and in addition, that the issue of teacher morale be addressed. The UTU also suggests that the whole reporting system be examined in order to ensure that the message going out to the general public is one that will not undermine the very good work being done by the vast majority of schools.
 10. In relation to the School Improvement Process, the UTU has grave concerns about the emphasis on raising standards at a time when the Education Service is fighting just to maintain standards in a climate of harsh cuts to the Education budget. This does not seem to be taken into account by the Department of Education in their constant mantra of school improvement. At present schools are working in a very difficult situation with staff redundancies, a lack of proper support services to schools, an absence of comprehensive Professional Development for teachers and with the uncertainty around the formation of an Education and Skills Authority. The current employing authorities have been cut back drastically and the support services that were once there have dwindled and in some cases disappeared completely. Serious thought must be given to the reality of where we are economically – we can only have standards that relate to the resources we put into schools, not the standards we would all aspire to if there were endless streams of funding available.
 11. The UTU once again thanks the Education Committee for this opportunity to participate in the Inquiry and would be very happy to send a representative to speak to this paper should the Committee request it to do so.

ULTACH Trust



IONTAOBHAS ULTACH

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27 September 2013

**Inquiry into the Education Training Inspectorate (ETI)
Assembly Education Committee**

Aodán Mac Póilin, ULTACH Trust

A chara

ULTACH Trust is a cross-community Irish language organisation. In the past our organisation was heavily involved in the promotion of Irish-medium education. We still have some involvement in the area, and have maintained contact with many Irish-medium schools and preschools.

Our observations are based on conversations with a range of people working in the sector. They have three major areas of concern about how the Inspectorate interfaces with Irish-medium schools.

The first of these is that many inspectors are given responsibility for inspecting Irish-medium schools without sufficient knowledge of the language to carry out their task. Indeed some of them have no Irish at all.

We understand that it may not always be possible to have a full team of inspectors with a high command of the language, and we understand that efforts are made to have at least one Irish-speaking inspector in primary and secondary schools. However, we have been told of incidents in which inspections were led by inspectors with no Irish at all. As the lead inspector is the person with the most input into inspections, we believe that there is no justification for giving such a level of authority to someone who does not understand the language of instruction.

We have also been told that the same care is not given to inspections of Irish-medium preschools, and that they are frequently inspected by teams in which none of the inspectors know the language. This should not be allowed to happen.

The second cause of concern relates to the lack of consistency in the inspection process. Schools have a good idea, when they hear who is to inspect them, what kind of a report they are liable to get, and claim that their estimate is usually correct. Some inspectors are particularly notorious for the severity of their evaluations. A number of inspectors have been singled out for being particularly hard on Irish-medium schools. It is not always clear if this is due to hostility on their part, or to a very poor understanding of how Irish-medium education works.

There is something badly wrong with a system when evaluations appear to be so arbitrary, and when they appear to be dependent on the personality – or personal attitude – of individual inspectors. There does not seem to be a mechanism in place to ensure a high level of consistency in inspectorial reports.

The third area of concern is that of inspectors who appear to be badly informed about how immersion education works. According to our contacts, these inspectors appear to assume that what is desirable in a first-language setting must also be desirable – in all circumstances – in a second (or immersion) language setting. While many basic principles of good practice are common to both English-medium and Irish-medium education, in some cases the mechanical application of evaluative principles designed for English-medium schools are completely inappropriate for Irish-medium schools. One example of this is a common complaint from inspectors that teaching in Irish-medium schools is too directive, or too teacher-centred. There is a simple answer to this. You cannot discovery-learn a second language; if you want Irish-medium education to succeed, until the language is well-established, you have to accept a different level of teacher direction than in a first language situation.

Behind all these problems is a single, basic, structural problem. Inspectors are given too much power. Evaluations made by inspectors are regarded by the Inspectorate as inviolable, and cannot be challenged. While this does not mean that all inspectors – or all inspections – are unfair, it does mean that inspectors who have taken a stand on a particular educational dogma, or are not very intelligent, or who may have an instinctive bias against Irish medium education, can abuse their power.

Mise le meas

AODÁN MAC PÓILIN
Director

Victoria College Belfast

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement process

Submission from Victoria College Belfast.

<p>Issue 1</p> <p>The ETI current approach in respect of school inspection/ improvement and how/whether ETI properly assesses the value-added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment.</p>	<p>The rationale behind any inspection of an educational establishment should be to provide an accurate assessment of provision across a number of different areas in a drive to identify strengths and areas for improvement for the service provided for our young people. Research indicates that external assessment is not necessarily effective in achieving this result. Most high-achieving schools are proficient in self-evaluation and this level of self-awareness would seem to be a more appropriate assessment of provision than a conclusion drawn by ETI inspectors based on a 2½ day visit to a school.</p> <p>The ETI approach seems to focus very much on accountability as measured through the published examination results. All schools are judged against criteria for GCSE and A level passes which are different for selective and non selective schools but which take no account of the contextual value added. Within the College we use baseline testing at Year 8 and again in Year 11 to set target grades and to track pupil progress. As a result, we are very aware of the value-added that we provide for our pupils at both GCSE and A level. A number of our pupils present with serious pastoral and/or home-life problems and may be advised by staff to sit a reduced number of GCSE and/or A level subjects. As we are a selective school, the benchmark for attainment is set at 7+ GCSEs grades A* - C and 3+ A levels grades A* - C. Under extenuating circumstances we sometimes permit a girl to take fewer GCSEs or 1 or 2 A-levels as this meets her needs at the time, despite the negative impact that we know this will have on our academic outcomes. The pressure of league tables that are widely publicised in the media is intense and yet the figures do not provide the value-added background and cannot be accurately interpreted by the public. However, this does not prevent the newspapers publishing articles which highlight “failing” grammar schools and the “Top 20 schools”.</p> <p>Correlation between ETI/DENI expectations and benchmarking would be welcomed.</p>
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<p>Issue 2</p> <p>The key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the Education and Library Boards to help schools improve.</p>	<p>If a school has concerns about the ETI inspection process and the published report a written report must be produced with supporting evidence. However, this does not prevent the report from being published. The impact on staff morale resulting from a negative ETI report cannot be underestimated. The staff in a school that is experiencing difficulties will be under constant scrutiny which is a difficult situation for SLT and Governors to manage. The confidence in a school's performance as perceived by current and prospective pupils and parents can be severely damaged as the result of a crude inspection categorisation based on a short 2 ½ day inspection. The reputational risk to the school as a result of an unfavourable inspection report is huge and may adversely impact on pupil intake for many years thereafter.</p> <p>School improvement can be achieved with the support of ELB. However, due to funding cuts, the CASS service provided to schools has been dramatically reduced. In our opinion, ETI should therefore be an active participant in the school improvement process which takes place after inspection. The Department of Education currently do provide statistical data for benchmarking examination results and a set of quality standards as published in Every School a Good School and Together Towards Improvement. However, we believe there is a gap in training for teachers and Senior Leadership Teams in self-evaluation methodologies which would make a very positive impact on school improvement.</p> <p>Many of the support networks we avail of are internal or within the South Belfast Area Learning Community. We would welcome more widespread support.</p> <p>We are experiencing a lack of core literacy and numeracy support and would like to express our concern at the increasing levels of pupils presenting with SEN and the impact this has on school performance and provision for individual pupils.</p>
<p>Issue 3</p> <p>Alternative inspection/ improvement approaches which might better assess value-added and recognise improvement by schools.</p>	<p>Ofsted measure Contextual Value Added. We know that every child is different and each will have their own learning needs: some will have to do a lot of catching up to get five GCSEs or equivalent; for others seven or eight good grades will be relatively easily attained; and for some (perhaps with significant special educational needs) one or two qualifications might be a huge achievement. Ofsted therefore also measure the progress made by pupils from one stage of their education to the next.</p> <p>A number of other factors which are outside a school's control, such as gender, special educational needs, English as a Second Language, movement between schools, and family circumstances, are also known to affect pupils' performance. CVA therefore goes a step further than simple VA by taking these factors into account and thus gives a much fairer measure of the effectiveness of a school. That means that comparisons against other schools are more meaningful, for example, when comparing the performance of a school in a leafy suburb against the performance of one in an inner city area – both of which might face quite different challenges.</p>

<p>Issue 4</p> <p>The priorities and actions which need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process – does ETI need enhanced powers?; should ETI make more/any use of alternative measures of achievement (other than examination performance) to assess school performance?; should ETI be independent of the Department of Education (as Ofsted is)?; does ETI need a better complaints/feedback procedure?; Do schools always understand the conclusions produced by ETI – is more transparency required in this regard?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ETI should give more weight to school self-assessment and provide support and training to enable schools to more effectively self-assess. In some countries, self-assessments are used by external reviewers to make a preliminary appraisal of a school before it is visited (Faubert, 2009). An advantage of school self-assessments is that they encourage schools to engage with the criteria (indicators) and to reflect on their own practices and improvements. • ETI should measure progress over time and not simply judge a school by a snapshot in time. • There needs to be an improved relationship between teachers and inspectors with ETI assessors viewed as professional practitioners who are helpful to school leaders in improvement planning. ETI should also be able to identify certain schools/individual teachers/leaders as examples of best practice and aid collaboration between schools experiencing difficulties and those schools who are deemed to be providing excellent education for children and young people. • In our opinion, a school should be judged by the people who are currently best placed to identify strengths and areas for improvement – namely pupils, staff, parents and governors. The role of ETI would then become one of support to help the school to develop strategies to become even better. • In our opinion, the inspectorate should be an independent body and not linked to the Department of Education as it is presently.
<p>Issue 5</p> <p>Other matters relating to ETI and the school improvement process that are worthy of further scrutiny.</p>	<p>We note with interest how the education system in one of the top performing countries, Finland, is geared towards the professional development of teachers. Overall, Finland invests 30 times more funds in the professional development of teachers and administrators than in evaluating the performance of students and schools, including testing. In testing-intensive education systems, this ratio is the opposite, with the majority of funding going to evaluation and standardised testing.</p> <p>In many countries, standardised testing is used to assess a school's performance. That's not the case in Finland where, in the absence of standardised tests, schools are responsible for assessing student achievement. A high-performing school in Finland is one where all students perform beyond what would be expected based on their socioeconomic background.</p> <p>ETI should consider enhanced incentives for individual and whole school improvement supported at school level and by the Department of Education. This was evidenced in New Orleans, USA during a leadership study visit during the last academic year.</p>

Wallace High School

Wallace High School

Response to the Inquiry into The Education and Training Inspectorate And the School Improvement Process.

Submitted by: Deborah O'Hare

ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection/improvement and how/ whether ETU properly assesses the value-added in those schools, which have lower levels of examination attainment:

ETI inspectors use the information that is designed by DENI to be the key indicators of performance. It is this information that is lacking in sufficient detail and, one could argue, does not take account of value added measures across the whole school sector, not just in schools with lower levels of achievement. A lack of reliable KS2 and 3 data sets does not allow for careful scrutiny of the effect of a school's early intervention methods eg in Yr 8.

The first reliable comparative measure is that of GCSE results, in my opinion, which is too late in a young person's educational career.

Schools use a plethora of CATS, YELLIS tests to try to fill this gap, it is expensive. A reliable state sponsored test of this type would give a much clear baseline from which ETI and the Department could measure attainment and improvement at individual pupil level, school by school and system wide.

The key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the ELBs to help schools to improve:

The very public scrutiny in the press now of "failing schools" means for many schools in formal intervention following an ETI inspection the loss of confidence publically may be irreversible. Whilst schools in which improvements need to be made should receive support and firm intervention with targets etc, perhaps the question to be asked by the Department of Education and the managing authority is how did they let the situation get to this serious a stage and why did only a 3 day visit from Inspectors pick this problem up?

More regular supportive and exploratory visits by district inspectors would help ensure a wider knowledge base of the standards across the province. ETI's current structure would not facilitate this approach; it seems that district inspectors now have very high numbers of schools in their district. A reduction in the number, more inspectors and a more supportive role in assessing the standards regularly reached by the school, in my opinion, would improve the educational outcomes of all students.

Alternative inspection/ improvement approaches, which might better assess value-added and recognise improvement by schools:

The introduction of reliable comparable externally marked assessments at KS 2 and 3 would, in my opinion, provide a more accurate picture of attainment at KS2 and 3.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the way in which the curriculum is swayed and the negative impact on some students by the rather narrow measures of performance at GCSE and A'Level required by the Department and used by ETI to assess the performance of schools. Measures such as % of students achieving 3 + A-C at A'Level may encourage some schools not to enter students for 2 A'Levels plus one other subject at a lower level, which may otherwise have been a sensible career pathway decision and appropriate for the student.

A more sensible measure of performance in Sixth Form may be to look at the destinations of the students; if building capacity in the economy is one of the key aims why not track the progress of leavers to see where the value is being added? Also consideration should be given to a more holistic analysis of performance in Sixth Form to include the students' individual UCAS tariff. This includes representative sporting honours, music grades etc as well as raw grades.

The priorities and actions which need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process – does ETI need enhanced powers?; should ETI make more/any use of alternative measures of achievement (other than examination performance) to assess school performance?; should ETI be independent of the Department of Education?; does ETI need a better complaints/ feedback procedure? ; Do schools always understand the conclusions reached by ETI- is more transparency needed in this regard?

I believe ETI should be independent of DENI but a very different model of inspection service than OFSTED. The independence from DENI will allow ETI to scrutinise and critique DENI policy and make suggestions based on "on the ground knowledge" of the system.

As previously explained I think ETI should have a role in supportive school improvement through the district inspector structure and there should be a move from 3 day inspections to a much more self –analytical and self – evaluative approach to school improvement.

Underpinning this should still be a rigorous and accountable system but with more local support for schools, perhaps experienced Principals seconded to help also and early intervention in schools to reduce or obliterate the need for formal intervention or such headline carrying stories which serve to undermine the work of the whole system.

Other matters relating to ETI and the school improvement process that are worthy of further scrutiny. None.

Ms I Whitten

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We are a group of ex teachers from all types of school; primary, secondary, grammar, who meet very regularly and who are still in touch with many serving teachers. We invariably talk shop. These are points which are often raised. (I am spokesperson as I am out of teaching long enough not to be associated with any school or employee).

From speaking to many teachers, Vice Principals and some Principals the same concerns keep being raised.

- An over reliance of data.
- The inspectorate itself.
- The cosy relationship which seems to exist between the ETI, the boards and the DENI..

An over reliance in data

To take a school in the NEELB as an example its inspection report of Feb 2012 states "In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided is inadequate."

Yet the report finds

- Satisfactory quality of provision in English, maths and science.
- Satisfactory quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils
- Satisfactory curricular provision for the pupils
- Good quality of CEIAG

All of this would point towards a satisfactory rating overall. However because of the GCSE results being below the N.I average for similar type schools and because the SDP did not meet with approval the school is described as inadequate.

If you scrutinise the inspection reports of the schools in formal intervention in many cases everything; pastoral care, the provision for learning and the quality of teaching are all satisfactory or above and the parents, pupils and the boards of governors are all satisfied with the school. Yet because of below average results the quality of education is described as inadequate.

The bands the schools are put into are determined on the number of FSM.

How is the number of children on FSM determined? If a child does not take up the offer of FSM are they still included in the statistics?

Services children are not allowed to take FSM yet they are often below average because of constantly moving from one country to another.

Small schools are disadvantaged. The inspectors acknowledge this themselves (in very small print) viz- "the key stage outcome should be interpreted with caution for small primary schools as a large percentage change from year to year can often be attributed to a very small number of children." Yet they still use the standard N.I. averages in these schools. If you look at the inspection reports of failing schools a higher percentage are small schools. Are inspectors setting too high targets? Inspection reports show that even with intensive help from the Boards and CASS school development plans have still not met with approval.

If the experts from the Board and CASS cannot produce an acceptable how can a senior management team be expected to?

If the school is described as below average it almost invariably follows that the leadership is deemed to be inadequate. This is unfair to Principals and may lead to fewer able candidates applying for principalships in the future. For instance in the school we used as an example previously the principal had been described by inspectors as providing “excellent leadership that is characterised by his high expectations of the pupils and the staff and his commitment to continuous improvement” in an inspection survey in 2006 and the 2012 inspection stated “the principal is strongly committed to the life and work of the school, has fostered good working relationships and is supported by his SLT and Board of Governors.” The leadership was still classed as inadequate.

The principal resigned shortly after. He has been replaced by someone who in the past four years as a VP and acting principal has been given an unsatisfactory rating on two separate occasions by inspectors.

A VP who has been used by her board and other principals as an example of good classroom practice has taken early retirement. This is partly because her school is due an inspection and although she is recognised as an exemplary classroom teacher she is afraid her documentation would not satisfy the inspectorate.

Schools will try to find ways to maximize their results, ways which aren't always in the pupils' best interest. Already we know that

- Schools are pulling pupils from GCSE classes if it is thought that they won't do well.
- Children are being advised to do subjects that it is thought that they will pass well. These are not always the subjects that they need for what they want to do in the future.
- Pupils are not being allowed to proceed to year 14 if they haven't achieved AS levels of D or above.
- One Grammar school we know of is making some pupils repeat year 11 if their term exams have not been good enough.
- One Primary school principal has told his P7 teacher how many Key Stage 3s are needed to keep the Schools average consistent within the band it is in.

All of these are intended to make sure schools averages are at the level required to please the inspectors.

The inspectorate themselves

Who inspects the inspectors? To whom are they accountable?

A recently published report by the ETI entitled 'Preparing School Principals for leaderships' recommends that Principals need “appropriate opportunities to refresh their skills and professional competencies.” Are there opportunities for inspectors to do the same? Inspectors that have not taught for many years should have to refresh their skills in the classroom. Otherwise how can an inspector who has only ever taught French in a grammar school assess a Primary 1 lesson on play?

If an inspector is found wanting are there appropriate channels for complaint and who investigates the complaint?

The cosy relationship between bodies

The ETI, the DENI and the boards seem to have a cosy relationship which seems to exclude Principals and teachers. For instance the NEELB had a telephone conversation for which an email exists saying that they were going to remove a principal and asking for the inspection report to be printed early which it was. The NEELB installed an ex-inspector as an extra governor of a failing school even though he had no experience of being a Governor or had never taught in a primary school.

There is a very high level of dissatisfaction among principals and teachers we have spoken to with the inspectorate and the criteria by which their schools are measured.

Yours faithfully,

I Whitten



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 4

Memoranda and Correspondence from the Department of Education

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Education and Training Inspectorate

Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process

Education Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly

Submission by Noelle Buick
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Education and Training Inspectorate
September 2013

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Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



ETI Evidence for NI Assembly Education Committee Inquiry into ETI

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is a 'unitary' inspectorate. It is part of the Department of Education and provides independent inspection services and policy advice for a number of departments. Much of ETI's work is for three Departments within the Northern Ireland Civil Service: the Department of Education (DE); the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)

1.2 Inspection is at the centre of raising standards for all learners. It ensures best practice is highlighted and poor provision is identified and improved. The main function of ETI is to inspect and report on all education and training provision with a particular focus on statutory provision. In the case of DE this includes all statutory education, initial teacher education, early years settings, and youth settings.

1.3 In addition to the more familiar institutional inspection ETI also conducts a wide range of inspection evaluations which provides an opportunity to focus on an aspect of education and/or training in greater depth.

1.4 Most inspectors are deployed as district inspectors with responsibility for a group of organisations. The district inspector develops a deeper understanding of the context within which the organisation is working.

1.5 The ETI is headed by a Chief Inspector who is supported by 60 inspectors. The ETI budget is approximately £5 million or around 0.3% of the total DE education budget. A target of a 20% reduction over the 2011-2015 period has been set for the organisation.

1.6 Whilst performance data is extremely important, ETI bases its evaluations on a range of indicators which have been shared with the education community.

1.7 The ETI reports its findings using the following descriptors, relating to levels of performance: outstanding; very good; good; satisfactory; inadequate and unsatisfactory.

1.8 The ETI has formed strong links with other inspectorates both internationally and within the United Kingdom and Ireland.

1.9 Most inspection teams include associate assessors who are practising principals, vice-principals or senior managers in their own organisations. Currently ETI has over 200 associate assessors who assist on inspections and also provide an important additional perspective to inspection findings by providing regular evaluative feedback on the effectiveness of the inspection and improvement processes.

1.10 In the interests of promoting improvement through the process of self-evaluation, ETI publishes the quality indicators against which inspectors evaluate the quality of the educational provision during inspection work. One of the most popular resources issued by ETI to support the professional development of teachers is The Reflective Teacher.

1.11 The ETI evaluates continually its own processes and procedures in order to build on strengths and identify areas for improvement.

1.12 The effectiveness of the work of ETI is independently and externally evaluated every year by the Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency (NISRA). Over 80% of respondents stated that the inspection process helped the organisation plan for and effect improvement in the outcomes for learners. The report issued by the assessors for the Customer Service Excellence standard stated that: "The Education and Training Inspectorate is a highly customer focused organisation with a discrete balance between the rigorous assessment of educational and training establishments against educational policy and the support for these organisations to change and improve."

2. Overview

2.1 Who We Are

2.1.1 The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is a 'unitary' inspectorate and part of the Department of Education (DE). The ETI provides independent inspection services and policy advice for DE as well as for a number of other government departments. The legal basis for ETI's work is set out in The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (Articles 102 and 102A). Its mission statement 'promoting improvement in the interest of all learners', is supported by agreed corporate values and principles (Appendix 1) and underpins all inspection and policy advice offered by ETI.

2.2 Who Commissions Inspection Services?

2.2.1 Much of ETI's work is for three Departments within the Northern Ireland Civil Service:

The Department of Education (DE)

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)

2.2.2 In addition, ETI inspects the education services provided by: the agricultural colleges funded by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development; the prison service (conducted collaboratively with the Criminal Justice Inspection); and provides inspection services on behalf of the Home Office (formally the United Kingdom Border Agency).

2.3 The Role of ETI

2.3.1 The main function of ETI is to inspect and report on all education and training provision with a particular focus on statutory provision. The ETI provides each of the key departments, (DE, DEL, DCAL), with evidence-

based policy advice, evaluates the effectiveness and impact of key policies in practice and, via the biennial Chief Inspector's report, makes evaluative comment on the quality of education being provided system-wide including strengths and areas for improvement.

2.3.2 In the case of DE this includes all statutory education, initial teacher education, early years settings, and youth settings. The ETI inspects, on behalf of DEL, all further education colleges, work-based learning supplier organisations and the lead contractors for adult employment programmes (Steps to Work). DCAL commissions ETI to inspect the education programmes provided by the arms length bodies it funds, such as the Arts Council, PRONI, Armagh Planetarium and Observatory, W5, Northern Ireland Screen, and the Creative Learning Centres.

2.3.3 In addition to the more familiar institutional inspection, ETI also conducts a wide range of inspection evaluations, which provide an opportunity to focus on an aspect of education and/or training in greater depth and to look at it across a number of institutions in order that good practice can be shared. An indication of the range of evaluations/surveys undertaken and completed by ETI during the business year is set out in Appendix 2.

2.3.4 ETI is responsive to requests from departments when asked for specific specialist advice or when unexpected circumstances or difficulties occur. For example, in the last year an inspection team was deployed to respond to DE concerns arising from a serious incident in a school raised by a 'whistle blower'.

2.3.5 Requests received from the three main commissioning departments in the business year 2012-2013 are outlined in Appendix 2.

2.4 The Organisational Structure of ETI

2.4.1 The ETI is headed by a Chief Inspector who is the principal professional adviser on education matters. The Chief Inspector is supported by 60 inspectors. (Appendix 3)

2.4.2 Inspectors are recruited through open competition. All inspectors have extensive experience as practitioners and all have held substantial management responsibilities at a senior level in the organisation from which they were recruited.

2.4.3 Most inspectors are deployed as district inspectors (DIs) with responsibility for a group of organisations. The DI develops a deeper understanding of the context within which the organisation is working, provides a challenge function outside of the normal inspection programme, and contributes to capacity building for the organisation to effect improvement. During school visits, s/he will have had the opportunity to discuss a number of issues with the school management team which may include the school development planning process, standards and achievements and, through class observation, the quality of the learning and teaching. Where possible, the DI is a member of the inspection team for that organisation.

2.5 How ETI is Funded

2.5.1 The ETI budget is approximately £5 million or around 0.3% of the total DE education budget. A target of a 20% reduction over the 2011-2015 period has been set for the organisation. Despite the significant resourcing challenges, ETI has maintained its commitment to meeting the demands of the inspection programme and providing policy makers with high quality, independent, evidence-based advice.

2.6 Impact of Inspection

2.6.1 Inspection is at the centre of raising standards for all learners. It ensures that best practice is highlighted and that poor provision is identified and improved.

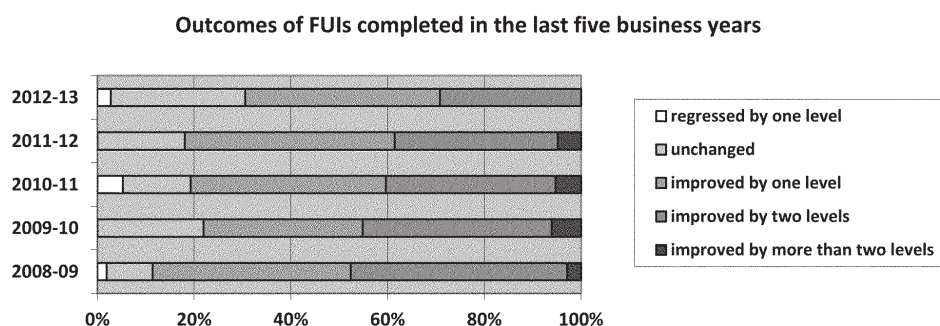
2.6.2 In line with its mission statement, ETI promotes improvement through: advocating for and on behalf of learners of all ages; assuring parents that their children are both safe and well educated; and providing government with evidence-based policy advice and robust accountability mechanisms. Individual organisation inspection reports, survey inspection reports and the Chief Inspector's Reports (with the associated dissemination activities), and regular visits made to organisations by their DI, all contribute to the development of greater rigour and accountability in effecting improvement across the education system. Closely allied to this is the series of support documents (Appendix 4) produced by ETI which help schools develop their own self-evaluation processes.

2.6.3 Inspection enhances the life-chances of learners, by using firsthand evidence to identify, promote and effect improvement in education. For example, the success rate of schools which have been re-inspected following their entry into the Every School a Good School (ESaGS) formal intervention process (FIP) and have exited is indicative of FIP being more successful than previous school improvement programmes. To date 18 of the 26 schools which have been re-inspected have shown significant evidence of improvement and have successfully exited the programme.

2.6.4 In addition, since April 2010, a total of 238 follow-up inspections have been carried out by ETI. Approximately 80% of the education, youth and training organisations in which a follow-up inspection was conducted improved by at least one performance level, (Figure 1).

More detailed information is provided in the annual publication *Inspection Leading to Improvement*.¹

Figure 1



2.6.5 Inspection evidence that the quality of provision was good or better in 78% of primary schools in 2010-12 was supported not just by end of key stage outcomes but by the international endorsement of Northern Ireland coming 5th and 6th respectively in the international Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

2.6.6 Much remains to be done, however, to ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential. The Chief Inspector's Report (2010-12) highlighted the fact that it is unacceptable that 1 in 5 of our primary school children do not reach the expected levels at the end of key stage 2 (2010-11). It is also a concern that in 2011-12 only 62.0% of school leavers achieved at least five GCSEs or the equivalent at grade A*-C including GCSE English and maths and an even greater concern that this figure drops to 34.1% for those school leavers entitled to free school meals. (See also 3.2.1 and 3.2.6)

¹ Inspection leading to improvement

<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-general-documents-non-phase-related/support-material-general-documents-about-inspection/inspection-leading-to-improvement-business-year-2011-2012.htm>

2.6.7 While performance data is extremely important, ETI bases its evaluations on a range of indicators which have been shared with the education community. For example, ETI places a significant, and increasing, emphasis on evaluating the quality of provision for pupils who require additional support with their learning (SEN) and the promotion of inclusive support for pupils at risk of marginalisation. The increased emphasis placed on these issues in the inspection process has encouraged schools to focus more sharply on how they are meeting the needs of these pupils. In particular, SEN issues are addressed more frequently in school development planning and schools are making increased efforts to ensure that the standards achieved by pupils with SEN are improving.

2.6.8 In addition, closer links are being established between special and mainstream schools whereby the specialist experience in one is being shared with the other. There is also clear evidence to demonstrate that the inspection focus on pupils at risk or educated out of schools has done much to encourage post primary schools to take greater responsibility for these pupils and to develop better links with out of school providers.

2.6.9 The effectiveness of the work of ETI is independently and externally evaluated every year by the Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency (NISRA) through confidential questionnaires completed by teachers and principals in the educational and training organisations which have been inspected. The feedback, which is largely positive, indicates that those key professionals who had undergone inspection see a clear link between inspection and improvement. Over 80% of respondents stated that the inspection process helped the organisation plan for and effect improvement in the outcomes for learners.

2.7 The Inspection Process

2.7.1 Inspection aims to promote the highest possible standards of learning, teaching, training and achievement throughout the education system. In all inspections, the fundamental task of the inspection team is to determine if the

provision for learners is not just good but good enough. It does so by exploring five key questions²:

- How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners?
- How effective are teaching, training, learning and assessment?
- How well do the learning experiences, programmes and activities meet the needs of the learners and the wider community?
- How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?
- How well do learners develop and achieve?

2.7.2 The ETI reports its findings using the following descriptors, relating to levels of performance: outstanding; very good; good; satisfactory; inadequate and unsatisfactory.

2.8 Links With Other Inspectorates

2.8.1 The ETI has formed strong links with other inspectorates both internationally and within the United Kingdom and Ireland. For example, in recent years, ETI and the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Inspectorate of the Republic of Ireland have worked together to:

- research and report on good practice in literacy and numeracy in schools; and
- contribute to the creation of the Middletown Centre for Autism (Centre) in 2007 and the joint inspection evaluation carried out in the past academic year.

2.8.2 Members of ETI are invited to join inspection teams in England, Wales, Scotland and Republic of Ireland and reciprocal arrangements take place. ETI

² Together Towards Improvement
<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement.htm>

is also a member of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) and held the Secretariat for over three years.

2.9 The Evaluation of the Inspection Process

2.9.1 The ETI continually evaluates its own processes and procedures in order to build on strengths and identify areas for improvement. As a result, the organisation has been awarded the Customer Service Excellence for the last eight years the assessment for which involved the assessor meeting with, and interviewing, some of the leaders of organisations, chosen at random, which had recently undergone an inspection activity. In addition, the business practices of the organisation were reviewed by a DE internal audit in 2011 which resulted in a very positive evaluation.

2.9.2 Most inspection teams include associate assessors (AA) who are practising principals, vice-principals or senior managers in their own organisations. Since its inception in 2002 the AA programme has practising senior managers in inspection processes and procedures, many of whom cite this training as the best professional development they have undertaken. Appointments are made on a three year basis and ongoing training is provided for participants. Currently ETI has over 200 AAs.

2.9.3 The AAs bring to the inspection process valuable insights on the issues facing senior managers within organisations. Their contribution to inspection complements the great skill ETI inspectors bring to each inspection based on system wide knowledge and expertise gained from the many inspections and visits they carry out. In addition, the AAs gain valuable insights into the evaluation process and observe good practice which they take back to their own organisations and use to develop their self-evaluation procedures. They also provide ETI with regular evaluative feedback on the effectiveness of the inspection and improvement processes.

2.9.4 The outcomes from the confidential questionnaires administered after inspection by NISRA as well as the external evaluation conducted as part of

the assessment for the Customer Service Excellence standard, provides additional opportunities for the organisation to receive feedback on the inspection process from stakeholders.

2.9.5 As a direct result of the evaluations received, changes have been made to the inspection notification time, which is now two working weeks instead of four working weeks; inspection findings are reported on a Friday on whole week inspections so that schools do not have to wait over the weekend to receive the outcome; and prompt feedback is provided after lessons so that teachers do not have to wait until the end of the inspection to learn the findings. The revised post-primary inspection to be introduced in September 2013, now has a greater focus on self-evaluation, and demands less paper work by the school.

2.9.6 In line with ETI objectives (appendix 1) and the Ten Principles of Inspection (appendix 5) ETI is open and transparent about its processes. Through the ETI website organisations have access to information for governors, parents, teachers, principals, learners and employers, along with the quality indicators used by inspectors during inspection. All organisations inspected are made aware of the ETI complaints procedure.

2.10 ETI Promoting Self-Evaluation and Supporting Improvement

2.10.1 In the interests of promoting improvement through the process of self-evaluation, ETI publishes, in "Together Towards Improvement", and "Improving Quality: Raising Standards" the quality indicators against which inspectors evaluate the quality of the educational provision during inspection work. These documents represent a culmination of many years of publishing support materials for organisations and can be used at any time as part of organisations' ongoing developmental planning and target setting processes. Additional information can be found in Appendix 4.

2.10.2 One of the most popular resources issued by ETI to support the professional development of teachers is 'The Reflective Teacher'. This was

first published in 2005 and subsequently updated in 2012 to reflect more recent developments such as the inclusion of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland's (GTCNI) professional competences.

3. Detailed Comment on Terms of Reference

3.1. The Education Committee will review the effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement – considering particularly how ETI assesses the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment

3.1.1 Effectiveness of ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement

3.1.1.1 The ETI undertakes a wide range of work across all sectors of education. Approximately 76% of ETI's work is commissioned by DE across the pre-school, primary, post-primary, special education, initial teacher education and youth phases; nearly 65% is comprised of inspection and policy work in the primary, post-primary and special education sectors.

3.1.1.2 Inspection plays a central role in the implementation of DE's key school improvement policy, ESaGS. In order to ensure reducing resources are targeted to where they can have the greatest impact, ETI developed a proportionate and risk-based inspection strategy for schools. This strategy is being phased in over a six -year period which began in September 2010.

3.1.1.3 The essential feature of this strategy is that all schools will have a formal inspection activity at least once in a three year period but that the length and nature of the inspection activity will vary according to assessment of risk. This will allow ETI to deploy more intensive resources to schools where improvement is required while recognising, endorsing and disseminating innovative practice in the best schools. All targets remain on track for successful completion.

3.1.1.4 Currently, ETI uses a variety of inspection models, ranging from an inspection of a post-primary school focusing on leadership and management and specialist areas, to focused inspections of literacy and numeracy in primary schools. ETI has also carried out area-based inspections, and unannounced inspections focused on pastoral care and child protection.

3.1.1.5 The ETI is introducing a new model of inspection in the post-primary sector for 2013-14. The improvements to the inspection model have been made in response to recent developments in education and to responses from those who have undergone inspection as collated through the NISRA confidential questionnaires. The aim is to bring internal self-evaluation in schools even closer to external inspection in ways that contribute to improving the capacity of the schools for self-evaluation leading to improvement and to strengthening the collaborative nature of inspection and improvement.

3.1.1.6 Inspection teams range from two inspectors for a small primary school to a maximum of seven inspectors in a large post-primary school and almost all teams will include an AA. The inspectors use a range of evidence to inform judgements with a significant focus on classroom observation. Other evidence includes interactions with pupils, an evaluation of the quality of pupils' work, professional discussions with staff and individual post-holders and survey responses from parents, teachers and support staff.

3.1.1.7 Towards the end of an inspection, a moderation meeting is conducted which considers all of the information outlined above. ETI views this moderation meeting as a crucial discussion. Associate Assessors in particular comment regularly on how impressed they are with the thoroughness of these discussions and of how every effort is made to be fair to the school concerned on the basis of the evidence presented. The findings are reported orally to the school either at the end of the inspection or on the following day depending on the inspection model. A draft report is provided to the principal four weeks later to check for factual accuracy. The final report is normally published no longer than six weeks after the inspection.

3.1.1.8 At the end of an inspection, the inspection documentation is scanned and stored electronically within the Department's central repository.

3.1.1.9 The spoken and written reports of the findings of an inspection of an individual organisation acknowledge effective practice and outcomes within

the context of the organisation and, where appropriate, identify the areas for improvement.

3.1.1.10 Schools where provision is evaluated as good or better are confident in using self-evaluation to effect improvement. They work on an ongoing basis with their DI and thus ensure that their staff view the inspection as part of a continuous improvement process and not a one-off event.

3.1.1.11 Organisations where quality of provision is evaluated as 'satisfactory', 'inadequate' or 'unsatisfactory' are subject to a formal process of interim follow-up visits and follow-up inspections. In the case of the 'inadequate' and 'unsatisfactory' evaluations, DE will follow the procedures outlined in the ESaGS policy which normally involves placing the school in the FIP.

3.1.1.12 Where the findings of inspection are acted upon and have had the greatest impact there is: more effective leadership and management with a sharper focus on monitoring and evaluating the standards the pupils are achieving in all aspects of their work; better learning and teaching particularly where the teachers are setting higher expectations of what the learners can achieve, supported by strong pastoral support; a collegial approach to improvement involving all the organisation's staff, the governors, parents and the learners themselves.

3.1.2 How ETI assesses value added

3.1.2.1 The process of inspection is not data-driven but data informed. The critical judgements that inspectors make about value-added depends on the quality of pupils' learning experiences across the school relative to their baseline starting points. ETI does not use a prescriptive or formal value-added system but instead accepts and scrutinises all assessment information a school wishes to make available to it.

3.1.2.2 The ETI noted the problems associated with the development of contextual value-added (CVA) measures in England. Of greatest concern was the risk identified that they can entrench low expectations for the most disadvantaged young people and mask underachievement. While the concept of CVA appears attractive in promising to show the difference schools can make, in reality such measures are very complex and can be difficult to interpret by stakeholders.

3.1.2.3 The ETI draws on all of the information, quantitative and qualitative, which the school has at its disposal and not just a single outcome measure, such as GCSE results.

3.1.2.4 Factors that an inspection team takes into account include; the context in which the school is working, which includes the free school meals percentage; the numbers of pupils on the special educational needs register; pupil enrolment trends; school type; staffing; the attendance, behaviour, motivation and work ethic of the pupils; the parental and community support, intake, gender; and, if available, the qualitative and quantitative data collated by the school's C2k attendance and behaviour management modules. In addition the team will discuss the school's work on tracking low and underachievement of pupils and the actions the school has taken to address any underachievement identified as a result of its data analysis.

3.1.2.5 The inspection teams use their professional judgement and breadth of knowledge of the NI education system to evaluate the value-added evidence that the school provides against the quality indicators in TTI. Through their experience in visiting a large number of schools each year inspectors acquire a detailed understanding of the standards achieved by learners. It is through such experience that inspectors are able to make judgements on whether the standards achieved by the learners are good enough. In addition to the individual experiences of inspectors there are regular opportunities provided for inspectors to meet and discuss how they make their judgements. It is through such internal discussions that ETI ensures that the judgements made

by an inspection team are consistent with those made in other inspections.
(See also the role of the DI in 2.4.3).

3.1.2.6 Through The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 DE requires schools to undertake self-evaluation for improvement to inform school development planning at all times. Prior to an inspection, schools are encouraged to ensure that some form of self-evaluation on the quality of the provision, standards and outcomes and leadership and management is available for inspection. ETI provides a sample proforma which a school may use if it finds it to be helpful. On the basis of the evidence in the school's self-evaluation: inspectors select a sample of lessons to observe; interview key staff; and track progress of the work in pupils' books. In order to evaluate how effective the school's self-evaluation has been in bringing about and demonstrating value added improvement within the school.

3.1.2.7 The school's performance data is discussed with the senior management team who have the opportunity to provide their interpretation of the context of the organisation – this, in turn, is set in the context of the inspector's own experience and judgements on the quality of the pupils' achievements and standards. The overall trends and progress in the school's internal and external performance indicators are tracked and benchmarked against the performance of pupils within the school and the performance of pupils in schools with a similar free school meal entitlement.

3.1.2.8 Where schools use standardised tests³, the inspection team sample the data to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's processes in distinguishing between low and underachievement. In addition, the inspection team will examine the extent to which the school has incorporated suitable intervention strategies and set realistic and challenging whole-school and subject targets to effect improvement.

³ standardised tests such as Midyis, Yellis, CATs, NFER, PIE, PIM

3.1.2.9 The inspection team evaluates the evidence gathered from interviews with the teachers, middle and senior managers to assess if the strategies for implementing whole-school value-added improvement strategies are manageable, consistent across the departments, understood and implemented by all of the staff.

3.2 The Education Committee will identify the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties and any gaps both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or ELBs

3.2 Key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties

3.2.1 The Chief Inspector's Report 2010-2012 indicated that overall, the education system across Northern Ireland achieves good value, but its outcomes are too variable. In the primary sector, there is a need to raise further the standards in literacy and numeracy for almost 20% of children; and improve around 18% of learning and teaching that is satisfactory or below. The quality of leadership and management requires improvement in 22% of the schools inspected. The report also identified an improving trend in the number of post-primary pupils achieving five good GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent. It also pointed out, however, that in the non-selective sector, the gap between schools with lower levels of free school meal eligibility and those where 50% or more of pupils are eligible, is too high at 24.7%. More worryingly, in 2010-11 only 32% of pupils who are entitled to free school meals achieve five GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics.

3.2.2 The ETI subscribes to the key tenet of ESaGS that the quality of teaching is the most important aspect of success for any school. Inspection evidence indicates that while there is a range of factors impinging on schools experiencing difficulties, the most important include: poor leadership and management; low expectations of teachers and managers; and, poverty of

aspiration amongst parents, pupils, and the wider community. However, while any or all of the above can apply in certain circumstances, inspection evidence indicates that the most significant issue in these circumstances is the quality of leadership and management and the capacity of the school for rigorous and honest self-evaluation leading to sustained improvement.

3.2.3 High quality leadership in a school will build on the smallest strengths in order to bring about improvement. There are no examples of schools inspected where the inspectors did not find some evidence of good practice. In every school inspected, either individual teachers or co-ordinators, were managing to achieve good outcomes despite the socio- economic circumstances of the school. Where the quality of leadership was poor, the senior leadership team invariably did not have the capacity to analyse the problems nor plan strategically and realistically for improvement.

3.2.4 The ETI review of school leadership development programmes for principals⁴ found that despite significant investment in leadership development programmes, in particular through Professional Qualification for Headship (PQH), there has been no significant overall increase in the quality of leadership evident through inspections over the past six years.

3.2.5 Post-primary schools tend to be much larger and more complex/multi-faceted than primary schools. Low attainment in post-primary public examinations is a key feature of most of the schools where overall effectiveness has been evaluated as satisfactory or below. Inspection evidence, supported by research, indicates that in these schools the attendant complexities have developed over a significant period of time and there have been clear identifiable trends of under-achievement. The resulting outcome is that, irrespective of the level of support or an expressed commitment to change, improvement, in many instances, is difficult to effect within timescales that will impact positively on the outcomes for all of the young people currently attending that school.

⁴ Preparing school principals to be effective leaders: a review of existing leadership programmes, ETI, March 2013

3.2.6 Nevertheless, the need to improve the outcomes for learners in English and mathematics across all sectors remains a key priority. Of particular concern is the standards achieved by those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, where only 34.1% of all school leavers entitled to FSM achieved GCSE at grades A* - C or equivalents in five subjects including English and mathematics in 2011–12. Whilst this is an improvement from 2010-11 (3.2.1) there is still a great deal of work to be done in order to ensure that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds fulfil their full potential. The ETI recently undertook a survey of schools where the standards achieved by pupils in schools with a relatively high FSM were good in order to identify elements of best practice. The resulting report, which all schools should find useful, will be issued in September 2013. This is especially important in relation to schools meeting the Programme for Government 2011-15 target of increasing the proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who achieve at least five GCSEs at A*-C or equivalent, including English and mathematics.

3.2.7 In some schools, where the quality of education provision is poor the school community has difficulty accepting the validity or fairness of an inspection performance level. The ETI does not under-estimate their difficulty in accepting that provision is not good enough when they believe that they are doing their best. The ETI evaluations are not focused on the individual efforts of teachers unless it is clear that someone is not meeting their professional commitment. However, in focusing on the needs of learners ETI has no option but to comment on the lack of the impact of that hard work on pupil achievements, always with a view to making things better for everyone in the longer term. As part of ETI's own self-evaluative process, and in response to feedback from some of those inspected, ETI is currently considering a review of the performance levels used in conclusion of inspection reports and, in particular, the terminology used in these descriptors.

3.2.8 There are examples where inspection has identified instances of underachievement and, in responding promptly, schools have made

significant improvement. Schools and their employing authorities need to use the wealth of data available to them to identify trends in outcomes and take action to prevent ongoing decline before low expectations become endemic in the organisation.

3.2.9 ETI can provide examples of schools where staff realised, subsequent to a successful follow-up inspection process, that things had needed to change and that as a result of the change having taken place everyone in the school community is more confident and pupils are achieving better outcomes.

3.3 The Education Committee will identify and analyse alternative approaches and models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection, the assessment of value added and improvement;

3.3.1 The ETI's inspection approaches adhere to the Ten Principles of Public Services Inspection, issued by the Office of Public Service Reform 2003: Inspecting for Improvement: Developing a customer Focused Approach (Appendix 6). The Cabinet Office view is that any Inspectorate that can demonstrate achievement against the ten principles will be at the forefront of the best practice.

3.3.2 As part of the Standing International Conference of national and regional Inspectorates of education, ETI is constantly reviewing aspects of the work of inspectorates across other countries and evaluating how effective these would be in Northern Ireland. ETI gives cognisance to the procedures that are effective in other jurisdictions and where appropriate integrates these as part of the on-going development of inspection. In addition, over the years members of ETI have participated in inspection activities with other inspectorates within the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland as well as in other European countries.

3.3.3 Members of the inspectorate management group and middle management group have regular contact with their respective colleagues in

other jurisdictions. Inspectors have had the opportunity to join inspection teams in other jurisdictions and to take part in transversal study opportunities across Europe. The report and evaluations from these activities are used to develop further the specialist expertise of individual inspectors, who through a comprehensive corporate continuous professional development programme, share these with all members of ETI.

3.3.4 The ETI has received positive feedback from colleagues in other jurisdictions, on its work in developing further the role of the DI. Recently, other inspectorates have also indicated their interest in the development of the second phase of the proportionate and risk-based strategy, revisiting schools where provision has been evaluated in the last three years as very good or outstanding. This development was piloted in the last academic year (2012-13) in the primary sector under the working title Sustaining Improvement inspection.

3.4 The Education Committee will consider what priorities and actions need to be taken to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process including the need for enhanced powers; alternative measures of achievement; improved governance; and transparency.

3.4.1 A key feature of all inspection activity is to build capacity within the organisations inspected. The ETI seeks to achieve this outcome by promoting processes of evaluation which will endure beyond the period of the inspection itself; by helping to establish improved ways of working through professional dialogue; and by identifying, reporting and disseminating examples of outstanding practice from which others may learn and so improve their provision for learners.

3.4.2 The ETI inspection process is open and transparent. All stakeholders can access inspection documentation and reports on the ETI website. Prior to inspection on many of the current inspection models the reporting inspector meets with all staff at a pre-inspection briefing to explain the arrangements for

the inspection and answer any questions. During the inspection, the reporting inspector liaises with the senior management on a daily basis to clarify any aspect of the inspection arrangements and to discuss any emergent findings.

3.4.3 In the last year alone, ETI has hosted three conferences on the Chief Inspector's Report (1,100 delegates), a half-day seminar on inspection for members of NAHT approx 200 delegates, two training days for associate assessors and contributed to a range of education conferences nationally and internationally.

3.4.4 In his statement on 26 September 2011, Putting Pupils First: Shaping our Future, the Minister for Education asked the ETI to strengthen the inspection process to enable the boards of governors of schools to receive feedback on how they are doing so that good practice can be identified and shared. Revised inspection arrangements were trialled successfully with a selection of schools in the academic year 2012-13 in preparation for full implementation in 2013-14.

3.4.5 The Education Bill introduced to the Assembly on 2nd October 2012 clarifies and modestly enhances the functions and powers of inspectors. The ETI note and support the main changes as necessary and proportionate. However, even with this enhancement, the powers of inspectorates in other jurisdictions are considerably stronger.

3.4.6 The ETI keeps its processes under continuous review and is always open to new ideas or views, and is aware also of the need to retain the professional support of the education system. The introduction of the formal intervention programme and the associated media coverage resulted in some schools expressing difficulty in accepting the validity or fairness of an inspection performance level. Although the inspection process had not changed, the context of media reporting did.

3.4.7 The ETI consults with stakeholders at the design, development and review stages of all of its processes and work. For example, we have

consulted with our stakeholder through a multi-agency group working under the title of the Using School Information and Data (USID) group the membership of which includes serving primary and post-primary school principals: primary and post-primary data conferences; AAs; focus groups; and questionnaires to parents, teaching and support staff. In addition, the organisation is scrutinised by external assessors. For example, the report issued by the assessors for the Customer Service Excellence standard stated that: "The Education and Training Inspectorate is a highly customer focused organisation with a discrete balance between the rigorous assessment of educational and training establishments against educational policy and the support for these organisations to change and improve."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

ETI mission statement, vision, objective, principles, values and standards

Mission Statement

‘Promoting improvement in the interest of all learners.’

Vision

‘The Education and Training Inspectorate will be a highly regarded and influential organisation, dedicated fully to the education and well-being of all learners.’

Objectives

- To promote openness and transparency in all of the work undertaken.
- To ensure that all those who are inspected are aware of the processes, protocols, standards and performance indicators adopted by the Education and Training Inspectorate.
- To ensure that no organisation is uncertain about the nature and purpose of inspection.

Principles, Values and Standards

- Recognition that the key priority must be the interests and well-being of the learners, in terms of the quality of education and training which they experience, and the outcomes they achieve.
- Objectivity and consistency in making evaluations, honesty in communicating findings, and openness in ensuring that evaluations reflect accurately the organisation’s achievements.
- Concern for accuracy, and reliance, in the main, on first-hand evidence based on observation.
- Fairness in dealing with individuals and groups.

- Sensitivity to the circumstances of the organisation, and tact and courtesy towards all with whom the inspector(s) come(s) into professional contact.
- Minimising stress by ensuring that queries are answered promptly and concerns dealt with within a measurable timescale.
- Sensitivity to the effect on others of evaluations and reports, but without compromising the principles, values and standards set out above.

APPENDIX 2**EVALUATIONS/SURVEYS COMMISSIONED BY DEPARTMENTS (1 APRIL
2012 to 31 MARCH 2013)**

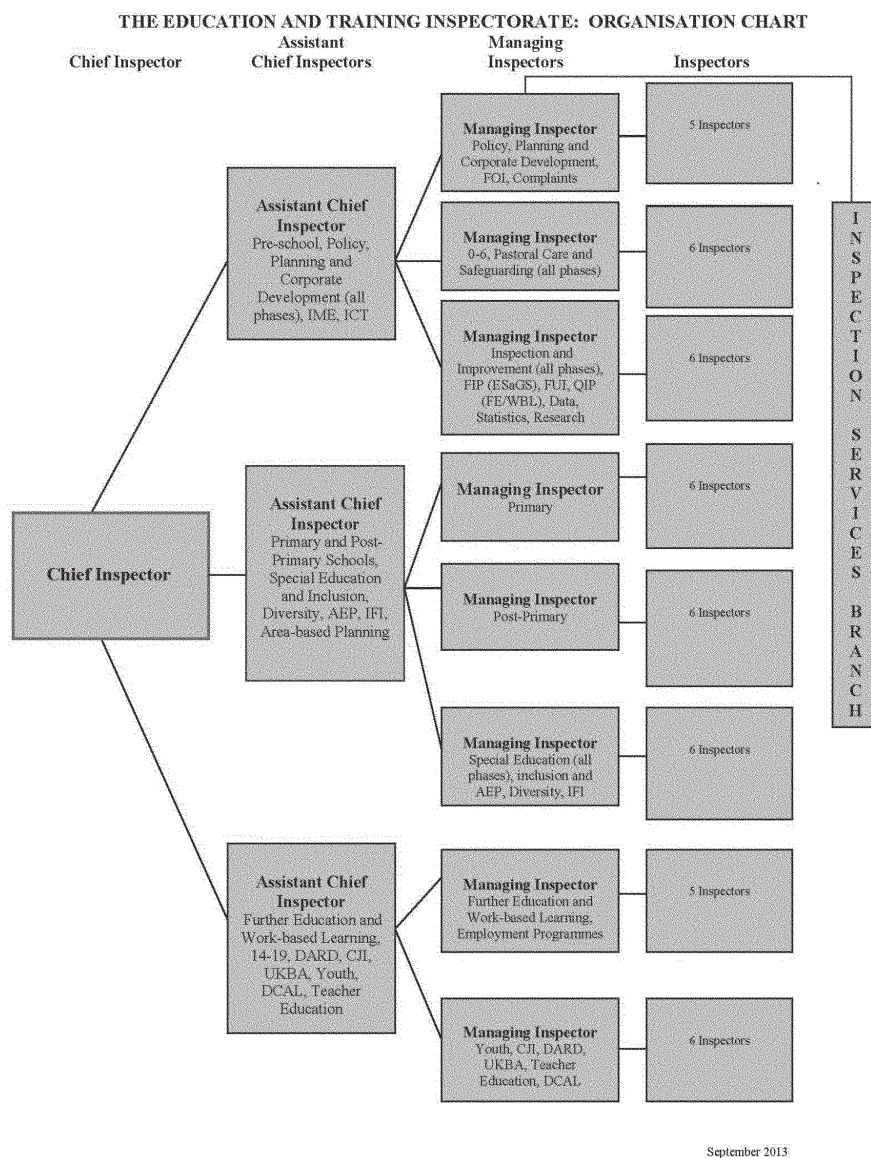
Source	Detail
DE	Literacy/Numeracy work to be undertaken at the request of the DE Minister.
DE	Joint report with DES inspectorate on best practice in literacy and numeracy in post-primary settings.
DE	Survey of how effectively primary schools are using statutory computer-based assessment (CBA, currently the InCAS tool) data for diagnostic and planning purposes.
DE	Evaluation of the joint QUB/UU Pilot Project: Post-Primary PGCE in Main Subject with Special Needs Education & Inclusion
DE	Evaluation of the effectiveness of Full Service School provision at the Boys' and Girls' Model Schools and the Full Service Community Network centred in Corpus Christi College
DE	Evaluation of SEN Review pilots in Level A educational assessment and in early years' settings
DE	Evaluation of International Fund for Ireland "Sharing in Education Programme" projects
DE	Survey of the quality of SEN provision across primary schools in the IME sector.

DE	Assessment of services provided by early years specialists to settings funded within the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme.
DEL	An evaluation and scrutiny of whole college self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans for the six area-based colleges.
DEL	An evaluation and enhanced scrutiny of self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans provided by a sample of contracted TfS/ ApprenticeshipsNI and Steps to Work lead contractors.
DEL	Follow-up on the Report of an Evaluation of the Provision and Outcomes for Essential Skills in the South Eastern Regional College.
DCAL	An evaluation of the summer language learning programmes provided directly, or funded by, the Languages Bodies
DCAL	An evaluation of the contribution of the Creative Learning centres to school improvement.
DCAL	An evaluation of the extent to which a range of arts-based organisations complement the STEM agenda through the learning strategy

OTHER INSPECTION ACTIVITY (1 APRIL 2012 to 31 MARCH 2013)

Source	Detail
CJI	Inspection of 1 Prison (Unannounced)
DARD	Inspection of CAFRE
UK Borders Agency	Inspection of Tier 4 English Language Colleges
ETI	Evaluation of Counselling in Special Schools
ETI	Speech and Language Evaluation
ETI	Evaluation of Residential Units (Joint work with RQIA)
ETI	Review of ASD in Mainstream Schools

APPENDIX 3



APPENDIX 4

ETI support material

Evaluating Series

The Evaluating series presents a range of indicators of quality in the provision of subjects, including pastoral care, derived from the experience of the Inspectorate, acquired on inspections and school visits. The indicators are intended to assist Boards of Governors, members of senior management and classroom teachers of primary, post-primary and special schools to monitor and evaluate their own provision and, where necessary, to effect improvements.

The Improving Series

The Improving Subject Series are based on inspections of and visits to subject departments in post-primary schools. They are intended to support subject teachers and departments in their evaluation and improvement of their teaching and of their pupils' learning and standards of achievement.

The Better Series

The Better series identifies the elements of the most and least effective provision using evidence gathered from inspections and other visits to schools

Together Towards Improvement

Together Towards Improvement outlines the process that a school may use to develop a culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement. The document outlines the quality indicators used by inspectors and illustrates how a school can use these indicators to evaluate the quality of provision. The document is designed for use in primary, post-primary and special schools.

Quality Assurance in the Youth Sector 2000

The Quality Assurance in the Youth Sector 2000 outlines quality indicators and possible sources of evidence to assist youth organisations in their self-evaluation.

Reflective Teacher

The Reflective Teacher sets out guidance for individual teachers to evaluate the quality of his/her practice and to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Draft Quality Indicators for the Youth Sector September 2007

The Draft Quality Indicators for the Youth Sector September 2007 is designed to help practitioners reflect on their practice, with a view to identifying strengths and identifying and addressing areas for improvement.

Improving Quality: Raising Standards (IQ:RS)

Improving Quality: Raising Standards (IQ:RS) is the Inspectorate's quality assurance framework for further education, and training programmes, and is linked to the Department for Employment and Learning's (the Department) strategy for quality improvement "Success Through Excellence: A Quality Improvement Strategy for the Further Education and Training System in Northern Ireland".

Digital Versatile Discs (DVD)

The DVDs were produced to help the staff of an organisation evaluate the quality of provision by reflecting on, and discussing, examples of good practice.

APPENDIX 5:**Ten Principles of Public Services Inspection (issued by the Office of Public Service Reform 2003: Inspecting for Improvement: Developing a customer Focused Approach)**

1. The ***purpose of improvement***. There should be an explicit concern on the part of inspectors to contribute to the improvement of the service being inspected. This should guide the focus, method, reporting and follow-up of inspection. In framing recommendations, an inspector should recognise good performance and address any failure appropriately. Inspection should aim to generate data and intelligence that enable Departments more quickly to calibrate the progress of reform in their sectors and make appropriate adjustments
2. A ***focus on outcomes***, which means considering service delivery to the end users of the services rather than concentrating on internal management arrangements.
3. A ***user perspective***. Inspection should be delivered with a clear focus on the experience of those for whom the service is provided, as well as on internal management arrangements. Inspection should encourage innovation and diversity and not be solely compliance-based.
4. ***Proportionate to risk***. Over time, inspectors should modify the extent of future inspection according to the quality of performance by the service provider. For example, good performers should undergo less inspection, so that resources are concentrated on areas of greatest risk.
5. Inspectors should encourage rigorous ***self-assessment*** by managers. Inspectors should challenge the outcomes of managers' self-assessments, take them into account in the inspection process, and provide a comparative benchmark.
6. Inspectors should use ***impartial evidence***. Evidence, whether quantitative or qualitative, should be validated and credible.
7. Inspectors should ***disclose the criteria*** they use to form judgments.

8. Inspectors should be ***open about their processes***, willing to take any complaints seriously, and able to demonstrate a robust quality assurance process.
9. Inspectors should have regard to ***value for money***, their own included.
10. Inspectors should ***continually learn from experience***, in order to become increasingly effective. This can be done by assessing their own impact on the service provider's ability to improve and by sharing best practice with other inspectors.

Committee for Education to DE 18.10.13



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Veronica Bintley
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer
Department of Education
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
Bangor
BT19 7PR

18 October 2013

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/952

Dear Veronica

Briefing from the Education and Training Inspectorate

The Committee for Education would like to express its thanks to the Education and Training Inspectorate for its informative briefing on 16 October 2013 as part of the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement process.

The Committee agreed to request the following additional information from the Education and Training Inspectorate including:

- an update on a school which was placed in the Formal Intervention Process in May 2013;
- information on the area based inspection undertaken across West Belfast in 2009, now being taken forward by the West Belfast Partnership Board;
- recent case studies of schools where practical advice from the Education and Training Inspectorate following an inspection has led to school improvement;
- a copy of the most recent evaluation of the ETI conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA); and
- information on the number of schools which will potentially be affected following the implementation of the proposed revisions to the Formal Intervention Process.

The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to seek a briefing on the consultation on proposed revisions to the Formal Intervention Process. As

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is the usual practice, the Committee anticipates that the Department will seek feedback from the Committee on this issue before a final decision is taken.

A response by 1 November 2013 would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk

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DE correspondence

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION IN RESPONSE TO REQUEST FROM
THE CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION (Ref:
PMcC/SMcG/952)**

1. To provide an update on a school which was placed in the Formal Intervention Process in May 2013.

Please find:

- (a) report of the school (which has been anonymised);
- (b) copy of pre-publication correspondence to the school;
- (c) response to pre-publication from the school;
- (d) online press coverage relating to the principal's criticism expressed on the school's website;
- (e) copy of a letter from the school principal to an ETI Managing Inspector;
- (f) copy of a letter from the CI to the principal of the school.

Please note that, beyond the many opportunities for communication with the Education and Training Inspectorate during the inspection, the following opportunities were provided:

- i. the pre-publication communication;
- ii. the offer of a meeting between the principal and governors of the school and ETI;
- iii. correspondence from the Chief Inspector, indicating that ETI had offered to treat the principal's letter as a formal complaint and that he had declined this offer.

(a)

POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Voluntary, co-educational, 14-18, grammar school

Report of an Inspection
in March 2013

eti
The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	5
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APPENDIX 1	PERFORMANCE & STATISTICAL DATA
APPENDIX 2	SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS: English, mathematics and science
APPENDIX 3	ACCOMMODATION AND/OR HEALTH AND SAFETY

CONTEXT OF THE INSPECTION (METHOD)

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of post-primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Inspectorate's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>.

Inspectors scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils from years 12, 13 and 14; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Data on the questionnaire returns is shown in the table below.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	115	34	30	21
Teachers	38	26	68	8
Support Staff	25	12	48	0

QUANTITATIVE TERMS

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

PERFORMANCE LEVELS

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) use the following performance levels (grades) in reports:

Performance Level	Descriptor
Outstanding	Outstanding characterised by excellence
Very Good	Consistently good; major strengths
Good	Important strengths in most of the provision. Areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address
Satisfactory	Overall sound/satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed
Inadequate	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action
Unsatisfactory	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

[redacted] draws its pupils from the town and wider area within the Craigavon system of junior and senior high schools. Most of the pupils transfer at the beginning of key stage (KS) 4 from two local, maintained non-selective schools. The enrolment has remained steady over the last three years, with a slight increase in the past two years. The school has been part of the review of the post-primary provision in [redacted] undertaken by the Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education. The delay in the decision emerging from this review has brought significant uncertainty about the future development of the school. In January 2013, the Minister of Education announced funding for the amalgamation of [redacted] with the two maintained non-selective schools.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 12 Intake	146	144	149	144
Enrolment	567	566	573	570
% Attendance (NI Average)	95 (95)	94 (95)	96 (95)	-
FSME Percentage ¹	8.11	9.01	10.82	12
No. of pupils on the SEN register	22	24	23	20
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*
Intake				
% of Y10 pupils with L6 and above English	59	67	61	42
% of Y10 pupils with L6 and above mathematics	57	57	58	49

* fewer than 5

1.2 FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

The inspection focused on achievements and standards, learning and teaching, curriculum provision and on leadership and management across the school as a whole.

Specialist inspectors paid particular attention to English, mathematics and science provision, and provided detailed oral feedback to the teachers in these areas; a summary of the findings is reported in Appendix 2.

The inspection also focused on: the provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection and safeguarding; the provision for pupils requiring additional support with their learning and their inclusion in all aspects of school life; the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG); and the progress towards meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

1.3 OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

Overall Performance Level	Inadequate
Achievements and Standards	Inadequate
Provision for Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Inadequate

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 The overall standards achieved by the pupils are inadequate².

KEY FINDINGS

The pupils are well motivated to learn and, in two-thirds of the lessons observed, work effectively in pairs and groups. They have good personal and social skills, including a range of organisational strategies to help them overcome barriers to their learning. A significant minority of the pupils need to learn to speak more clearly and audibly in class and develop more effective presentation skills; the teachers need to model good practice.

Data on Year 12 (Key Stage 4) performance

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects	2010	2011	2012
*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 5 subjects	100	100	100
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	93.1	86.81	83.89
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>In line with average</i>	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Well below average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics	93.1	86.81	76.51
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>In line with average</i>	<i>Below average</i>	<i>Well below average</i>
*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	99.31	92.36	97.32
Percentage of FSM entitled school leavers achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A*-C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	85.71	84.21	94.44

Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks³

The overall levels of attainment at GCSE level are too low; twelve GCSE subjects at grades A*-B, including English, mathematics and all of the science subjects, are more than 10% points below the NI average. Furthermore, the percentage of pupils attaining seven or more GCSE qualifications grades A*-C, including English and mathematics has declined significantly. This decline is due to the underperformance of a significant minority of subjects that are well below the Northern Ireland (NI) average at A*-C. In contrast, over the past three years, almost all of the pupils achieved grades A*-C in both English and mathematics.

² For additional performance data in public examinations, including in applied subjects, see Appendix 1

³ DE Circular 2011/03: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

In order to raise the overall GCSE standards, there is an urgent need to address the lack of effective curricular links with the local schools to ensure better progression in the pupils' learning from KS3. Collectively these schools need to agree reasons for the drop in recent years in the proportion of pupils attaining level 6 or above in English and mathematics at KS3 on entry to [REDACTED] and actions to improve the current downward trend.

Data on Year 14 (A2) performance

GCE A Level or equivalent	2010	2011	2012
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalents in at least 3 subjects	98.5	99	97.7
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	66.91	58.4	62.32
<i>Comparison with the NI average for similar schools in the same FSM category</i>	<i>Well below average</i>	<i>Significantly below average</i>	<i>Well below average</i>

Overall, the percentage of year 14 pupils obtaining grades C or above in at least three GCE A levels is not high enough. At GCE A level, the pupils attain very good standards in English Literature and good standards in mathematics; with a significant uptake in these subjects over the past three years. The pupils also attain well in the applied subjects on offer. However, significant variation in performance between subjects is evidenced through a majority of the individual subjects, at grades A* to C being below the NI average with only, a significant minority being above, or in line with, the three-year average. In 2011, just 59% of pupils in year 14 progressed into higher education in comparison with an average of 80%; 23% of pupils progressed into further education.

The school's analysis of data indicates that the pupils who require additional support make good progress and achieve well in external examinations. The school identifies appropriately a number of pupils who are underachieving and has put in place literacy and numeracy support sessions; however, the actions are not sufficiently targeted at the pupils' individual needs to be effective.

3. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The quality of the provision in English and mathematics is good and in science, it is inadequate⁴.

While the quality of the planning, learning and teaching is effective in English and mathematics, across the school it is inconsistent and, in a significant minority of the subjects, the planning is inadequate. The pupils' needs are not met adequately due to considerable variation in the teachers' understanding and skilful deployment of differentiated learning strategies. Similarly, there are inconsistencies in the teachers' understanding and use of assessment for learning strategies to provide constructive feedback to the pupils on how to improve their work.

⁴ For detailed findings of the provision in English, mathematics and science see Appendix 2.

The quality of the learning and teaching observed during the inspection ranged from very good to inadequate. In two-thirds of the lessons observed it was good or better; a significant minority of these lessons were in English and mathematics. The less effective practice, in one-third of the lessons observed, was characterised by whole-class teaching, closed questions and low-level activities. In these lessons, the pupils were passive in their learning, their oral responses were limited and they did not attain good standards. In the best practice, the teachers built on the pupils' prior learning; used well-directed questioning to probe and challenge their thinking; and developed their independence through carefully-planned activities which enabled them to apply their learning in real and relevant contexts. Furthermore, these teachers provided opportunities for the pupils to consolidate their knowledge, understanding and skills through effective plenary sessions.

3.1.2 The quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils is good.

KEY FINDINGS

The quality of the pastoral care is good.

The pupils are friendly, courteous and confident; their behaviour is very good and they give a high level of support to charitable causes. The older pupils are responsible and display leadership in their various roles as peer mentors and members of the school council. The good range of extra-curricular activities are appreciated by the pupils as an opportunity to develop their talents, as well as raising their confidence and self-esteem. There is effective leadership of the pastoral provision and the school has developed an appropriate mentoring programme to help targeted pupils overcome barriers to their learning. The senior leadership team (SLT) now needs to link the pastoral provision in a more coherent and strategic way to learning and teaching, in order to raise the standards attained by the pupils.

In discussions, the pupils talked positively about their experiences in the school, highlighting the good rapport they have with their supportive teachers. They indicated that they feel safe in the school and know to whom they can turn if they have any concerns regarding their work, safety or well-being.

The majority of the parents who completed the confidential questionnaire indicated their satisfaction with the work of the school. ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the written concerns identified by one-half of the parents who responded to the questionnaire; these included issues about the choice of subjects and communication. Where appropriate, these have been commented on in the report.

The school gives good attention to healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, the health promotion team, and the good range of physical activities offered through the extra-curricular programme which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

The overall quality of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.

The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage through the appropriate exchange of relevant information from their previous school. In almost all classes, the pupils are motivated and work confidently alongside their peers. These pupils benefit from helpful intervention sessions to meet their learning and pastoral needs. There are appropriate individual education plans to help the teachers plan for targeted support for these pupils; the teachers now need to take greater cognisance of the identified needs in their planning and teaching.

The quality of the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is good.

The CEIAG programme focuses appropriately on developing the knowledge, understanding and skills which the pupils need to inform their personal career planning. The pupils use up-to-date information to assist them in their decision making and have a good understanding of the range of the available education, training and employment options. Well-planned careers events and a short period of work experience in year 13 contribute effectively to the pupils' understanding of the world of work. The embedding of CEIAG across all subjects requires further development. While the CEIAG accommodation and learning resources are adequate, the pupils have limited access to ICT facilities in the careers suite.

3.1.3 The curricular provision for the pupils is satisfactory.

KEY FINDINGS

The school is meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework and, in collaboration with other schools in the Craigavon Area Learning Community, provides the pupils with a wide choice of subjects at both KS4 and post 16, including opportunities to experience shared learning with pupils from differing backgrounds. It is appropriate that the school has extended the range of applied subjects to meet the different needs of the pupils, however, the curriculum at KS4 does not build sufficiently on the pupils' prior learning experiences.

Strategies to evaluate the effect of the continuing curriculum development on the learning experiences provided and the standards achieved by the pupils are underdeveloped.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The overall quality of the strategic leadership and management to raise standards attained by the pupils is inadequate.

KEY FINDINGS

The lack of clarity in the strategic future of the school has impacted negatively on the development of a clear and shared vision by the SLT. Consequently, this detracts from the clarity of communication with staff, parents and governors.

The school development planning process is not underpinned by a clear baseline from which to set precise and measurable targets and appropriate actions for improvement. The school development plan does not meet the requirements of the School Development Plan Regulations (NI) 2010. Significant development work is required to review all of the working practices of the SLT to ensure that there is a coherent focus on improving the quality of the learning and teaching to meet the increasingly diverse needs of the pupils and to raise the standards they attain.

There are examples of effective middle management across the school, including pastoral care and child protection, the collation of data, the progress towards meeting the Entitlement Framework, special educational needs, CEIAG and the English and mathematics departments. There is, however, insufficient development of the strategic role of middle managers to raise standards consistently across all subjects.

The governors who met with the inspection team are highly supportive of the school. However, scrutiny of the school's documentation indicates that, the governors are not informed sufficiently about the standards attained by the pupils and the school development planning process to enable them to perform an effective challenge function. In planning for the proposed amalgamation, and as a matter of urgency, the governors need to work closely with the employing authority of the other two schools to manage effectively the amalgamation process and secure good quality provision for all pupils both during and after the transition process.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children which reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 In almost all the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the pupils.

The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12-18 month period.

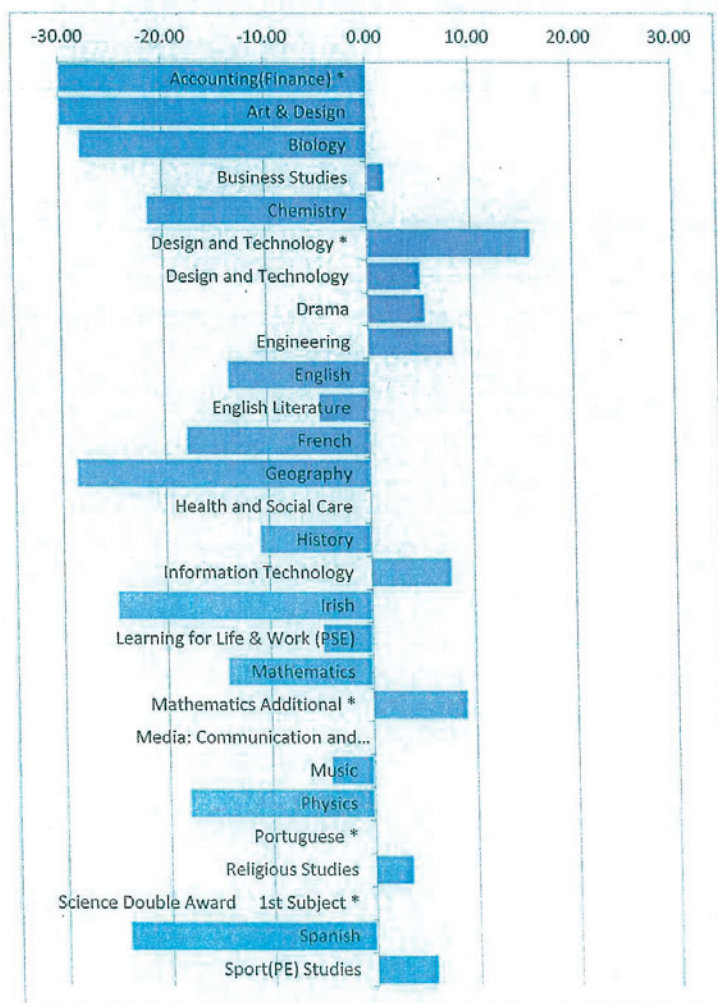
The main areas for improvement include the need to:

- raise the overall inadequate standards at GCSE and A-level;
- improve the quality of the learning, teaching and curriculum in order to meet better the needs of all the pupils; and
- provide effective strategic leadership at all levels to raise standards through a rigorous school development planning process.

APPENDIX 1

1.1 GCSE EXAMINATION RESULTS

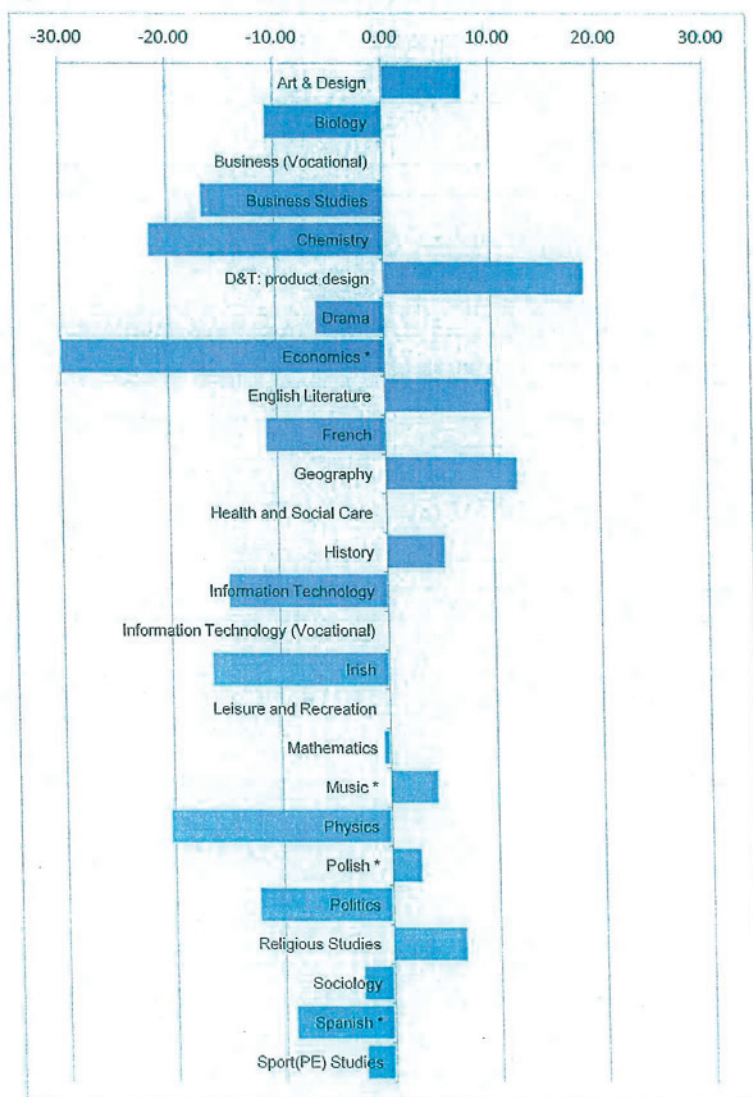
Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A*- B



* total number of entries fewer than 30

1.2 GCE RESULTS

Comparison with the three-year NI average at grades A*- C



* total number of entries fewer than 30

OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: GCE APPLIED

GCE Subject	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Total Entry over 3 Years
	% A*-C	% A*-C	% A*-C	
Applied Business	100	81.25	87.5	92
Health and Social Care	100	100	100	93
Applied Information Technology	100	100	92.31	51
Leisure and Recreation	100	93.33	87.5	31

Leavers' Destinations 2010-11

	Year 12	NI %	Yr 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	17		132	
Another School	29%	32.5	1%	2.1
Employment	12%	2.4	10%	3.6
Full-time Further Education	47%	50.6	23%	10
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	59%	80.2
Full-time Training	0%	8.4	2%	0.8
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	1.2	1%	1.3
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	12%	4.8	5%	2

APPENDIX 2

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

English

The overall quality of the provision for English is **good**.

The strengths of the work include:

- the very good standards attained by the pupils in GCE A Level English Literature;
- the very good working relationships within the department and the collegial approach to the promotion of English in the school;
- the quality of the teaching observed which was good or very good;
- the range of learning and teaching activities to engage the pupils actively in their learning and to develop their level of thinking;
- the effective questioning which prompts articulate and confident responses from the pupils; and
- the effective leadership of the head of department including rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the provision.

The area for improvement is to:

- improve the standards in GCSE English, in particular at grades A*-B.

Mathematics

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics is **good**.

The strengths of the work include:

- the good standards achieved by the pupils in GCE A level mathematics;
- the motivated, confident pupils who enjoy learning mathematics and work well independently and in pairs;
- the quality of the teaching observed during the inspection, which was good or very good;
- the wide range of teaching strategies and learning activities which provide appropriate opportunities for the pupils to engage actively in their learning;
- the effective use of data to monitor progress and identify pupils who need additional support; and
- the effective leadership of mathematics and the commitment of the hard-working departmental team to improve the quality of the provision.

The area for improvement is to:

- improve overall standards in GCSE mathematics, in particular at grades A*-B, through building more effectively on the pupils' prior learning from KS3.

Science

The quality of the provision for science is **inadequate**.

The strengths of the work include:

- the good working relationships between the teachers and the pupils in all of the lessons observed;
- the willingness of the pupils to engage in learning and to work collaboratively;
- the effective use of practical activities to complement and consolidate the pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific theory; and
- the good quality of the resources produced by the teachers to support the teaching, learning and assessment.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to improve the inadequate standards achieved by the pupils in public examinations;
- for teachers to review planning and teaching to take greater cognisance of the needs, interests and abilities of the pupils and provide greater progression in the learning; and
- for senior leadership to put in place and oversee more effective arrangements for the strategic leadership, management and co-ordination of the science provision to bring about improvements in learning, teaching and pupil outcomes.

APPENDIX 3

ACCOMMODATION

- There are significant shortcomings in the accommodation. The main building does not facilitate readily the flow of large numbers of students; the stairwells and corridors are narrow and restrictive.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The school has conducted a risk assessment identifying a wide range of health and safety issues as a result of the shortcomings in the accommodation. In particular, pupils have to cross busy traffic areas to access external classrooms and vehicle access to the premises at the start and end of the school day in areas of pedestrian traffic present health and safety concerns.

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(b)

Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture Arts and Leisure

Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
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BT19 7PR
Tel: 028 9127 9726
Fax: 028 9127 9721
email: inspectionservices@deni.gov.uk

The Principal

Our Ref: [REDACTED]

25 April 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

INSPECTION REPORT: [REDACTED]

I enclose a pre-publication copy of the report of the Inspection carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate in your school. I should be grateful if you would detail any matters of factual inaccuracy in the report to which you wish to draw attention on the attached confirmation slip.

The Inspectorate will continue to be accountable for the report and for the judgements and findings it contains. This procedure is intended only to try to avoid factual inaccuracies in the published document. You are not being asked to comment on the findings of the report.

The report will issue as soon as possible after receipt of your comments. Until the report is published it should be treated in confidence in the school.

Please confirm whether or not you are content with the accuracy of the report by returning the attached confirmation slip, in the pre-paid envelope provided, no later than 1 May 2013.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]

Inspection Services Branch

Enc



542-0056

Please tick one box.

- ☐ I wish to confirm there are no factual inaccuracies in the pre-publication draft of the inspection report on the above-named school.
- ☐ I wish to bring the factual inaccuracies detailed below to the attention of the relevant Reporting Inspector.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please return to Steven Graham, Inspection Services Branch, Department of Education,
Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, BANGOR, BT19 7PR, no later than 1 May 2013.

(C)

Please tick one box.

- ☐ I wish to confirm there are no factual inaccuracies in the pre-publication draft of the inspection report on the above-named school.
- ☒ I wish to bring the factual inaccuracies detailed below to the attention of the relevant Reporting Inspector.

1. The percentage of Yr11 taking 3 A levels is as follows:

2010 - 98.5%	2011 - 99%	2012 - 97.7%
--------------	------------	--------------
2. Page 7, para. 3: The comment relating to "the written concerns identified by one-half of the parents" is factually inaccurate, as written. It should be re-drafted to accurately reflect the actual number or the actual proportion of parents who complained.
4. Page 10, S.1: In almost all areas inadequate
In seven of the eight areas specified in section 1.2, focus and scope of the inspection, provision was deemed to be good or better.

Signed: 

Date: 29-04-13

Please return to Steven Graham, Inspection Services Branch, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, BANGOR, BT19 7PR, no later than 1 May 2013.

(d)

[REDACTED]

From: TheDetail.tv [mailto:email@thedetail.tv]

Sent: 14 May 2013 15:23

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: The Detail - Issue 205 - Grammar school principal rejects inspectors' "inadequate" rating

Investigations & Analysis - Northern Ireland



Issue 205 /
14 May 2013



UPDATED / 14 MAY

Grammar school principal rejects inspectors' "inadequate" rating

14 MAY 2013

BY KATHRYN TORNEY

A Co Armagh grammar school has rejected a highly critical inspection report which has resulted in the school being placed in formal intervention by the Department of Education.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] is only the second grammar in Northern Ireland to have formal intervention measures imposed on it by the department after the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) rated the school as "inadequate".

In a hard-hitting statement, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] has rejected the inspectors' highly critical conclusions.

[More](#)

Policing social media versus free speech

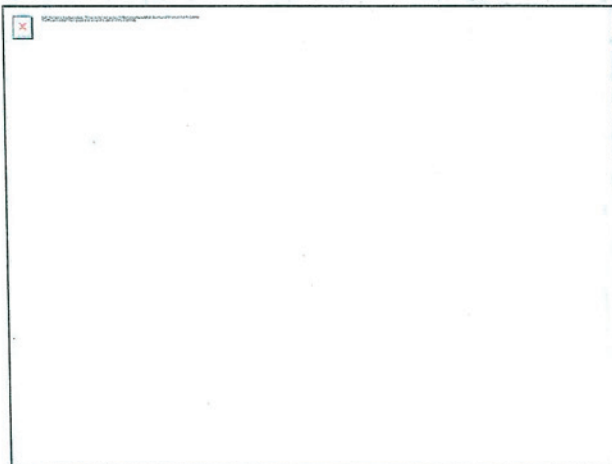
14 MAY 2013

BY NIALL MCCRACKEN

THE number of people convicted annually of crimes involving social media and other forms of public electronic communications in Northern Ireland has trebled since 2009, The Detail can reveal today.

We can also confirm that the Public Prosecution Service is currently drafting interim guidelines for dealing with cases involving social media.

It is understood that these will be issued for consultation "in the not too distant future".



(e)

[REDACTED]

11th June 2013

Mr Raymond Caldwell
Managing Inspector
ETI, Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

Dear Mr. Caldwell

Your offer of a meeting with Mr. John Anderson and Ms. Cheryl Stafford was discussed by the full Board of Governors at their scheduled meeting of Monday 10th June 2013. The Chairman and the Governors are uncertain as to the purpose of such a meeting and are equally unsure that such a meeting would bring about a positive outcome for [REDACTED]. This is a position with which I, as Principal, concur. Your offer of a meeting is therefore respectfully declined.

The formal response of the Board of Governors to the Inspection Report will be emailed to the Department before the close of school today, the thirtieth working day since receipt of the report. It re-states the commitment made in my own response to put in place comprehensive and rigorous procedures to address the matters raised in the report. Our energy and our attention are focused on the future and on ensuring that our pupils and parents are left in doubt whatsoever that the faith and trust they place in us is justified.

In my own view, spending time reviewing past processes and procedures, the outcomes of which will not change, would simply be a distraction.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

PRINCIPAL AND CORRESPONDENT TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

[REDACTED]

(f)



CHIEF INSPECTOR
Noelle Buick



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture Arts and Leisure

Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
Bangor
BT19 7PR
Tel: 028 9127 9359
Fax: 028 9127 9691
email: noelle.buick@deni.gov.uk



28 June 2013

Dear [REDACTED]

Following the publication of the recent inspection report on [REDACTED] a response which was highly critical of aspects of the inspection was published on the school website; a statement which attracted press coverage.

Following (rather than before) this public statement, the Reporting Inspector received a letter from you repeating the comments made.

We wrote to you indicating that we would treat your letter as a formal complaint. You replied that you did not wish to invoke the formal Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) Complaints Procedure.

Subsequently, the Managing Inspector for post-primary schools wrote to offer a face-to-face meeting with you and the chairman of your Board of Governors (governors) to discuss your complaints. You responded that the governors declined to meet with ETI.

However, in the interests of our own quality assurance processes we have completed an internal enquiry into the inspection of [REDACTED] and the evidence gathered to support the findings of the inspection.

We have not found any evidence which supports the complaints made. Furthermore, while you stated that there was an alleged lack of opportunity to provide additional evidence after the inspection, no new evidence of substance was contained in the public statement.

We confirm, therefore, that the inspection was conducted properly, the findings of the inspection of [REDACTED] are well-founded and we stand over them.

The inspection process focuses on improving provision. We wish the school every success in implementing the developments to address the areas for improvements in the provision for the pupils at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Noelle Buick

NOELLE BUICK



2. To provide information on the area based inspection undertaken across West Belfast in 2009, now being taken forward by the West Belfast Partnership Board.

Please find attached the report as requested.

<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/surveys-evaluations/surveys-evaluations-special-education/surveys-evaluations-special-education-2010/an-evaluation-of-the-quality-of-strategic-planning-learning-and-transition-arrangements-for-education-and-training-in-the-west-belfast-area.pdf>

Subsequent to the issue of the West Belfast area based inspection the ETI inspector who is the Area Board Co-ordinator for Belfast, Dr Shevlin, has maintained regular contact with the West Belfast Partnership Board which is taking the development work forward in co-operation with the BELB CASS service. There is clear evidence to indicate that, as a result of the inspection and the work being taken forward by the West Belfast Partnership Board, with the support and guidance provided by the members of ETI who work in the area, the standards achieved by the pupils as measured by GCSE outcomes, are improving.

In addition, we also submit a recent ETI report on the Full Service Extended Schools and Full Service Community Network which also evaluated area based provision, in this case in North Belfast

<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/surveys-evaluations/surveys-evaluations-post-primary/surveys-evaluations-post-primary-2013/an-evaluation-of-full-service-extended-schools-and-full-service-community-network-2.pdf>

3. To provide information on recent case studies of schools where practical advice from the Education and Training Inspectorate following an inspection has led to school improvement.

Please find attached a summary of a case study of an inspection of a primary school which entered the Formal Intervention Process (Appendix 3(a)(i)). Included is a synopsis of the case the original inspection report (Appendix 3(a) (ii)), copies of the letters issued to the school after an interim follow-up visit (Appendix 3(a)(ii)) and the follow-up inspection (Appendix 3(a)(iv)). Also included is a copy of the follow-up inspection report (Appendix 3(a) (v)).

In addition, a copy of reports issued after the follow up work conducted in a post-primary school have been provided. (Appendix 3(b)-(iv)). A summary letter of progress has also been provided (Appendix 3(b)(v)).

Both of these case studies exemplify the work undertaken by inspectors post-inspection.

3 a(i)

A CASE STUDY OF IMPROVEMENT IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL

Context of the school

The school is a small, rural primary school with 55 children and was originally inspected in October 2011. At the time of the inspection, the school had 4% of children who were entitled to free school meals and the school had identified approximately 13% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. The children are taught in composite classes consisting of two or three-year groups, two of the classes include children at two different key stages. In addition to his leadership role, the principal has a teaching responsibility on four days each week.

At the time of the initial inspection, the overall descriptor awarded to the school was inadequate and the school entered the formal intervention process. A number of important areas for development were identified, including the need to:

- improve the quality of learning and teaching in years 4 to 7;
- raise the inadequate standards in literacy and numeracy attained by a significant minority of the children; and
- improve the inadequate curricular leadership across all areas of the curriculum.

Immediately after the inspection, the principal, the staff and the Board of Governors approached the inspection findings positively and showed willingness and determination to seek and accept support and commit fully to the process of school improvement.

The role of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in the follow-up process.

- The District Inspector undertook a pastoral visit one week after the inspection to offer encouragement and discuss the areas for improvement again in detail.
- The school provided detailed action plans to effect improvement across all aspects of the provision. The action plans were submitted to the District Inspector who was content that they addressed fully the areas for improvement.
- An interim follow-up inspection visit (IFUIV) was undertaken seven months after the original inspection.
- Two inspectors observed literacy and numeracy lessons across the school and gave feedback on the quality of teaching and learning observed.
- The inspectors held meetings with the principal, literacy co-ordinator, Chair and Vice-chair of the Board of Governors and the Curriculum and Advisory Support Service (CASS) link officer.

- The governors worked closely with the principal and the staff and have played a significant role in bringing about improvement since the inspection. They both support and challenge the principal and staff on key aspects of the work of the school.
- They scrutinised the documentation presented by the school which included folders of evidence associated with each area for improvement and provided feedback on the evidence provided.
- In an oral report back, the inspectors outlined the good progress made towards improving standards in literacy and numeracy, particularly for those children identified as underachievers. They also reported on the developing culture of self-evaluation underpinned by rigorous monitoring and evaluation of planning, learning and teaching, assessment and standards.
- A key member of staff was in hospital during the IFUIV and the District Inspector, at the invitation of the principal, undertook a further visit to meet with her and give her an opportunity to outline the improvement work she had led in numeracy.

At the follow-up inspection, the school was evaluated as very good and the school exited the formal intervention process.

- In 2012, all of the year 4 and year 7 children achieved the expected levels in English and in mathematics in statutory assessment; these outcomes are well above the average for Northern Ireland (NI) and for similar schools in the same free school meals category.
- As a result of the development work undertaken since the original inspection, there is now a high level of professional pride among the principal and the teachers. The children, staff, parents and governors report that the school is a much happier, learning focused environment since the original inspection and is now regarded highly by the community.

Appendix 3(a) ii

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection
in October 2011

eti
The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. School: [REDACTED] iii. Date of Inspection: W/B 10/10/11
 ii. School Reference Number: [REDACTED] iv. Nature of Inspection: Focused

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	10	9	5	4	9
Enrolments					
Primary	77	71	66	56	55
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium Unit	0	0	0	0	0

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection.
 For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year
 (expressed as a percentage): 96.4% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**
- Average Attendance for those children on the
 Special Educational Needs Register: 96.2%
- | | Primary &
Reception | Nursery
Unit | Special
Unit | Irish Medium
Unit |
|--|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
|--|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 3.2 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 17.18 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 18.30
- iv. Class Size (Range): 18 to 19
- 18 v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support: | 21 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 20 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 12.5 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 2%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 12.7%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 5.4%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):
- | | | | | | |
|---------|-----|-------------|-----|-------|-----|
| English | 70% | Mathematics | 60% | Irish | N/A |
|---------|-----|-------------|-----|-------|-----|

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

[REDACTED] is situated in a rural area approximately five miles south of [REDACTED]. The enrolment has declined steadily over the past five years and stands currently at 55. Almost all of the children come from the surrounding rural area, some of the children are now transported to the school by bus which is a development welcomed by the school. At the time of the inspection, around 4% of the children were entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 13% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning, including 2% who have a statement of special educational needs. The children are taught in composite classes consisting of two or three year groups, two of the classes include children at two different key stages. In addition to his leadership role, the Principal has a teaching responsibility on four days each week.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

In addition, the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection were evaluated.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teachers and the support staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection. Meetings were held with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), and a group of children from year 6.

Thirty-seven questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 50% were returned to Inspection Services Branch: five contained additional written comments. Almost all of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the improvements over the last year in communication between the school and home, the range of after-school activities provided and the recently established parents' support group. The teachers and support staff completed the on-line questionnaire. The staff returns were wholly positive in relation to all areas of school life. An analysis of the questionnaires and the comments made by the parents and the staff were shared with the Principal and the governors.

The recently reconstituted Board of Governors expressed their strong support for the school and outlined their aspirations for the future when they met with the inspection team. They discussed their concerns about aspects of the school provision and outlined a number of recent improvements. Their vision for the school includes their commitment to improving the quality of the leadership and management, learning and teaching and the standards achieved by the children through working closely with the Principal and the staff.

In discussions held with the year 6 children, they talked positively about aspects of school life, including the range of subjects available to them and the extra curricular programme of activities and visits provided last year. They reported that they would value: more opportunities to use ICT in lessons; more challenging and less repetitive homework; continued opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities; and being asked for their views and opinions on school matters. They indicated that they feel safe and happy in school and were aware of what to do if they had any concerns.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is satisfactory. There is a family-centred ethos which supports the personal and social development of the children. The children are extremely welcoming, well-mannered and their behaviour was exemplary during the inspection. The several reward systems, including Student of the Week and Head Boy and Girl of the Month, are valued by the children. The Principal, parents and governors have worked hard over the last year to provide an extra-curricular programme of activities and educational visits to enrich the children's experience of school. The pastoral care co-ordinator has recognised the need to update a number of related policies and provide opportunities for the children to contribute to the decision-making process within the school.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The designated teacher needs to revise the child protection policy to reflect recent staffing changes and update the guidance for the children.

1.6 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

There have been a number of significant improvements in the communication between the parents and the school within the last year. The recently formed parents' support group has worked hard, alongside the governors and the Principal, to raise the profile of the school in the local community and to provide funds for additional learning resources. The parents now receive a newsletter each term to inform them about recent and forthcoming events in the school.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children are enthusiastic and respond particularly well to activities which challenge and extend their thinking and understanding. They support each other in their learning and respond positively to the staff and visitors.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2* assessment data indicates that in English and mathematics, over the past four years, the school's performance was well below the Northern Ireland (NI) average and the average for other primary schools within the same free school meals category.

* The key stage outcomes should be interpreted with caution for small primary schools as a large percentage change from year to year can often be attributed to a very small number of children.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall provision for English and literacy is inadequate; by the end of KS2, the overall standards in English and literacy are too low.

The school has a literacy policy that was reviewed in June 2010 and adheres broadly to the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) Language Framework. Further work is required to ensure that the literacy planning is specific to the school and is sufficiently broad, challenging and progressive to reflect the differentiated needs within the composite classes. Currently there is no literacy action plan to identify and address key priorities and targets in literacy across the school and to guide the teachers in their further development.

The majority of the children display good talking and listening skills. In the best practice, the teachers develop the children's language through effective questioning which encourages them to talk about their learning and to share their views in pairs, groups and through whole class discussion. Too often, opportunities are missed to promote the children's language and learning and to build on their responses and encourage extended dialogue. During the inspection the children who were not engaged appropriately by their teacher became distracted and did not complete their work to an acceptable standard.

In the Foundation Stage (FS) and KS1 the children learn to read using a structured programme which incorporates a range of methods and reading material that enable them to decode unfamiliar text and to read with increasing fluency. As the children progress in their reading in KS2 they are introduced to a range of novels. The children have access to a good range of books in both the class and school library. The children in years 4 and 7 reported that they enjoyed reading and most talked confidently about their favourite authors and books. The school's internal performance data indicates that by the end of KS2, a significant minority of the children are not reading at a level commensurate with their ability and the inspection findings confirm this.

In the FS and early KS1, the children are supported very well by the teacher and the classroom assistant to develop letter formation, to write words and to express ideas in simple sentences. By the end of KS1 a majority of the children can express their ideas appropriately in writing. In KS2, the children have opportunities to write poems and to produce extended pieces of writing based on their personal interests and experiences; however there are missed opportunities to develop and extend their writing across a range of genre. Currently there is no structure in place to assess the quality and standards of the children's writing across other curricular areas.

The literacy co-ordinator has been in post for three years and has begun to analyse the available data to improve the target setting process for the children by the end of KS1 and KS2. He does not have a clear overview of the planning for literacy across the key stages and does not currently monitor and evaluate the provision. With the recent significant investment in, and implementation of, a phonics programme across the school, it is essential that the co-ordinator tracks the impact of this initiative along with the other approaches used on the children's spelling, reading, writing and overall standards of literacy.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of the provision in mathematics and numeracy is inadequate; by the end of KS2, the overall standards in mathematics are too low.

There is a variation in the quality of teaching of mathematics. The lessons observed at the FS were evaluated as good or very good, whereas one -half of the mathematics learning and teaching observed at KS1 and KS2 was inadequate.

In the FS and early KS1, the children enjoyed the mathematics lessons, they were encouraged to think mathematically and share their understanding with their peers. The work was suitably differentiated and through a range of practical investigative activities, all of the children were developing their mathematical knowledge and understanding across number, shape and measures.

At the end of KS1, the lessons observed were over-directed by the teacher and there was too much emphasis placed on repetitive pencil and paper textbook exercises. In discussions with the year 4 children, they displayed a poor understanding of number, shape and measures, and most used a very limited range of mental mathematics strategies for basic addition and subtraction which resulted in incorrect answers.

Across KS2, there is an over-emphasis placed on mathematical concepts taught in isolation and consolidated through repetitive textbook exercises. The children have too few opportunities to engage in investigative and problem-solving work in order to develop their thinking skills and use mathematics in meaningful real-life contexts. The work in the children's books indicated that there is little differentiation resulting in all of the children across two year groups generally working on the same tasks and exercises. In discussions with the year 7 children, the more able responded well to questions on number facts, place value and measures; however, they were unable to estimate and think flexibly.

The Principal is currently acting co-ordinator for mathematics and numeracy. He has recognised the need to review urgently the long-term and short-term planning for mathematics and develop an effective framework for the systematic development of the children's mental mathematics skills. The inspection findings confirm that this, in conjunction with targeted staff development to build expertise and effective monitoring and evaluation, is an urgent area for development which needs to be reflected more directly in the School Development Plan (SDP).

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The planning for the children in years 1 to 3 across all areas of the curriculum is good and takes account of the stage of development and needs of the children. The recently appointed teacher of this composite class has worked extremely hard, to evaluate the children's learning and uses the information well to inform classroom practice. She has been well-supported in this by the experienced classroom assistant.

The overall planning for years 4 to 7 lacks breadth in the learning activities and resources. Too few opportunities have been identified for assessment and the planning does not promote sufficiently progression in the children's learning. It is important that the teachers who share the teaching of the year 6/7 class work together closely to plan for and evaluate the learning experiences.

Given the composite nature of all of the classes in the school, the teachers need to plan for the children based on their ability and not solely on their chronological age. The medium-term planning does not include clear differentiated learning outcomes which build on the children's prior learning nor provide opportunities for assessment

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from inadequate in almost one-third of lessons to very good in one-fifth; one-half of the teaching was good or better. In the best practice, the teachers had realistically high expectations of what the children could achieve, matched the work appropriately to challenge and support them and employed a range of strategies to maximise the children's oral contributions.

In the less effective practice the teaching focused on repetitive low level tasks or exercises which did not enable the children to access new learning. In these lessons there were too few opportunities to develop the children's language and thinking skills.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school uses a comprehensive range of standardised tests to assess the attainment of the children. The Principal and the assessment co-ordinator have recently collated the outcomes of the standardised assessment and end of key stage data. They acknowledge the need to make better use of the information, specifically, to set realistic targets for the children and to inform the planning and teaching throughout the school.

The teachers mark the children's work regularly and supportively. There are appropriate procedures and records in place for keeping the parents informed about their child's progress; this includes written reports and formal parent-teacher consultations. While the annual written reports provide the parents with a detailed and comprehensive evaluation of their children's progress and attainment.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision for special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory.

The small number of children who require additional support with their learning are identified at an early stage through a combination of the teachers' observations, diagnostic tests and the analysis of assessment data. The individual education plans (IEP) are written after consultation between the class teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). The IEP targets are specific and are reviewed regularly. The parents are made aware of the targets.

The current provision for the children is through in-class support. An analysis of the IEPs demonstrates that the majority of the children make good progress in line with the IEP targets and on occasion the children make sufficient progress to be removed from the register.

A policy for SEN was written over the last year and is due to be approved by the governors. The policy does not reflect sufficiently the context of Foley Primary School and contains a number of inaccuracies which need to be rectified before ratification by the governors.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is inadequate.

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal has been in post for 12 years and knows the children, their families and the community they come from very well. He has faced a number of complex issues over the last number of years including those related to staffing, illness and industrial relations, while

carrying out significant teaching responsibilities. Consequently, he has not provided the school with the strategic leadership required to attain and maintain high standards in all areas of the school's provision.

At the time of the inspection there were significant inaccuracies in the documentation presented by the school. All documents which inform and guide the work of the school need to be reviewed to ensure that they are current and reflect the specific context and needs of the school.

Some progress has been made, however, in a number of areas over the last year. The recently constituted governors are committed and professional in their approach. They have worked diligently with the Principal over the last year to improve communication with the parents, increase the range of extra-curricular activities provided for the children and to raise the profile of the school in the local community. They are exercising actively their challenge function with the Principal and have indicated their willingness to support him in addressing the areas for improvement identified in this inspection.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The School Development Plan (SDP) does not meet the requirements of the Department of Education School Development Planning Regulations/Schedule 2005/1. While the SDP contains a number of areas for development covering a two year period, there is insufficient focus on improving the quality of literacy and mathematics or any evaluation of the progress made in the priority areas from the previous plan. Currently there are two action plans associated with the SDP, these are not sufficiently specific, measurable or time bound to enable appropriate monitoring and measurement of improvement to be undertaken. Importantly the action plans need to include a sharper focus on strategies to improve learning, teaching, assessment, and the standards attained by all of the children. In addition, the views of the parents, the children, the governors and the staff need to be sought and incorporated when revising the SDP to take account of the findings of this inspection.

The process of self-evaluation leading to improvement has not yet been established in the school. The Principal and co-ordinators need further leadership and management training and well-focused external support to establish clear lines of accountability for the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school in order to provide improvement and raise standards.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The school accommodation generously comprises six classrooms, a staffroom, two offices, a small teaching space for SEN, an assembly/dining hall and a library housed in a combination of permanent and temporary buildings. The outdoor learning environment is underdeveloped and has the potential to enhance the children's learning experiences and improve the exterior appearance of the school. The standard of caretaking and cleaning is excellent.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the exemplary behaviour of the children and their enthusiasm to learn; and
- the very good work observed in the Foundation Stage and early Key Stage 1.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- to raise the inadequate standards in literacy and numeracy attained by a significant minority of the children;
- to improve the quality of learning and teaching in years 4 to 7; and
- for the Principal to improve the inadequate curricular leadership including the development of self-evaluation in order to effect necessary improvements across all areas of the curriculum.

In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is inadequate; the areas for improvement significantly outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified major areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all the children.

It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12 to 18 month period.

APPENDIX

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Access points for the children need to be secure at all times during the school day.

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Appendix 3(a)(iii)



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Interim Follow-up Visit



November 2012

[REDACTED]
Chairperson of the Board of Governors
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

December 2012

Dear [REDACTED]

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a focused inspection of Foley Primary School in the week of 10 October 2011 and as a result the school entered the formal intervention process on 20 October 2011. The Department of Education (DE) indicated at that time that a follow-up inspection would take place and that an interim follow-up visit (IFUV) would monitor the progress being made in bringing about the necessary improvements.

The focused inspection highlighted strengths in the exemplary behaviour of the children and their enthusiasm to learn; and the very good work observed in the Foundation Stage and early Key Stage 1.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- raising the inadequate standards in literacy and numeracy attained by a significant minority of the children;
- improvement in the quality of learning and teaching in years 4 to 7; and
- improvement of the inadequate curricular leadership including the development of self-evaluation in order to effect necessary improvements across all areas of the curriculum.

The post-inspection action plan was received by DE in March 2012. The DE acknowledged the positive response that the school had made, and planned to make, regarding the areas for improvement identified in the report.

The IFUV was carried out by the ETI on 21 and 22 November 2012.

During this visit, the Principal reported to the ETI on the nature and extent of the support provided to the school by the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service of the Southern Education and Library Board in the interval since the original inspection. The Principal and co-ordinators reported that they were satisfied with the level of support for literacy, numeracy and leadership development in the interim period.

The ETI met with the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (governors) during the visit. He reported that the governors were satisfied with the level of support received in the interim period.

The IFUV indicates that the school is addressing the key issues for improvement identified in the original inspection report. This was reported to the Principal, the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and a representative of the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service of the Southern Education and Library Board at the end of the IFUV.

At the time of the IFUV, the following were identified as the most important improvements that had taken place since the original inspection:

- the significant improvements in the quality of both the pastoral and curricular leadership provided by the Principal and the co-ordinators;
- the improved standards in the children's literacy across the school;
- the high quality planning for learning and teaching in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of the learning in the lessons taught by the permanent teachers of years 4 to 7 which was good or better; and
- the embedding of a culture of review, and development leading to improvement.

CONCLUSION

The IFUV confirms that the school is making good progress in addressing the key areas for improvement identified in the original inspection.

The ETI will continue to monitor the school's provision and a formal follow-up inspection will be conducted within the agreed timescales for the formal intervention process.

Yours faithfully


Inspection Services Branch

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Appendix 3 (a) (iv)



Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
Bangor
BT19 7PR
Tel: 028 91279334
Email: david.hughes@detn.gov.uk

Principal

9 August 2013

Dear

I have received a copy of the report of the follow-up inspection carried out in [redacted] Primary School by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in June 2013. I am pleased to note that the ETI has reported the quality of education provided by the school is now very good.

The report has highlighted the most important improvements made since the focused inspection in October 2011. On behalf of the Department of Education, I wish to commend you and all the school staff for the hard work and commitment which you have shown and which was necessary to effect these improvements.

I have written separately to [redacted] the chair of the school's Board of Governors, to inform him that the Department has decided that [redacted] Primary School has made sufficient improvement to enable it to exit the Formal Intervention Process. A copy of this letter has been forwarded to you.

I wish the whole school community every success as you build on the positive findings in the report and, with support from the SELB, continue to effect improvement in the school.

A copy of this letter has been sent to the chair of the school's Board of Governors and the SELB.

Yours sincerely

DAVID HUGHES (DR)
Director of Curriculum, Qualifications & Standards



Appendix 3(c) (V)



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

[REDACTED] Primary School
[REDACTED]

June 2013

FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOCUSED INSPECTION OF [REDACTED] PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a focused inspection of [REDACTED] Primary School in the week of 10 October 2011 and as a result the school entered the formal intervention process on 20 October 2011. The Department of Education (DE) indicated at that time that a follow-up inspection would take place and that, in the interim, follow-up visits would evaluate the progress being made in bringing about the necessary improvements¹.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an interim follow-up visit (IFUV) in November 2012, and a follow-up inspection on 4 and 5 June 2013.

In the interval since the original inspection, the school has received excellent support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) of the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) in developing aspects of the school's provision for literacy; numeracy and leadership.

Since the original inspection there has been one change in the teaching staff.

The action plan produced by the school in response to the inspection findings was of a very good quality.

The following are the most important improvements since the original inspection.

The Principal is now providing very good leadership supporting the staff pastorally and professionally since the inspection with an unwavering focus on improving the children's learning experiences and the standards that they attain. The Principal sets very high expectations for all aspects of the school's provision and has dealt effectively with sensitive staffing issues. All of the staff have contributed significantly to the improvement programme undertaken by the school in the interim period since the inspection and consequently they have developed their leadership skills significantly.

The school development planning process is based on a critical evaluation of key aspects of the school's provision and a robust analysis of performance data and the school development plan is now very good.

The co-ordinators are knowledgeable about their specialist areas and provide very effective guidance and curricular leadership to their colleagues.

The quality of the learning and teaching has improved since the original inspection and is now consistently very good. The learning and teaching observed in the sample of lessons visited during the follow-up inspection and interim visit demonstrated that the children attain very good standards in literacy and numeracy.

The teachers make very effective use of assessment data to identify and provide for the children who are under achieving, and those who are achieving at a low level.

The children are confident and articulate in discussing their work and make realistic evaluations of their learning. The standard of the children's written work across the school is very good. There is evidence that the literacy and numeracy booster group sessions are having a positive impact on the standards attained by the children.

¹ For further details, see the key strengths and areas for improvement reported originally in the Report of an Inspection of Foley Primary School in October 2011.

In 2012, all of the year 4 and year 7 children achieved the expected levels in English and in mathematics in statutory assessment; these outcomes are well above the average for Northern Ireland and for similar schools in the same free school meals category².

The governors work closely with the Principal and the staff and have played a significant role in bringing about improvement since the inspection. They have a clear understanding of their role and function, are well informed about leadership, standards, learning and teaching, and both support and challenge the Principal and staff on key aspects of the work of the school.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

It continues to be important that the employing authority, governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

² The key stage outcomes should be interpreted with caution for small primary schools as a large percentage change from year to year can often be attributed to a very small number of children.

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Appendix 1



Providing Inspection Services for
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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Interim Follow-up Inspection



October 2010

[REDACTED]
Chairperson of the Board of Governors
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

November 2010

Dear [REDACTED]

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out a standard inspection of [REDACTED] in the week of 4 October 2009 and as a result the school entered the formal intervention process on 20 October. The Department of Education indicated at that time that a follow-up inspection would take place and that, in the interim, follow-up inspection visits would monitor the progress being made in bringing about the necessary improvements.

An initial visit carried out by the Inspectorate on 16 March 2010 indicated that the school had prepared an appropriate action plan.

The first interim follow-up visit was carried out by the Inspectorate on 14 October 2010, the key findings of which are reported here.

In the interval since the original inspection the school has received support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service of the South-Eastern Education and Library Board and the Regional Training Unit in the following areas:

- leadership capacity development for senior management team (SMT) and middle managers;
- examination data analysis;
- reflective practice;
- curriculum mapping;
- English;
- science;
- technology and design; and
- support for other subject areas on request.

The following are the most important actions that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the broadening of the curriculum with the addition of courses provided through the Area Learning Community and within the school itself;
- the introduction of examination data analysis at individual teacher level;

- the whole school staff audit for School Development Planning;
- monitoring exercises, including book scoops and pupil shadowing;
- the revision of key stage 3 schemes in English, technology and science;
- staffing changes which include a new head of technology department, less reliance on non-specialist teachers in science and the employment of a part-time technology technician;
- increased time for SMT and Department meetings for planning and review, increased documentation of staff meetings and briefings, use of email; and
- the provision of skills development days and holiday, homework and breakfast clubs for the pupils.

As a result there have been improvements in the following areas:

- the General Certificate of Secondary Education results in 12 subjects in 2010, which are reported to be above the Northern Ireland average;
- the wider staff consultation which has better informed the school development planning process; and
- the sound start made to disseminating good practice across the school.

The interim follow-up visit confirms that the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the key issues for improvement identified in the original inspection report¹.

The school needs to continue to effect improvement in the overall standards achieved and to continue to engage all of the staff in the school's improvement work.

In particular, the school needs to:

- demonstrate the impact of improvement measures, the staff changes and the increased breadth of curriculum offer in raising overall standards and, in particular, in those subjects under focus in the original inspection; and
- provide evidence of improvement through revised target-setting and the development and use of SMART targets.

The District Inspector will continue to monitor the school's provision and a formal follow-up inspection will be conducted within the agreed timescales for the formal intervention process.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Name]
Inspection Services Branch

¹ The purpose of an interim follow-up visit is to evaluate the appropriateness of the actions being taken by the school. At this stage, a school's progress is determined as being either satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

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490.34.2.6 (10)



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**Providing Inspection Services for
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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection



October 2011

FOLLOW-UP TO THE STANDARD INSPECTION OF [REDACTED]

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a standard inspection of [REDACTED] in the week of 4 October 2009 and as a result the school entered the formal intervention process on 20 October 2009. The Department of Education (DE) indicated at that time that a follow-up inspection would take place and that, in the interim, follow-up visits would evaluate the progress being made in bringing about the necessary improvements.

The standard inspection in October 2009 highlighted strengths in:

- the good quality of pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection;
- the courteous and well-behaved pupils; and
- the good standards in public examinations achieved in mathematics and art and design.

The areas for improvement identified were the need to:

- improve the overall standards achieved by the pupils, including the standards in public examinations;
- improve the quality of leadership at all levels throughout the school; and
- develop a rigorous school development planning process involving all the staff, which focused strongly on effective learning and teaching and incorporates a robust process of self-evaluation and review.

The quality of education provided in English, in science and in technology and design was evaluated as inadequate.

An initial visit was carried out by ETI on 16 March 2010 shortly after an acceptable action plan was submitted by the school.

An interim follow-up visit was carried out by ETI on 14 October 2010 and confirmed that the school was making satisfactory progress in addressing the key issues for improvement identified in the original inspection report.

In the interval since the inspection the school reports that it has received good support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service of the South-Eastern Education and Library Board and the Regional Training Unit in the following areas: leadership and management; whole school development planning; self-evaluation and action planning and support for a range of subjects, in particular those under focus in the original inspection.

Since the October 2010 interim visit, the following are the most important improvements:

- the appointment of four new heads of department, which has led to some initial improvements;
- the introduction of a pupil pursuit programme by the Vice-Principal responsible for pastoral care, in order to support effectively self-evaluation for improvement;

- the development, by the newly appointed Principal supported by CASS, of a supplementary school development plan (SDP) (which complies with the DE's SDP Regulations, 2005) through a process which has actively engaged all of the teachers;
- the creation of a new faculty structure, with five appointed heads of faculty, resulting in better communication, mutual support and improved morale; and
- a staff development programme, supported by CASS, which is developing the teachers' skills in the use and analysis of data to inform better the planning and target setting for tracking the progress of individual pupils.

The quality of the teaching observed during the FUI ranged from inadequate to outstanding; the majority of lessons were good or better, a significant minority was satisfactory.

The overall standards achieved in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in 2011 decreased from 35% to 23% of the pupils in year 12 obtaining grades A* to C in five or more subjects, which is 36% below the average for non-selective schools.

16.7% of the pupils obtained grades A* to C in five or more subjects at GCSE level, including English and mathematics, which is 18% below the average.

Pupil attendance, whilst slightly improved, remains below the NI average.

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school remains inadequate, including in the three subjects originally evaluated as inadequate; the significant areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision.

There are important areas for improvement, which were identified in the 2009 Standard inspection, in standards, in learning and teaching and in leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the learners.

The areas for improvement are the need to:

- sustain the purposeful start made in improving teaching, learning and assessment, and
- raise the standards attained in external examinations, which are well below the NI average for similar schools.

It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will carry out a further follow-up inspection within 12 months and a further report will be published.

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Appendix 2b(10)



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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection



September 2012

FOLLOW-UP TO THE STANDARD INSPECTION OF [REDACTED]

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a standard inspection of [REDACTED] in the week of 4 October 2009 and as a result the school entered the formal intervention process on 20 October 2009. The inspection identified the need for improvement in a number of key areas, including in the standards achieved in public examinations and the quality of leadership at all levels throughout the school. The quality of education provided in English, in science and in technology and design was evaluated as inadequate.

An interim follow-up visit was carried out by ETI on 14 October 2010 and confirmed the progress that the school was making in addressing the key issues for improvement identified in the original inspection report.

The ETI carried out a follow-up inspection (FUI) in October 2011 and noted:

- the development, by the newly appointed Principal supported by South-Eastern Education and Library Board's Curriculum Advisory and Support Services, of a supplementary school development plan (which complies with the Department of Education's School Development Planning Regulations, 2005) through a process which has engaged actively all of the teachers; and
- the creation of a new faculty structure, with five appointed heads of faculty, resulting in better communication, mutual support and improved morale.

The October 2011 report noted further that a purposeful start had been made to improve teaching, learning and assessment; however, as the standards at key stage 4 in October 2011 remained well below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar non-selective schools the need to sustain and further improve standards was identified as a key area for improvement. The overall quality of education provided by the school remained inadequate.

The following are the most important changes that have taken place since the FUI in October 2011:

- the principal who had been appointed in a one-year, temporary post in September 2011, left the school to take up a permanent appointment elsewhere in August 2012;
- a new management structure was introduced in June 2012; and
- the school was awarded the UNICEF Children's Rights Respecting School: Recognition of Commitment reflecting a greater involvement which the pupils evidently have in their own learning.

Since the FUI in October 2011, the following are the most important improvements:

- the teachers have developed a wider range of teaching and learning strategies as a result of a structured programme of regular dissemination and sharing of good practice at departmental, faculty and whole-school level;
- there has been a strong focus on capacity-building in leadership and management at all levels;

- a very good start has been made to identifying underachievement among pupils, providing useful support through intervention strategies and offering parents greater opportunity to support their children's learning;
- in twelve subjects there was an increase in the percentage of pupils obtaining grades A*-C in the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) , although a significant minority of subjects are still 10% or more below the NI average;
- while the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C in any five or more GCSE subjects remains below the NI average for similar schools, it has doubled from 23% in 2011 to 45% in 2012; when GCSE English and mathematics are included in the five subjects, the percentage increased from 16% in 2011 to 23% in 2012, although this result remains well below the NI average for similar schools; and
- the quality of the provision in science has improved to satisfactory and the percentage of pupils achieving A*-C in single award science has increased from 55% to 90% which is well above the NI average for similar schools.

While the percentage of pupils attaining grades A*-G in any five GCSE subjects has increased from 80% to 85%, the standards at this level remain below the average for similar schools.

There has been no improvement in the overall attendance of the pupils, which has remained consistently below the NI average.

All of the staff have worked effectively, in a collegial manner and with active monitoring and support by governors, to begin to develop and implement the planned changes. As a consequence the quality and standards of significant aspects of the education provided by the school have improved in a relatively short period of time.

Overall, important aspects of the school's provision remain inadequate.

In order to sustain, secure and build on the important gains made in the last year the school needs:

- to consolidate and raise more consistently the standards in public examinations;
- to bring stability to the changing leadership and management arrangements; and
- to embed and build upon the self-evaluation leading to further improvement by identifying and addressing low and under-achievement and improving the attendance of the pupils.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will carry out a further follow-up inspection within 12 months and a report will be published.

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Appendix 2



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CHARTER MARK OF EXCELLENCE

**Providing Inspection Services for
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Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Standard Inspection



Inspected: October 2009

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

[REDACTED] is a co-educational controlled secondary school situated in the outskirts of Belfast. Thirty-three per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals; approximately 16% of the pupils enrolled at the school require additional support with their learning.

1.2 THE VIEWS OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF, GOVERNORS AND PUPILS

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity, prior to the inspection, for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires based on the life and work of the school, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of pupils from years 8 and 12.

One hundred and twelve questionnaires were issued to parents; forty were returned, duly completed to the Department of Education (DE), and 14 of these contained additional written comments. The majority of responses from the questionnaires were positive, indicating support for the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents commented on the good individual support that their children receive and the caring ethos in the school.

Over half of the teachers completed a confidential questionnaire, with four teachers providing additional written comments. Five support staff completed a confidential questionnaire. A majority of the staff who responded raised concerns relating to aspects of leadership and management and communication within the school. The governors expressed strong support for the work of the school and the leadership of the Principal.

The pupils expressed their appreciation of the care and support provided by their teachers, in particular their form teachers. They said that they enjoyed school, that they felt safe and secure and knew the staff to whom they could turn if they needed help or support.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) reported the key matters arising from the parents', teachers' and support staff's questionnaire to the Principal and Vice-principals in the school. Some of these matters are dealt with in more detail within the body of the report.

1.3 FOCUS

The inspection focused on learning and teaching, leadership and management at all levels across the school and, in particular, on the quality of provision and outcomes in the following subjects: English, technology and design, and science. The school's provision for pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection, and the provision for pupils with special educational needs, were also evaluated. In addition to classroom visits in the aforementioned subjects, inspectors observed classes in a range of other subjects in order to add to the inspection evidence base. A summary of the main findings for the subjects under focus can be found in Appendix 1.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK

2.1 ACHIEVEMENTS

The pupils are well motivated and when their teachers have appropriately high expectations of them, and understand and meet their individual needs, they respond in a positive manner and take part enthusiastically in class.

In 2009, approximately one-quarter of the Year 12 pupils achieved five or more A*-C grades at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level including English and mathematics, which is just above the respective Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar schools. Over the previous 3 years the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more grades A*-C at GCSE level has risen, although this percentage remains well below the NI average for similar non-selective schools. Over the same period, GCSE results at grades A*-C in approximately half of the subjects were more than five percentage points below the respective NI average, and in a significant minority of subjects were more than ten percentage points below.

The senior management team (SMT) recognises the need to address the significant variation in the results at GCSE, across the subjects, in comparison to the corresponding NI averages, if the pupils are to achieve the standards of which they are capable, in all subjects.

More information about the results achieved in public examinations is given in Appendix 4.

2.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

The quality of teaching in just over half of the lessons observed was good or better. In the subjects under focus, the quality of teaching ranged from very good to inadequate with the majority of lessons being satisfactory.

In the best practice observed there were opportunities for the pupils to engage actively in their learning. These lessons were well structured with clear learning intentions, an effective variety of teaching strategies were employed, and opportunities were provided for the pupils to talk about their learning. Furthermore, the work was matched well to the pupils' individual needs and abilities. However, in almost half of the teaching observed, there was less effective practice. This was characterised by lack of pace and challenge, reflecting the teachers' low expectations of the pupils, with insufficient focus on the intended outcomes.

2.3 PASTORAL CARE

The provision for pastoral care within the school is good. The Vice-principal with responsibility for pastoral care, the year heads and form teachers are committed and dedicated to the welfare of their pupils. In turn, the pupils are courteous and well-behaved in class and in the communal areas of the school. Well-considered strategies have been introduced recently to link the pastoral care of the pupils and the standards they achieve. The good work started through the personal tutorial system, should be regularly monitored and adjusted to ensure that individual targets are measurable and reflect realistically high expectations of the standards the pupils can achieve.

2.4 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

2.5 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The provision for special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory. In a small number of departments, where there is a shared understanding of how best to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and teachers use effective strategies and approaches, outcomes for the pupils are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) manages the provision for pupils on the SEN register, supported by a dedicated and skilled teacher who withdraws small groups of pupils for additional support with their learning. The SENCO draws up appropriate Individual Education Plans (IEPs), in collaboration with colleagues across the school and the IEPs provide the subject teachers with practical guidance and information. In the best practice, the teachers plan meticulously to differentiate work, and the pupils are clear about what is expected of them, and complete their tasks with interest and enthusiasm. More often, the pupils with special educational needs are not engaged in their learning and are insufficiently challenged by their teachers, who pay limited attention to their individual needs.

A small development team has drawn up an action plan which identifies appropriately a number of areas for future development. These include the need for the SMT to: work with all departments to agree what constitutes high quality provision for those pupils who have special educational needs; monitor and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching for those pupils who have special educational needs; and disseminate the existing good practice in the school.

3. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

While the Principal and Vice-principals demonstrate a strong commitment to the pastoral care and well-being of the pupils, the strategic leadership of the school is inadequate. Roles and responsibilities of the SMT are not clearly defined and there are ineffective procedures for communication and consultation among the staff. There is no systematic, collegial approach to drive forward improvement and as a result, much of the work that takes place has little impact on the quality of learning and teaching and on the standards achieved by the pupils.

The SMT has attempted to build leadership capacity among middle management through, for example, the creation of curriculum development teams and involvement with the Regional Training Unit in providing professional development for members of the middle management tier. However, the capacity at middle management level to undertake rigorous self-evaluation remains inadequate.

The School Development Plan (SDP) does not meet the associated regulations and the school development planning process is not sufficiently focused on raising standards, improving the quality of learning and teaching or on developing a broader and more relevant curriculum for the pupils. There is variation in the quality of the action plans produced by departments as part of the school's process for improvement; many, for example, are not adequately linked to the SDP. In a minority of departments, a good start has been made to the analysis and interpretation of performance data, including DE benchmarking, to review and inform further improvements in learning. This good practice needs to be disseminated.

The school needs further external support to improve leadership capacity at all levels, to help develop a collegial school development planning process and increase the knowledge and skills of the staff to engage in effective self-evaluation.

4. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The main strengths of the school include:

- the good quality of pastoral care and the arrangements for child protection;
- the courteous and well-behaved pupils; and
- the good standards in public examinations achieved in mathematics and art and design.

The areas for improvement identified are the need to:

- improve the overall standards achieved by the pupils, including standards in public examinations;
- improve the quality of leadership at all levels throughout the school; and
- develop a rigorous school development planning process involving all the staff which focuses strongly on effective learning and teaching and incorporates a robust process of self-evaluation and review.

5. CONCLUSION

In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the learners.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. A follow-up inspection will be carried out within 12 to 18 months after the inspection.

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS FOR THE SUBJECTS UNDER FOCUS

English

The strengths of the work include:

- the good relationships which exist in many of the classes;
- the innovative and creative teaching strategies in a minority of classes; and
- the willingness of many of the pupils to engage in the learning process.

The areas for improvement include the urgent need to:

- improve the inadequate standards including those in public examinations;
- plan for teaching and learning in a more coherent and collegial manner; and
- adopt a more strategic approach to bring about improvement in teaching, learning and outcomes.

Technology and Design (T&D)

The strengths of the work include:

- the good working relationships at all levels;
- the commitment of the staff to improvement;
- the well-ordered environment in the T & D department with good visual displays; and
- the strong emphasis on the care and health and safety of all pupils.

The areas for improvement are the urgent need to:

- raise the inadequate standards achieved by the pupils at GCSE level;
- improve the quality of teaching to include more frequent opportunities for the pupils to engage in practical activities; and
- revise the key stage 3 curriculum to provide a more varied technological experience which builds on the pupils' interests and provides appropriate progression and challenge.

Science

The strengths of the work include:

- the good quality teaching observed in a minority of classes;

- the extensive analysis of results achieved in public examinations and a comparison of these to NI averages for similar schools;
- the good quality schemes of work for years 8 and 9, which usefully set out a range of teaching strategies, resources for the pupils' use and homework; and
- the successful completion of practical work, including some investigative activities, with a due regard for safety, in the lessons observed.

The areas for improvement are an urgent need to:

- raise the inadequate standards of achievement for a significant minority of the pupils, including those attained in public examinations;
- improve leadership and management of the department, in particular to enable the department to work more effectively as a team; and
- disseminate the good practice observed to all the classes, particularly the effective display, explanation and assessment of expected learning outcomes and their associated success criteria.

APPENDIX 2

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- There is a need for technician support for technology and art and design.
- The technology and design workshops should not be used as general classrooms.

APPENDIX 3

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: [REDACTED] v. Date of Inspection: W/C 05/10/09
 ii. School Reference Number: [REDACTED] vi. Area of Study: Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-17
 iv. Status: Controlled

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 8 Intake	121	75	85	125	88
Total enrolment	646	609	574	563	551

1.3 Attendance

Year 2008/09	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2008/09	NI Average 2007/08
% Attendance	95.1	94.4	92.9	93.6	85.3	0	0	0	90

- 1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers: 38 iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact): 0.812
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 14.026

Year 2009/10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	42	63	51	54	66	N/A	N/A	276
Enrolment: Girls	46	66	43	46	74	N/A	N/A	275
Enrolment: Total	88	129	94	100	140	0	0	551
PTR	12.393	15.016	13.545	13.236	15.349	N/A	N/A	

- 1.5 Staying On Rate (2007/08) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	1.4	NI Av Year 13	40.9
Year 14	N/A	NI Av Year 14	N/A

1.6 Leavers Destinations

2007/08	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	143		2	
Another School	13%	11.3	0%	1.7
Employment	8%	8.7	0%	18.6
Full-time Further Education	59%	41.8	50%	22.4
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	0%	42.8
Full-time Training	8%	30.0	0%	4.9
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	3%	4.4	0%	5.6
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	8%	3.5	50%	4

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL:



SCHOOL YEAR:

2009/2010

GCSE	2007	2008	2009
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	89.23	79.2	87.7
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	25.38	34.4	36.07
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 5 subjects	65.38	67.2	71.31

6

APPENDIX 4

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2009, in comparison with the respective Northern Ireland (NI) averages

Table 1

	More than 10 percentage points above	Between 5 and 10 percentage points above	Within 5 percentage points	Between 5 and 10 percentage points below	More than 10 percentage points below
GCSE A*-E	Spanish	Art and Design Geography Mathematics	Chinese English Literature History Music Office Technology Religious Studies Sport/PE Studies	Design and Technology Double Award Science 1 st Subject English French Home Economics Child Development Home Economics Food Single Award Science	Business Studies GNVQ Hospitality and Catering Information Technology

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Table showing the spread of the NI subject averages which have been used in the determination of Table 1.

Table 2

	100% - 96%	95% - 86%	85% - 76%	75% - 66%	65% - 0%
GCSE A*-E	Double Award Science 1 st Subject English Literature	Art and Design Chinese English French History Home Economics Child Development Home Economics Food Information Technology Music Office Technology Religious Studies Sport/PE Studies	Business Studies Design and Technology Geography Mathematics Single Award Science Spanish	GNVQ Hospitality and Catering	

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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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36) (v)

FOLLOW-UP TO THE STANDARD INSPECTION OF [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a standard inspection of [REDACTED] the week of 4 October 2009 and as a result the school entered the formal intervention process on 20 October 2009. The inspection identified the need for improvement in a number of key areas, including in the standards achieved in public examinations and the quality of leadership at all levels throughout the school.

The ETI carried out a follow-up inspection (FUI) in October 2011 and noted that, despite initial improvements in learning and teaching, the standards at key stage (KS) 4 in October 2011 remained significantly below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for similar non-selective schools. The need to sustain and improve further the examination standards was identified as a key area for improvement.

A second FUI conducted in September 2012 noted that, for the year (2011-12) in which she was in post, a new principal had radically restructured the management arrangements. As a consequence, there was a number of important improvements, including an increase, across twelve subjects, in the percentage of pupils obtaining GCSE grades A*-C, although standards in a significant minority of subjects remained 10% or more below the NI average.

A third FUI took place on 25-26 September 2013 and evaluated the quality of provision as satisfactory. The following are the most important changes since September 2012:

- an acting principal, was in post from September 2012;
- and a further acting principal was appointed from September 2013;
- the school's enrolment dropped from 395 to 314;
- the number of pupils from homes where English is an additional language has increased to 20% of the enrolment;

- four departments have been involved in a connected learning project under the auspices of the STEM¹ initiative;
- the choice of courses available to pupils, in particular at KS4, has widened; and
- three new members were appointed to the school improvement team.

Drawing on effective support from the South-Eastern Education and Library Board Curriculum and Advisory Support Services, the following are the most important improvements at September 2013:

- the development amongst the pupils of positive attitudes, skills and dispositions towards learning in an increasingly multi-cultural school community;
- the percentage of pupils achieving grades A*-C in any five or more GCSE subjects, has more than doubled from 23% in 2011 to 49%;
- when GCSE English and mathematics are included in the five subjects, the percentage has increased from 16% to 30%;
- the percentage of pupils achieving A*-E in any five or more GCSE subjects has increased from 73% to 81% in 2013; and
- the quality of provision in English has improved to satisfactory.

While the standards attained in public examinations are rising steadily, and the level achieved in five GCSEs at A*-C including English and mathematics is now just below the average for similar schools, there remains scope for continued improvement.

The restructured management, at all levels, has the capacity to build further on the established improvement processes to, for example, differentiate more accurately between low and under achievement and to intervene and support pupils individually.

The quality of education provided by the school is now satisfactory. The strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision.

¹ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

The key areas for improvement which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the pupils are:

- to continue to raise standards and bring greater consistency to improvements in learning and teaching;
- to consolidate links with the community to address the poor overall level of attendance of the pupils, which remains consistently below the NI average and is having a direct impact on the standards the pupils attain; and
- to improve further the quality of self-evaluation, based on the action plans, to identify the impact of those actions which are raising standards effectively.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over the next 12 to 24 month period.

4. To provide a copy of the most recent evaluation of the ETI conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

This is attached. (Appendix 4)

Appendix 4

**Post Inspection
Evaluation
April 2012 – March 2013**

**Conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics
and Research Agency (NISRA)**

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Background Information

The Education and Training Inspectorate exists to provide inspection services on behalf of the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Department for Employment and Learning. In order for continuous improvement and increased openness, a post inspection evaluation has been conducted by the Statistics and Research Team within the Department of Education to evaluate performance levels during the inspection process. The following report comprises the findings of the study for the business year 2012/13.

The post inspection evaluation consisted of a survey of schools/organisations that had a general, focused, short or follow-up inspection between April 2012 - June 2012 and September 2012 – March 2013. These schools/organisations included pre-schools, nurseries, primary schools, special schools, post-primary schools, training colleges, further education colleges and youth organisations. These schools/organisations were invited to complete an online questionnaire. All teaching staff in a school/organisation had the opportunity to respond to the survey so multiple returns per school are possible.

A total of 410 valid online questionnaires were returned by 119 schools/organisations. Twelve organisations submitted more than one return from the Leader /Principal of the school/organisation. Most of these were schools.

It is worth taking note that not every respondent answered every question and some responded with 'not applicable'. The number of missing responses and 'not applicable' responses is shown for each table. Where appropriate, percentages having been also calculated based on valid responses, i.e. excluding 'not applicable' responses.

Where necessary, data has been suppressed to protect the identity of respondents. Where data has been suppressed the following abbreviations have been used:

- * denotes small number of responses (less than 5)
- # denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

GENERAL DETAILS

The first two questions in the questionnaire relate to the member of staff who completed the survey and in what sector their school/organisation belongs to. **Tables 1- 2** show the number and percentage of responses to the questions that were asked.

Table 1: You are completing this return as a :

	Frequency	Percent
Leader/Principal	121	29.6%
Teacher/Trainer/Lecturer	288	70.4%
Total	409	100.0%

NB: 1 missing grade

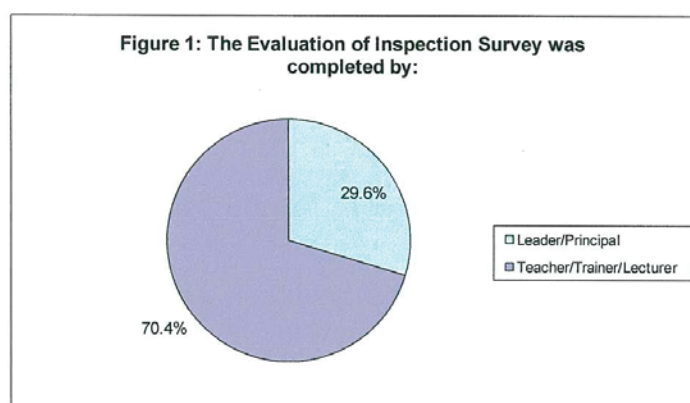
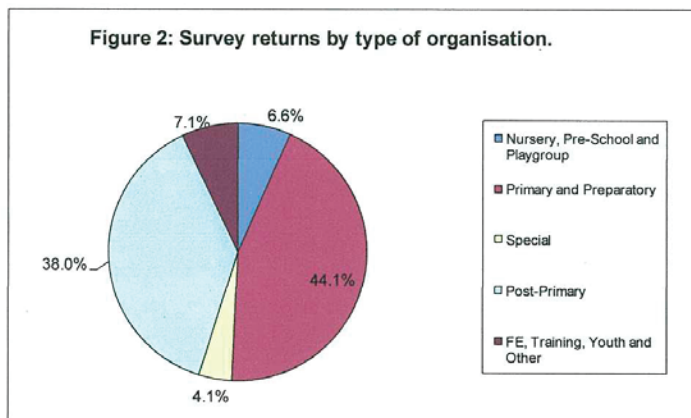


Table 2: The School Type your institution belongs to:

	Frequency	Percent
Nursery, Pre-School and Playgroup	27	6.6%
Primary and Preparatory	181	44.1%
Special	17	4.1%
Post-Primary	156	38.0%
FE, Training, Youth and Other	29	7.1%
Total	410	100.0%



SECTION A = Pre-Inspection

The seven questions in Section A relate to the pre-inspection at a school/organisation. **Tables 3 – 9** below show the number and percentage of responses to the questions that were asked.

Table 3: The Reporting Inspector explained the inspection process clearly before the inspection.

	Frequency	Percent of total	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	247	60.2%	62.2%
Agree	132	32.2%	33.2%
Neither Agree or Disagree	8	2.0%	2.0%
Disagree	#	#	#
Strongly Disagree	*	#	#
N/A	13	3.2%	
Total	410	100.0%	100.0%

* denotes small number of responses (less than 5)

denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

Table 4: The amount of documentation required before the inspection began was reasonable.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	100	24.4%	24.8%
Agree	228	55.7%	56.6%
Neither Agree or Disagree	29	7.1%	7.2%
Disagree	36	8.8%	8.9%
Strongly Disagree	10	2.4%	2.5%
N/A	6	1.5%	
Total	409	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 1

Table 5: The process of gathering information for the inspection from parents, teachers, support staff (including through the use of online questionnaires) did not place an undue additional administration burden on the school.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	102	24.9%	26.4%
Agree	182	44.5%	47.0%
Neither Agree or Disagree	43	10.5%	11.1%
Disagree	47	11.5%	12.1%
Strongly Disagree	13	3.2%	3.4%
N/A	22	5.4%	
Total	409	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 1

Table 6: The school/organisation was informed of the procedures for making a complaint.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	149	36.7%	38.0%
Agree	189	46.6%	48.2%
Neither Agree or Disagree	30	7.4%	7.7%
Disagree	#	#	#
Strongly Disagree	*	#	#
N/A	14	3.4%	
Total	406	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 4

* denotes small number of responses (less than 5)

denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

Table 7: The school/organisation had sufficient opportunity to brief the inspection team on the context of the organisation.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	148	36.3%	39.5%
Agree	175	42.9%	46.7%
Neither Agree or Disagree	29	7.1%	7.7%
Disagree	17	4.2%	4.5%
Strongly Disagree	6	1.5%	1.6%
N/A	33	8.1%	
Total	408	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 2

Table 8: The notice period prior to the inspection was too long.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	25	6.2%	6.2%
Agree	54	13.4%	13.4%
Neither Agree or Disagree	103	25.6%	25.6%
Disagree	164	40.7%	40.8%
Strongly Disagree	56	13.9%	13.9%
N/A	1	0.2%	
Total	403	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 7

Table 9: The notice period prior to the inspection was too short.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	5	1.2%	1.2%
Agree	23	5.6%	5.7%
Neither Agree or Disagree	120	29.4%	29.9%
Disagree	187	45.8%	46.5%
Strongly Disagree	67	16.4%	16.7%
N/A	6	1.5%	
Total	408	100.0%	100.0%
NB: missing values = 2			

SECTION B: During Inspection

The thirteen questions in Section B relate to during the inspection at a school/organisation. Tables 10-22 show the number and percentage of responses to questions about how the inspection team conducted themselves.

Table 10: The inspection team was approachable.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	166	40.6%	40.6%
Agree	188	46.0%	46.0%
Neither Agree or Disagree	22	5.4%	5.4%
Disagree	21	5.1%	5.1%
Strongly Disagree	12	2.9%	2.9%
N/A	0	0.0%	
Total	409	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 1

Table 11: The inspection team was courteous.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	200	48.8%	48.8%
Agree	182	44.4%	44.4%
Neither Agree or Disagree	16	3.9%	3.9%
Disagree	7	1.7%	1.7%
Strongly Disagree	5	1.2%	1.2%
N/A	0	0.0%	
Total	410	100.0%	100.0%

Table 12: The inspection team was helpful.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	161	39.4%	39.7%
Agree	141	34.5%	34.7%
Neither Agree or Disagree	64	15.6%	15.8%
Disagree	28	6.8%	6.9%
Strongly Disagree	12	2.9%	3.0%
N/A	3	0.7%	
Total	409	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 1

Table 13: The inspection team was professional.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	218	53.3%	53.3%
Agree	153	37.4%	37.4%
Neither Agree or Disagree	23	5.6%	5.6%
Disagree	9	2.2%	2.2%
Strongly Disagree	6	1.5%	1.5%
N/A	0	0.0%	
Total	409	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 1

Table 14: The Inspection team dealt effectively with any issues that were brought to its attention during the inspection.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	138	34.1%	40.9%
Agree	112	27.7%	33.2%
Neither Agree or Disagree	64	15.8%	19.0%
Disagree	18	4.4%	5.3%
Strongly Disagree	5	1.2%	1.5%
N/A	68	16.8%	
Total	405	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 5

Table 15: The schools/organisation had the opportunity to provide inspectors with an appropriate range of evidence for consideration.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	182	44.5%	45.3%
Agree	176	43.0%	43.8%
Neither Agree or Disagree	27	6.6%	6.7%
Disagree	12	2.9%	3.0%
Strongly Disagree	5	1.2%	1.2%
N/A	7	1.7%	
Total	409	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values=1

Table 16: The Reporting Inspector communicated effectively with the school/organisation throughout the inspection.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	169	41.5%	44.2%
Agree	143	35.1%	37.4%
Neither Agree or Disagree	42	10.3%	11.0%
Disagree	20	4.9%	5.2%
Strongly Disagree	8	2.0%	2.1%
N/A	25	6.1%	
Total	407	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 3

Table 17: Where an Associate Assessor and / or lay member was on the inspection team, he / she made a valuable contribution to the inspection process.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	77	18.9%	32.2%
Agree	88	21.6%	36.8%
Neither Agree or Disagree	62	15.2%	25.9%
Disagree	#	#	#
Strongly Disagree	*	#	#
N/A	169	41.4%	
Total	408	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 2

* denotes small number of responses (less than 5)

denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

Table 18: Where a 'nominee' was a member of the inspection team, he / she contributed effectively to the inspection process.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	21	5.2%	16.5%
Agree	40	9.8%	31.5%
Neither Agree or Disagree	61	15.0%	48.0%
Disagree	*	#	#
Strongly Disagree	*	#	#
N/A	280	68.8%	
Total	407	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 3

* denotes small number of responses (less than 5)

denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

Table 19: In all spoken reports during the inspection, the inspection team identified the main strengths of the organisation.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	169	41.7%	45.7%
Agree	147	36.3%	39.7%
Neither Agree or Disagree	18	4.4%	4.9%
Disagree	22	5.4%	5.9%
Strongly Disagree	14	3.5%	3.8%
N/A	35	8.6%	
Total	405	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 5

Table 20: In all spoken reports during the inspection, the inspection team communicated the main strengths of the organisation effectively to management.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	156	38.6%	45.2%
Agree	137	33.9%	39.7%
Neither Agree or Disagree	27	6.7%	7.8%
Disagree	14	3.5%	4.1%
Strongly Disagree	11	2.7%	3.2%
N/A	59	14.6%	
Total	404	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 6

Table 21: In all spoken reports during the inspection, the inspection team identified the main areas for improvement.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	133	33.3%	38.3%
Agree	176	44.0%	50.7%
Neither Agree or Disagree	21	5.3%	6.1%
Disagree	10	2.5%	2.9%
Strongly Disagree	7	1.8%	2.0%
N/A	53	13.3%	
Total	400	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 10

Table 22: In all spoken reports during the inspection, the inspection team communicated the main areas for improvement effectively and sensitively.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	128	31.4%	36.8%
Agree	158	38.8%	45.4%
Neither Agree or Disagree	30	7.4%	8.6%
Disagree	20	4.9%	5.7%
Strongly Disagree	12	2.9%	3.4%
N/A	59	14.5%	
Total	407	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 3

SECTION C: After the Inspection

The six questions in Section C relate to post inspection at a school/organisation. Tables 23 – 28 below show the number and percentage of responses to questions that were asked regarding the written report and on promoting improvement in the outcomes of learners.

Table 23: At the final report back, the inspection team communicated the findings of the inspection clearly to the senior management / management committee / Board of Governors.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	163	40.1%	49.4%
Agree	132	32.5%	40.0%
Neither Agree or Disagree	24	5.9%	7.3%
Disagree	#	#	#
Strongly Disagree	*	#	#
N/A	76	18.7%	
Total	406	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 4

* denotes small number of responses (less than 5)

denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

Table 24: During the final report back the staff had sufficient opportunities to seek clarification where necessary.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	119	29.5%	34.4%
Agree	120	29.8%	34.7%
Neither Agree or Disagree	43	10.7%	12.4%
Disagree	35	8.7%	10.1%
Strongly Disagree	29	7.2%	8.4%
N/A	57	14.1%	
Total	403	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 7

Table 25: After the final report back, the senior staff / management committee / Board of Governors were clear about what was to happen after the inspection.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	152	37.3%	43.9%
Agree	152	37.3%	43.9%
Neither Agree or Disagree	27	6.6%	7.8%
Disagree	9	2.2%	2.6%
Strongly Disagree	6	1.5%	1.7%
N/A	62	15.2%	
Total	408	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 2

Table 26: The language used in the written report was clear and concise.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	158	39.0%	39.4%
Agree	209	51.6%	52.1%
Neither Agree or Disagree	14	3.5%	3.5%
Disagree	11	2.7%	2.7%
Strongly Disagree	9	2.2%	2.2%
N/A	4	1.0%	
Total	405	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 5

Table 27: The content of the written report reflected accurately the main messages communicated in the spoken report.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	171	42.2%	45.4%
Agree	157	38.8%	41.6%
Neither Agree or Disagree	26	6.4%	6.9%
Disagree	15	3.7%	4.0%
Strongly Disagree	8	2.0%	2.1%
N/A	28	6.9%	
Total	405	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 5

Table 28: The inspection process has helped the school / organisation to plan for, and promote improvement in the outcomes for learners.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	149	36.5%	36.8%
Agree	179	43.9%	44.2%
Neither Agree or Disagree	40	9.8%	9.9%
Disagree	22	5.4%	5.4%
Strongly Disagree	15	3.7%	3.7%
N/A	3	0.7%	
Total	408	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 2

SECTION D: Inspection Services Branch

The five questions in Section D relate to the Inspection Services Branch. Tables 29 – 33 below show the number and percentage of responses to questions that were asked regarding the Inspection Services Branch.

Table 29: Inspection Services Branch was approachable throughout the inspection process.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	114	27.9%	42.2%
Agree	114	27.9%	42.2%
Neither Agree or Disagree	36	8.8%	13.3%
Disagree	*	#	#
Strongly Disagree	*	#	#
N/A	138	33.8%	
Total	408	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 2

* denotes small number of responses (less than 5)

denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

Table 30: Inspection Services Branch was courteous throughout the inspection process.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	121	29.8%	45.1%
Agree	106	26.1%	39.6%
Neither Agree or Disagree	37	9.1%	13.8%
Disagree	*	#	#
Strongly Disagree	*	#	#
N/A	138	34.0%	
Total	406	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 4

* denotes small number of responses (less than 5)

denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

Table 31: Inspection Services Branch was helpful throughout the inspection process.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	112	27.7%	42.1%
Agree	105	26.0%	39.5%
Neither Agree or Disagree	40	9.9%	15.0%
Disagree	#	#	#
Strongly Disagree	*	#	#
N/A	138	34.2%	
Total	404	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 6

* denotes small number of responses (less than 5)

denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

Table 32: Inspection Services Branch was professional throughout the inspection process.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	117	28.7%	43.8%
Agree	107	26.3%	40.1%
Neither Agree or Disagree	38	9.3%	14.2%
Disagree	5	1.2%	1.9%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%	0.0%
N/A	140	34.4%	
Total	407	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 3

Table 33: Inspection Services Branch dealt effectively with any administrative issues that were brought to its attention during the inspection process.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	101	24.9%	41.4%
Agree	94	23.2%	38.5%
Neither Agree or Disagree	45	11.1%	18.4%
Disagree	*	#	#
Strongly Disagree	*	#	#
N/A	161	39.8%	
Total	405	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 5

* denotes small number of responses (less than 5)

denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

SECTION E: Overall Satisfaction

The four questions in Section E relate to Overall Satisfaction. Tables 34 – 37 below show the number and percentage of responses to questions that were asked regarding the Overall Satisfaction from the Inspection process.

Table 34: The information relating to the inspection process was easily accessible.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	167	40.9%	42.3%
Agree	204	50.0%	51.6%
Neither Agree or Disagree	16	3.9%	4.1%
Disagree	#	#	#
Strongly Disagree	*	#	#
N/A	13	3.2%	
Total	408	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 2

* denotes small number of responses (less than 5)

denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

Table 35: The information team met the deadlines set out in the timeline issued as part of the pre-inspection documentation.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	179	43.8%	45.8%
Agree	187	45.7%	47.8%
Neither Agree or Disagree	16	3.9%	4.1%
Disagree	#	#	#
Strongly Disagree	*	#	#
N/A	18	4.4%	
Total	409	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 1

* denotes small number of responses (less than 5)

denotes figure suppressed under rules of statistical suppression

Table 36: Overall I am content with the quality of service provided by ETI and ISB throughout the inspection process.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	172	42.1%	42.2%
Agree	151	36.9%	37.0%
Neither Agree or Disagree	41	10.0%	10.0%
Disagree	23	5.6%	5.6%
Strongly Disagree	21	5.1%	5.1%
N/A	1	0.2%	
Total	409	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 1

Table 37: I / we have been treated fairly by the inspection team throughout the inspection. * If not, please give the reasons in the comments box.

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of valid responses
Strongly Agree	186	45.6%	45.7%
Agree	141	34.6%	34.6%
Neither Agree or Disagree	29	7.1%	7.1%
Disagree	30	7.4%	7.4%
Strongly Disagree	21	5.1%	5.2%
N/A	1	0.2%	
Total	408	100.0%	100.0%

NB: missing values = 2

PUBLICATIONS PRODUCED BY THE INSPECTORATE

This section relates to how useful leaders/teachers have found the following publications/resources produced by the Inspectorate. **Tables 38 – 45** below show the number and percentage of responses to questions that were asked regarding how useful the publications were.

Table 38: Together Towards Improvement / IQ:RS

	Frequency	Percent
Very Useful	210	53.0%
Quite Useful	142	35.9%
Of Little Use	11	2.8%
Never Used/Not Familiar With	33	8.3%
Total	396	100.0%

NB: missing values = 14

Table 39: Chief Inspector's Report

	Frequency	Percent
Very Useful	124	31.2%
Quite Useful	188	47.2%
Of Little Use	40	10.1%
Never Used/Not Familiar With	46	11.6%
Total	398	100.0%

NB: missing values = 12

Table 40: Better Maths / English / Science

	Frequency	Percent
Very Useful	108	27.5%
Quite Useful	126	32.1%
Of Little Use	15	3.8%
Never Used/Not Familiar With	144	36.6%
Total	393	100.0%

NB: missing values = 17

Table 41: Evaluating Subjects (e.g. careers / pastoral care / geography)

	Frequency	Percent
Very Useful	72	18.5%
Quite Useful	125	32.1%
Of Little Use	21	5.4%
Never Used/Not Familiar With	172	44.1%
Total	390	100.0%

NB: missing values = 20

Table 42: Improving Subjects

	Frequency	Percent
Very Useful	65	16.5%
Quite Useful	128	32.6%
Of Little Use	17	4.3%
Never Used/Not Familiar With	183	46.6%
Total	393	100.0%

NB: missing values = 17

Table 43: The Reflective Teacher

	Frequency	Percent
Very Useful	120	30.6%
Quite Useful	186	47.4%
Of Little Use	20	5.1%
Never Used/Not Familiar With	66	16.8%
Total	392	100.0%

NB: missing values = 18

Table 44: The Common Framework for Inspection

	Frequency	Percent
Very Useful	121	30.9%
Quite Useful	168	42.9%
Of Little Use	20	5.1%
Never Used/Not Familiar With	83	21.2%
Total	392	100.0%

NB: missing values = 18

Table 45: The ETI Website

	Frequency	Percent
Very Useful	162	41.0%
Quite Useful	180	45.6%
Of Little Use	24	6.1%
Never Used/Not Familiar With	29	7.3%
Total	395	100.0%

NB: missing values = 15

5. To provide information on the number of schools which will potentially be affected following the implementation of the proposed revisions to the Formal Intervention Process.

Since the implementation of ESaGS, 10 schools have had two consecutive evaluations of 'satisfactory' and 1 school has had three consecutive evaluations of 'satisfactory'

DE Correspondence 17.02.14



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture Arts and Leisure

CHIEF INSPECTOR
Noelle Buick



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Peter McCallion
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17 February 2014

Dear Peter

Please find attached the case studies submitted previously in response to your query of 18 October 2013. I thought it might be helpful to refocus on these as they demonstrate a clear link between inspection and improvement. There is both a primary and post-primary case study showing the sequence of inspection activity that led to improvements in each school.

I also enclose a copy of the ETI's "Inspection Leading to Improvement" for the 2012-2013 Business Year. This also has some relevant case studies.

Yours sincerely

Noelle Buick

NOELLE BUICK



DE Correspondence 17.02.14

The Education and Training Inspectorate

Inspection Leading to Improvement:

Business Year 2012-2013



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



Foreword by the Chief Inspector

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has both an improvement and accountability role. Our mission is 'promoting improvement in the interest of all learners'. The work of ETI raises expectations and leads to improvement in the quality of education by identifying practice which is good or better so that it can be shared or where it is not good enough and needs to improve. In addition we have a key role in capacity building and we do this, for example, by promoting self-evaluation and involving associate assessors in our work. We also have an accountability role in providing assurance to the Department of Education, Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure about the quality of education and training and in reassuring parents and carers that their children are getting a good education.

Effective, high performing organisations display a number of key characteristics which are described in this report. There are, however, a minority of the organisations we inspect which do not demonstrate this capacity for improvement and which require more extended support. Where inspection identifies such organisations, a more rigorous follow-up inspection process is instigated whereby the organisation receives support over a period – between 12-24 months depending on the original inspection outcome – after which the ETI conducts a follow-up inspection. It is this follow-on process, and the associated interim visits conducted by ETI, which organisations tell us are so helpful to them in their improvement process.

The report which follows demonstrates clearly that a majority of organisations have been successful in making substantial improvements, leading to better outcomes for learners, as a direct result of the inspection process. I am happy to report that the positive impact of inspection which we reported over the past two years has continued this year.

Raising standards and achievements is at the heart of the current range of educational policies and the external support provided for organisations. The ETI look forward to continuing to play a pivotal role in 'raising the bar'¹ and 'closing the gap'², doing so in the very best interests of children, young people and adult learners across our education, youth and training sectors.

¹ Literacy and Numeracy Taskforce Report. 2008-09

² Every School a Good School. 2009

Noelle Buick

Noelle Buick
Chief Inspector

In assessing the various features of the provision, inspectors relate their evaluations to six performance level descriptors as set out below:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

In this short report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

almost/nearly all	more than 90%
most	75% – 90%
a majority	50% - 74%
a significant minority	30% - 49%
a minority	10% - 29%
very few/a small number	less than 10%

Introduction

Follow-up inspections are undertaken where overall provision, at the time of the original inspection, has been evaluated as satisfactory, inadequate or unsatisfactory. The follow-up inspection process focuses on the areas for improvement identified in the original inspection, which very often reflect the three key areas of leadership and management, quality of provision for learning, and achievements and standards.

In total, 72 follow-up inspections were completed between April 2012 and March 2013. The follow-up inspections **show significant improvement across a majority of the education, youth and training organisations in which a follow-up inspection was completed.** Of the 72 follow-up inspections, 15 were in early years settings³, 27 in primary schools, 20 in post-primary schools, three in special schools, one in Alternative Education Provision (AEP), three in work-based learning and three in youth.

Summary features of improvement through inspection across all phases

The evidence from the follow-up inspections demonstrated that improvement occurs when all who are professionally involved within an organisation:

- acknowledge during and/or following inspection that improvement is needed;
- develop the quality of leadership and management at all levels;
- address inconsistencies in learning and teaching;
- share high expectations of what children, young people and adult learners can achieve and of the quality of education and training that they experience;
- commit to more effective quality assurance arrangements, including more robust use of qualitative and quantitative measures to inform both the self-evaluation and development planning processes;
- monitor learners' progress and intervene early, if necessary, to enable individuals to make good progress; and
- work well together and with others, including non-teaching staff, governors, management committees, parents and the wider community, in the very best interests of all children, pupils and adult learners.

³ Of these, 4 were nursery units within primary schools

This is not a list of necessary precursors of improvement, but these features are those that the evidence indicates are most likely to improve the educational experiences and outcomes for learners and so enable organisations to achieve an overall improvement of at least one performance level by the time of the follow-up inspection.

Ensuring that these features are in place, and that they complement each other to effect an improvement, can be challenging. The evidence indicates that in large complex organisations, where there has been long-term low achievement, improvement often takes longer.

This year, once again, the evidence demonstrates that **when leadership and management remains a substantial area for further development, sufficient improvement does not happen.**

Exemplars demonstrating how organisations improve professional practice and inspection outcomes are included in case studies in Annex 1.

The following are key statistical features of the improvements identified during the follow-up inspections:

- Improvement at the follow-up inspection during the current business year was reported in 69% of instances; most follow-up inspections reported a satisfactory or better level of performance; two organisations regressed from the time of the original inspection. The overall pattern of improvement is less favourable than that observed in the previous three years due primarily to remaining issues in some post-primary schools.
- Follow-up inspections in 29% of organisations showed improvement by two or more levels of performance on the original inspection evaluation. The proportion of organisations which had improved by one level of performance was 40% similar to the proportion in previous years.
- Of the 16 follow-up inspections where the performance was evaluated to be less than satisfactory at the original inspection, half remained less than satisfactory at the time of the follow-up inspection and half improved to a satisfactory or better level of performance.
- Of the 56 follow-up inspections where the performance was evaluated satisfactory at the original inspection, 42 improved to a good or better level of performance.

Phase summaries

In the Early Years sector, the quality of the provision for the children was followed up in 11 organisations. In addition, there were follow-up inspections in four nursery units that were originally inspected as part of the inspection of a primary school. Improvement by at least one performance level was identified in 93% of these 15 centres; half of these had improved by at least two levels.

In the Primary school sector, there were 27 follow-up inspections, five of which were evaluated as being less than satisfactory at the time of the original inspection and were placed by the Department of Education in the Formal Intervention Process (FIP), outlined in the *Every School a Good School* policy. Of these 27 schools, 81% per cent demonstrated their capacity to improve on aspects of provision - a lower proportion than the 97% last year, primarily because there were three schools in FIP which failed to improve.

In the Post-Primary school sector, there were 20 follow-up inspections, eight of which were in organisations evaluated originally as having a less than satisfactory level of performance. Five of the schools in FIP failed to improve sufficiently and their quality of education remained less than satisfactory. Approximately one half of the schools that had satisfactory provision at the original inspection failed to demonstrate sufficient improvement - a proportion similar to last year. In summary, 40% of the schools improved by at least one performance level - a slightly higher proportion than the 33% last year which achieved similar improvement.

In the Special school sector, there was sufficient improvement in all three special schools that had a follow-up inspection this year to lead to an increase in the performance level assigned.

In the Alternative Education Programme sector, one follow-up inspection was undertaken and the performance level improved by one level.

In the Youth sector, there were three follow-up inspections. In all three providers, the improvement was not sufficient to lead to an increase in the assigned performance level.

In the Work-Based Learning and Adult Employment sector, three follow-up inspections were completed; in two of the organisations the levels of performance improved by at least one performance level and in the third the performance remained the same.

In addition to the three training organisations, the work-based learning provision in two specialist areas in one of the Further Education Colleges was evaluated during follow-up visits. In each of the areas, the provision improved by at least two performance levels.

In the Further Education sector, there were no follow-up inspections during which the overall provision was evaluated. However, there were two specialist areas in each of two colleges which were evaluated during follow-up visits. In all four areas, the provision improved by at least one performance level.

Extent of improvement in performance levels 2012-13

	Number of follow-up inspections	Remained less than satisfactory	Regressed to less than satisfactory	No change (satisfactory)	Improved one level	Improved two levels
Early Years	15*			1	7	7**
Primary	27	3	1	1	11**	11**
Post-Primary	20	5	1	6	7***	1
Special School	3				2	1
AEP	1				1	
Youth	3			3		
Work based learning	3			1	1**	1**
Total	72	8 11.1%	2 2.8%	12 16.7%	29 40.3%	21 29.2%

* Of which four were nursery units within primary schools

** Of which one improved from a less than satisfactory performance level

*** Of which three improved from a less than satisfactory performance level

ANNEX 1**A CASE STUDY OF IMPROVEMENT IN A PRE-SCHOOL SETTING****At the time of the initial inspection:**

At the time of the original inspection, a significant number of children with social and emotional development delays, or non-diagnosed special educational needs, displayed challenging behaviours which impacted negatively on the overall quality of the provision for all of the children. Too many children were not engaged in their learning as the session progressed and the staff lacked sufficient skills and confidence to manage these challenges effectively.

The inspection report identified three key areas for improvement; the need for the staff to develop effective behaviour management strategies for use with children who display challenging behaviour; the need to review the daily timetable which was too fragmented and did not support the children's needs, and the need to develop observation and assessment procedures which would better inform the planning for individual children.

The overall conclusion indicated that the quality of educational provision at the time of the inspection was satisfactory.

As a result of the inspection:

The playgroup drew up appropriate action plans and these were monitored through class observation and discussions held with the staff during two interim visits carried out by the district inspector. The leader reported that the positive feedback, guidance and discussion provided by ETI during the interim visits were helpful in building her confidence and capacity to implement effective improvement.

A number of key actions were taken which contributed significantly to improvement. The staff all received excellent training to support children with special educational needs through the Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Early Years capacity building pilot, funded by the Department of Education. A specialist member of the Belfast Education and Library Board Early Years Inclusion Team (EYIT) was deployed to provide additional focused support during the session for a specific child who required one-to-one support for their own safety and that of the other children. This not only helped the child to focus on activities but also freed up the staff to meet the needs of the other children. The staff benefited hugely from observing the specialist support worker's techniques on a daily basis building their own expertise and confidence which they then used in their work with all of the children. In addition, the staff used the skills they have learned through the recent capacity building training to implement effective strategies for managing children's behaviour including smaller group sessions, visual cues, and clear, direct instructions.

The training has also guided the staff on how to track children's progress effectively and how to set suitable targets. As a result, the children's records of progress are more detailed and are being used to tailor the sessions, and adult support, more effectively to the needs of individual children. For example, the children access the outdoors, one-to-one support, smaller group activities or more challenging activities, as appropriate for their stage of development.

As a result of the actions taken, the children listen more attentively, they display very good social skills, and they are well motivated and more highly engaged in their learning. The provision for all of the six areas of the pre-school curriculum was evaluated as very good or excellent during the follow-up inspection. Children with additional needs have been identified earlier, ensuring they get the appropriate early intervention and that their parents have better information to make informed decisions about the next stage of their child's education.

The follow-up inspection evaluated the overall quality of the educational provision as very good.

A CASE STUDY OF IMPROVEMENT IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL

At the time of the initial inspection:

A number of important areas for development were identified, including the need to improve the quality of learning and teaching in years 4 to 7, to raise the inadequate standards in literacy and numeracy attained by a significant minority of the children and for the principal to improve the inadequate curricular leadership across all areas of the curriculum.

Immediately after the inspection:

The Principal and the staff approached the inspection findings positively and showed willingness and determination to seek and accept support and commit fully to the process of school improvement.

Within a short period:

There was one change in the teaching staff and the Principal along with the two permanent teachers reviewed key aspects of the school's provision and put in place detailed action plans to effect improvement across all aspects of the provision.

The Principal established a collegial approach to school improvement involving the staff, governors, children and parents and set high expectations for all aspects of the school's provision. He supported the staff pastorally and professionally with an unwavering focus on improving the children's learning experiences and the standards that they attain.

The governors worked closely with the Principal and the staff and have played a significant role in bringing about improvement since the inspection. They both support and challenge the Principal and staff on key aspects of the work of the school.

The school development planning process was reviewed and is now based on a critical evaluation of key aspects of the school's provision and a robust analysis of performance data.

The co-ordinators undertook a detailed review of the planning for learning and teaching in literacy and numeracy and new frameworks for short and long term planning were carefully devised. The processes of reflection on and evaluation of learning, and sharing of good practice are now fully embedded in classroom practice.

The teachers made very effective use of assessment data to identify and provide for the children who are under achieving, and those who are achieving at a low level. Literacy and numeracy booster group sessions were introduced and the school was able to demonstrate that these are having a positive impact on the standards attained by the children.

In 2012, all of the year 4 and year 7 children achieved the expected levels in English and in mathematics in statutory assessment; these outcomes are well above the average for Northern Ireland (NI) and for similar schools in the same free school meals category⁴.

⁴ The key stage outcomes should be interpreted with caution for small primary schools as a large percentage change from year to year can often be attributed to a very small number of children.

A CASE STUDY OF IMPROVEMENT IN AN EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL CENTRE (EOTAS)

At the time of the initial inspection:

A number of important areas for development were identified, including the need to develop planning to promote the application of the key skills of English, mathematics and information communication technology (ICT), to provide greater challenge for the young people within lessons and connect the learning in practical activities with the core curriculum, to provide opportunities for the young people to work in pairs and small groups to develop their ability to work collaboratively, to clarify the overall governance of the provision and put in place budgetary arrangements which ensure that the education co-ordinator can effectively cost the centre's development plans and resources and to ensure staff have access to continuous professional development.

Following the inspection:

A mainstream post-primary school accepted the role of governance of the EOTAS centre and a new education co-ordinator was appointed. The principal of the school conducted an audit of the ICT provision and training was provided in the use of ICT, assessment for learning and in the use of thematic approaches to teaching and learning. There was a restructuring of the schemes and lesson planning with opportunities provided for the young people to work collaboratively. The school provided in-service support and ICT technical support for the centre.

As a result of the development work carried out since the original inspection, the staff report a greater engagement and attendance of the young people who are now given the opportunity to work collaboratively. There is now a consistent format for lesson planning with greater challenge within lessons and ICT is used appropriately across the core curriculum and in some practical activities. The teachers use themes based on the interests and needs of the young people as a focus that engages them well. The centre is developing the connections between the core curriculum and practical learning activities. The local mainstream post-primary school has taken on the role of governance of the centre and management is effectively supporting the new education co-ordinator in improving the provision and providing opportunities for staff to access continuing professional development. Some of the centre staff have been team teaching in the post primary school for part of the week as part of their professional development and there are effective professional relationships between the teachers in both organisations. The Education and Library Board have put in clear budgetary arrangements enabling the education co-ordinator to plan and resource the centre effectively.

The centre is more dynamic and staff are exploring new courses and creative ways to engage the young people. The quality of the education provided by the centre is now good and there are important strengths in the provision. The governance and financial issues have been resolved and the new management team have demonstrated the capacity to continue to develop the provision.

A CASE STUDY OF IMPROVEMENT IN A POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL WHICH HAD BEEN IN THE FORMAL INTERVENTION PROCESS

The school in this case study is a non-selective 11-18 school with 900 pupils from city and rural areas. Over 95% of the pupils enrolled obtained either a Grade D or did not participate in the (then) transfer procedure. Twenty-seven percent of the pupils were entitled to free school meals and 22% required additional support with their learning.

At the time of the initial inspection

In March 2010, when the initial inspection was conducted, SEN provision was evaluated as good and pastoral care and careers as satisfactory. The quality of the achievements and standards (particularly in English and science), provision for teaching and learning and the leadership at most levels, however, were evaluated as inadequate. The school was placed by the Department of Education in the formal intervention process.

Following the inspection

By the time of the first follow-up inspection in September 2011, three new assistant principals (for teaching and learning, pupil support and standards and achievements) and a new head of science had been appointed. A staff development programme had been put in place and a consistent approach to managing pupil behaviour was implemented successfully. Effective use of tracking and target-setting in Year 12 to raise standards had been introduced. Standards in science rose to well above the average for similar schools and standards in English fell further to well below average. Overall, however, the provision remained inadequate.

How did the school improve to Satisfactory between March 2010 and November 2012 and exit formal intervention?

- The governors formed a monitoring group which worked in the school, on a regular and frequent basis, interviewing, challenging and supporting teachers with leadership duties.
- Reporting to governors through subject departments reviews, was implemented, focusing on addressing underachievement.
- A new school development plan was drawn up, coordinating teams across the school.
- The senior leadership team was restructured with distributed responsibilities.
- A new vice-principal and a new head of English were appointed.
- Pastoral care provision was revised, codes of conduct for pupils and staff were introduced with a focus on consequences and rewards, in order to build an ethos of REAL (*Respect for Everyone, Achievement for Life*) which created a more explicit link between the curriculum, teaching and pastoral provision.
- A staff well-being group was introduced and monthly meetings held with support staff.
- A school council was set up for students and evening classes provided for parents.
- Based on collating and analysing detailed assessment data, the tracking of pupils' progress and intervention was developed further to address underachievement.
- Through staff development, a much sharper and more effective focus on the pupils' learning and on the pedagogy which best promotes it was shared.

In the context of a well-coordinated and highly accountable strategic approach, the staff now accept collective responsibility for continued improvement and, through a combination of formal and informal communications, are reflecting on and sharing good teaching practices in an effective way. As a result, across 14 subjects, standards at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) have risen significantly, including the measure of good GCSEs and, while the headline figures are just below the average for similar schools, there is sufficient evidence that the actions are impacting positively on the outcomes for pupils and the provision was evaluated as satisfactory in November 2012 and the school exited formal intervention.

A CASE STUDY OF IMPROVEMENT IN A WORK-BASED LEARNING ORGANISATION

At the time of the initial inspection:

The overall quality of the provision was inadequate and a number of important areas for development were identified, including the unsatisfactory quality of the provision for engineering in a sub-contracting organisation; the inadequate leadership and management of the engineering provision, particularly the arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the sub-contracted training; the quality of the teaching, training and learning in a significant minority of the directed training sessions observed; and the modest overall retention rate across the professional and technical areas inspected.

Within a short period:

The manager, board of directors and staff demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing shortfalls in the quality of the provision and an effective improvement plan was produced to promote improvement across the organisation.

In the interval after the inspection:

A number of key actions which affected the work of the organisation took place.

- The board of directors became more actively involved in the quality improvement process.
- Improved internal quality assurance and management information systems were implemented.
- The curriculum offer was revised and new health and safety and sub-contracting arrangements were put in place, including enhanced arrangements to monitor and evaluate the sub-contracted provision.
- The staffing and management structures were reviewed, and a qualifications manager and some specialist tutors were recruited.
- A significant investment was made in targeted continuous professional development to further improve the quality of teaching, training and learning.
- High levels of investment were made in resources and accommodation.
- A revised retention strategy was implemented.

Over an 18 month period:

Significant improvements were made in the quality of the provision, both at management level and across a number of professional and technical areas.

- Good arrangements are now in place to manage and evaluate provision which is sub-contracted.
- The provision in the professional and technical areas has improved and is now good or very good across the provision.
- The quality of teaching, training and learning is now good or better in a majority of the sessions observed.

A CASE STUDY IN A SPECIAL SCHOOL: ENABLING INCLUSIVE SUPPORT TO DEVELOP

At the time of the initial inspection:

The main area for improvement related to leadership and management. The school was in the process of a new build and much work was needed to ensure that the provision would be fit for future purpose and developed within a long term strategic view of the school as a specialist provider for children with sensory impairment and an advisory and support service to the wider mainstream school system

Following the inspection:

Little progress was noted by the time of the follow-up inspection in the key areas for development as the school was focused almost entirely on securing the resources and accommodation which the staff considered necessary to meet the needs of the pupils. With support from the Education and Library Board and the district inspector a new action plan and school development plan were prepared which were of good quality and used purposefully to implement important priorities such as linking the school to provision at the local further education college and initiating joint learning between the school and its neighbouring mainstream schools. This action was effective and helped the school to create an ethos as a valued resource to mainstream schools

The second follow up inspection:

Found the level of provision of a good standard. Key improvements included the creation of an effective system to track pupils' progress, monitor outcomes and ensure that the pupils had the opportunity to experience learning alongside peers in mainstream schools. The outreach service is now well established and learning pathways are clear and recognised by pupils and parents alike. Creatively, the pupils have developed a training programme of signing to break barriers to communication which they teach to pupils and professionals in other schools, and settings.

As a consequence the school is in a better position to day and a confident and outgoing service of support is well underway.

Committee for Education to DE 24.10.13



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Veronica Bintley
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer
Department of Education
Rathgael House
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24 October 2013

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/984

Dear Veronica

Education and Training Inspectorate – Complaints Procedure etc.

At its meeting on 23 October 2013, the Committee received a briefing from representatives of the NITC as part of its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request the following information:

- an update on a reported planned review of the ETI complaints procedure;
- clarification in respect of suggestions that complaints against individual ETI inspectors do not lead to retraining or disciplinary measures but result in the relevant inspector simply being moved; and
- information on the advice issued to inspectors during the INTO industrial action (which ceased in 2012); the impact on inspections at that time; and the ongoing consequences for schools and inspectors.

A response by 8 November 2013 would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

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Signed Peter McCallion
Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk

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DE correspondence 08.11.13



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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/984

8 November 2013

Dear Peter

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE – COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE ETC

I refer to your letter dated 24 October 2013. I will answer each point in turn.

To provide an update on a reported planned review of the ETI complaints procedure

A major review of the complaints procedure was completed in 2012 including consultation with the teaching unions. This culminated in the publication of the new procedure in September 2012. It is reviewed on a regular basis.

The most recent review was undertaken in July and August 2013 with minor amendments made to the procedure. Significantly the review included the addition of Standards for Complaint Handling based on the Northern Ireland Ombudsman's Principles of Effective Complaints Handling (2009) which are attached.

To provide clarification in respect of suggestions that complaints against individual ETI inspectors do not lead to retraining or disciplinary measures but result in the relevant inspector simply being moved

All complaints are investigated thoroughly and on the basis that an inspection evaluation is made by a team not by an individual. Where a complaint concerns the conduct of an individual inspector, all relevant information is shared with the inspector and with their line manager in line with normal NICS practice. Disciplinary action is



taken if appropriate but it is more likely that additional training will be provided through an agreed personal development plan.

At no time has it been deemed necessary, nor would the Chief Inspector view it as appropriate to move an inspector out of a district due to complaints received.

To provide information on the advice issued to inspectors during the INTO industrial action (which ceased in 2012); the impact on inspections at that time; and the ongoing consequences for schools and inspectors.

INTO and UTU took action short of strike from January 2012 until June 2012. This included non co-operation with school inspections. The action was not instigated against ETI. The inspection process was used as a vehicle to protest against the changes in employment conditions for teachers, that is to say, the restriction on pay increases for a prolonged period, the later retirement age and the increased pension contributions. At this moment in time the action short of strike has only been suspended, not ceased. It is worth noting that ETI inspectors were subject to these same changes to their conditions of employment.

Being unable to carry out all of the planned inspections had a detrimental effect on ensuring all pupils were receiving a high quality education as it resulted in some school inspections being partially completed.

Where possible, inspections went ahead. The information given to inspectors indicated the importance of being polite, professional and courteous at all times, as they always are. Inspectors were mindful of ensuring that the children did not sense any tension and despite the unusual situation that surrounded the action short of strike relationships on the ground between teachers and inspectors were good.

When inspectors went to observe a class, if a teacher said that they were taking part in action short of strike, the inspector thanked them and left. Any teachers that were observed, were not observed again when the inspection was completed.

Initial indications from the unions were that the action short of strike might impact on more inspections than it did. In the end 16 inspections were partially completed in that period. This represents less than 1 in 5 primary schools and only 2 post primary schools were affected. An interim inspection letter was issued for all inspections that were partially completed and the inspections were wholly completed by March 2013. It did impact on the scheduling and resourcing of inspections.

The unions' rationale was that non cooperation with inspection would not impact on the quality of education for learners. It did significantly impact on the quality of education for learners as areas for improvement were not identified until a later date in the 16 partially completed inspections.

In fact provision in a large secondary school with over 600 pupils was evaluated as inadequate when the inspection was completed. These pupils had a significant delay in improvements being identified and subsequently actioned.

There are no ongoing consequences for those schools that took part in the action short of strike. However, there is still the possibility that this action could be taken again by the unions, disrupting improvements in provision for learners. In all other jurisdictions where the legislation surrounding inspection is much stronger than ETI's it would not be possible for unions to undertake this type of action.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V Bintley (mm)'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'V' and a trailing flourish.

VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Education and Training Inspectorate

Standards for Complaint Handling

September 2013



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INTRODUCTION

The Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) standards for complaint handling have been developed to conform to the government's minimum standards for complaint handling by all departments, agencies and arms length bodies (ALB).

These have been developed around the Northern Ireland Ombudsman's Principles of Effective Complaints Handling (2009). These aim to provide consistency in approach to, and accountability for, complaint handling across government. These supplement ETI's existing complaints procedure and provide a measure against which to assess the effectiveness of organisational complaint handling arrangements.

STANDARDS

According to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), "a standard is a document that provides requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose."

A standard also provides "a level of quality against which performance can be measured. It can be described as 'essential'- the absolute minimum to ensure safe and effective practice, or 'developmental', - designed to encourage and support a move to better practice." (DHSSPS, 2006).

These standards will:

- give ETI a measure to assess against and to demonstrate improvement;
- help raise the standard of service and reduce any unacceptable variations in quality;
- enable members of the public to understand what quality of service they are entitled to and provide the opportunity for them to help define and shape the quality of services provided; and
- enable ETI to communicate effectively in helping members of the public access services.

STANDARDS FOR COMPLAINT HANDLING

STANDARD 1: ACCOUNTABILITY

The ETI ensures that there are clear lines of accountability for the handling and consideration of complaints within their organisation.

Rationale:

The ETI will demonstrate that they have in place clear accountability structures to ensure the effective and efficient investigation of complaints and provide a timely and effective response to the complainant.

Criteria:

1. All ETI staff will be aware of, and comply with, the requirements of the complaints procedure within their area of responsibility.
2. All information relating to complaints will be managed in line with relevant information governance requirements.

STANDARD 2: LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT CULTURE

The ETI promotes a culture of learning from complaints so that, where necessary, services, processes and practices can be improved when complaints are raised.

Rationale:

The complaints process will provide a framework whereby learning from complaints is incorporated into organisational governance arrangements. Complaints are viewed as an important source of learning; are an integral aspect of customer service and help the ETI to continue to improve the quality of their services.

Criteria:

1. The ETI will review the outcomes of the investigations of complaints in order to inform an assessment of the learning and the potential for improvement at organisational level.
2. Learning will take place, as appropriate, at different levels (individual, team and organisational).
3. The ETI will monitor the nature and volume of complaints so that trends can be identified and appropriate action taken.

STANDARD 3: ACCESSIBILITY

All customers or service users have open and easy access to ETI's complaints procedure and the information required to enable them to complain about any aspect of service.

Rationale:

Those who wish to complain will be treated impartially, in confidence, with respect and courtesy and will not be adversely affected because they have found cause to complain.

Criteria:

1. Arrangements about how to make a complaint are publicised, simple and clear.
2. Arrangements for making a complaint are open, flexible and easily accessible to all customers or service users.
3. As far as reasonably practicable, arrangements will be made to accommodate the specific needs of all customers or service users.

STANDARD 4: SUPPORTING THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

All complaints received are dealt with appropriately and the process and options for pursuing a complaint are explained to the complainant.

Rationale:

All complaints are welcomed and are recognised as an important source of learning. All complaints, however or wherever received, will be recorded, treated confidentially, taken seriously and dealt with in a timely manner.

Criteria:

1. Flexible arrangements are in place so that complaints can be raised in a variety of ways (e.g. verbally or in writing), and in a way in which the complainant feels comfortable.
2. The ETI ensures that relevant staff are appropriately trained and supported in complaint handling.
3. Staff are aware of their responsibility to protect the confidentiality of customer or service user information.
4. Complaints and their outcomes are appropriately recorded in a database and processing sheet.

STANDARD 5: INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS

All investigations are conducted promptly, thoroughly, openly, honestly and objectively.

Rationale:

ETI has a clear system to ensure an appropriate level of investigation. Not all complaints need to be investigated to the same degree. A thorough, documented investigation will be undertaken, where appropriate, including a review of what happened, how it happened and why it happened.

Criteria:

1. The ETI will investigate complaints robustly and proportionately and the findings will be supported by the evidence gathered.
2. Personnel with appropriate skills, expertise and seniority will be involved in the investigation of complaints, according to the substance of the complaint.
3. All correspondence and evidence relating to the investigation will be retained in line with relevant information governance requirements.

STANDARD 6: RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

All complaints are responded to as promptly as possible and all issues raised are addressed.

Rationale:

All complainants have a right to expect their complaint to be dealt with promptly and in an open and honest manner.

Criteria:

1. The timescales for acknowledging and responding to complaints will be in line with the ETI's agreed target timescales.
2. Where any delays are anticipated or further time is required, the ETI will advise the complainant of the reasons and keep them informed of progress.
3. The ETI's responses will be clear, accurate, balanced, simple, fair and easy to understand.
4. All issues raised in the complaint will be addressed and, where appropriate, the response will contain an apology.
5. Complainants will be informed, as appropriate, of any change (or planned change) in system or in practice that has resulted from their complaint.
6. Where a complainant remains dissatisfied, he/she will be clearly advised of the options that remain open to them. These options are outlined in the Complaints Procedure.

STANDARD 7: MONITORING

The ETI monitors the effectiveness of their complaints handling and responsiveness.

Rationale:

The ETI will monitor its performance in order to determine its effectiveness. It will also ensure that it incorporates improvements, where appropriate.

Criteria:

1. The ETI will record all complaints and the outcomes of investigations.
2. The ETI will keep under review its arrangements for handling and responding to complaints.

Committee for Education to DE 08.11.13



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Veronica Bintley
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer
Department of Education
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
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BT19 7PR

8 November 2013

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/999

Dear Veronica

ETI and School Improvement Inquiry - inspections

At its meeting on 6 November 2013, the Committee received a briefing from representatives of NIPSA as part of its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Following the evidence session, the Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on the typical size and composition of inspection teams – i.e. how many District Inspectors, Associate Assessors etc. are involved. Members also sought clarification as to how ETI determines the frequency of inspections for schools and an indication of the typical and longest time periods between inspections.

A response by 22 November 2013 would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk

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DE correspondence 21.11.13



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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/999

21 November 2013

Dear Peter

ETI AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INQUIRY - INSPECTIONS

I refer to your letter dated 8 November 2013. I will answer each point in turn.

- 1. Further information on the typical size and composition of inspection teams (for the current academic year) – i.e. how many District Inspectors, Associate Assessors etc. are involved.**

Primary inspections (2/3 day and 5 day model)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pre-inspection day for the Reporting Inspector is programmed for each primary inspection to allow the RI to visit/contact the school, meet with the principal and brief the staff on the inspection process • Wherever possible, and subject to other competing priorities, the District Inspector will be a team member • The size of the inspection team will be dependent on the size of the school. A general guide is one member of ETI for 3/4 teachers • Minimum team size of 2 ETI • Maximum team size of 7 ETI + AA(s)
Post-primary inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pre-inspection day for the Reporting Inspector is programmed for each post-primary inspection to allow the RI to visit the school, meet with the principal and brief the staff on the inspection process • Wherever possible, and subject to other competing



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

	<p>priorities, the District Inspector will be a team member</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum team size of 4 ETI + AA • Maximum team size of 7 ETI + AA(s) • A post-primary team is based on the size of school.
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The information above represents 'typical' team size and composition. It should be noted, however, that the size and composition of an inspection team may also be determined on the basis of proportionate risk, and that there may be additional members added to a given team, for example, to facilitate the induction of new inspectors. Associate Assessors are also involved in survey evaluations and dissemination work.

2. Clarification as to how ETI determines the frequency of inspections for schools and an indication of the typical and longest time periods between inspections.

Frequency of Inspections and Typical Time Periods between Inspections

Until September 2010, ETI aimed to inspect each school at least once every seven years with more frequent inspection of a school being undertaken where it was deemed necessary.

In September 2010, ETI introduced a more proportionate and risk-based inspection strategy whereby the need for an inspection is identified by information from school performance indicators, risk factors including the length of time since the last formal inspection and from on-going monitoring of schools by inspectors at local level.

Yours sincerely



VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Committee for Education to DE 15.11.13

Veronica Bintley
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15 November 2013

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1026

Dear Veronica

ETI Inquiry – Oral Evidence Session 13 November 2013

At its meeting on 13 November 2013, the Committee received a number of briefings as part of its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek:

1. clarification regarding the number of complaints (successful or otherwise) made against it in respect of school inspections to the NI Ombudsman and/or the Information Commissioner; and to ask for details of successful complaints;
2. clarification regarding the number of judicial reviews (successful or otherwise) made against the Department in respect of school inspections; and to ask for details of successful judicial reviews or judicial reviews which were the subject of a settlement;
3. commentary in response to the suggestion that the principles of 'Every School a Good School' were in one case applied by ETI to a school retrospectively;
4. commentary in response to the suggestion that confidentiality is applied by ETI selectively in that it is afforded to complainants, but not certain staff members;
5. commentary in response to the suggestion that it is/was ETI's practice to destroy evidence relating to school inspections following the completion of inspection reports;
6. commentary as to how the assessment of school leadership by ETI is influenced by the non-compliance by staff with action plans and programmes recommended by ETI following an inspection report;
7. commentary as to how the assessment of school leadership by ETI is influenced by staff complaints linked to the resolution of staff performance management issues; and
8. commentary that school leaders had in some cases complied with ETI requirements outlined in an inspection report but found that further requirements were put forward by ETI in subsequent reports.

The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to seek:

9. further information on the weighting allocated in school inspections to end of Key Stage assessments (as opposed to individual school pupil monitoring systems) as compared to other inspection findings;
10. commentary on suggestions of interference by ETI senior management with regard to the outcome of school inspections; and

11. clarification as to the value placed by ETI on skills-based or vocational courses as opposed to academic courses when judging school performance.

The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to determine how ETI benchmarks its inspection activities; assesses Inspectors; and provides training and development for Inspectors.

A response by 29 November 2013 would be appreciated.

Please be aware that all correspondence pertaining to the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process Inquiry will be published on the Committee for Education webpage once it has been considered by the Committee for Education.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk

DE Correspondence 28.11.13

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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1026

28 November 2013

Dear Peter

ETI Inquiry – Oral Evidence Session 13 November 2013

I refer to your letter dated 15 November. I will respond to each point below.

- 1. Clarification requested on the number of complaints (successful or otherwise) made against ETI in respect of school inspections to the NI Ombudsman and/or the Information Commissioner to include details of successful complaints**

In respect of the Ombudsman, one case was referred to the Ombudsman and the report was withdrawn from the ETI website.

Two applications have been referred to the Information Commissioner.

In one of these applications the Information Tribunal ruled in favour of the Department. The second case was not pursued other than a recommendation that in future instances ETI should retain information for a longer period. Information is now retained for seven years.

- 2. Clarification regarding the number of judicial reviews (successful or otherwise) made against the Department in respect of school inspections; and details of successful judicial reviews or judicial reviews which were the subject of a settlement**

There have been no judicial reviews in respect of the Department and school inspections. There was one application for leave that was resolved and the Department agreed to pay the Applicant's costs.

- 3. Commentary in response to the suggestion that the principles of 'Every School a Good School' were in one case applied by ETI to a school retrospectively**

The four elements of high quality provision outlined in ESaGS inform the inspection process and to that extent are applied in inspection.

ETI does not place schools into the Formal Intervention Process; this is the role and decision of the School Improvement Team which sits within the Department.

4. Commentary in response to the suggestion that confidentiality is applied by ETI selectively in that it is afforded to complainants, but not certain staff members

Questionnaires administered prior to an inspection to parents and staff within a school, are confidential. The names of the respondents are not disclosed to the management of the school.

ETI makes every effort to avoid identifying individual teachers within a school in the written report but this is, at times, difficult particularly where there is comment about the leadership and management of a specific aspect of a school's provision such as special educational needs or pastoral care.

ETI's quality indicators for leadership are written in generic terms about the effectiveness of the strategic leadership of the organisation and avoid singling out any individual senior leader. In writing their reports ETI endeavours to avoid identifying individual leaders, who are never named. This can be difficult however, depending on the circumstances, including where a senior leader's work has been evaluated as unsatisfactory, or where, for example, the work of a newly-appointed principal has effected significant improvement.

5. Commentary in response to the suggestion that it is/was ETI's practice to destroy evidence relating to school inspections following the completion of inspection reports

Prior to October 2010 all inspection evidence was retained in line with the retention and disposal schedule signed by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). In October 2010 the schedule was suspended voluntarily by the Department and all records were retained.

The current, retention and disposal schedule was approved by PRONI in 2012 and the practice is that all evidence relating to an inspection is held for seven years.

6. Commentary as to how the assessment of school leadership by ETI is influenced by the non-compliance by staff with action plans and programmes recommended by ETI following an inspection report

Schools which are evaluated as less than good are obliged to draw up action plans to address the issues identified, within a defined period as outlined in 'What Happens After an Inspection'. Schools may receive support from the ELB CASS service in this process. The action plans are sent to the School Improvement Team within DE who may pass them on to ETI for comment. Should clarification be required the District Inspector may arrange an informal visit to the school to provide additional advice and/or support.

Prior to the follow-up inspection a number of interim follow-up visits may be undertaken where the outworking of the action plan may be discussed and amendments, where appropriate, suggested.

At the follow-up inspection, which is held 12-24 months (depending on the inspection outcome) after the initial inspection, ETI evaluates and reports on the quality and appropriateness of the action plan and the extent to which the school is making adequate progress in implementing its action plan.

This process provides sufficient time for senior management to work with their staff in agreeing an appropriate action plan and its implementation.

7. Commentary as to how the assessment of school leadership by ETI is influenced by staff complaints linked to the resolution of staff performance management issues

ETI do not have access to records of complaint made by an individual member, or members, of staff against the school management. Specific incidents may be referred to in the questionnaire returns but these do not form firm evidence one way or another on any issue.

It is not the role of ETI to conduct staff performance management in or on behalf of schools. That remains the role of the governors and senior staff. ETI will evaluate the effectiveness of senior leaders in carrying out their roles and responsibilities.

Where ETI have sufficient evidence, however, that the number and extent of complaints against management are having a detrimental impact on the provision for the pupils in the school, and that view is well-founded on direct inspection evidence gathered by ETI itself, then inspectors will report as they find.

8. Commentary that school leaders had in some cases complied with ETI requirements outlined in an inspection report but found that further requirements were put forward by ETI in subsequent reports

When following up on an inspection report, ETI will pay attention to the extent to which areas for improvement, identified in the report, have been addressed effectively.

If ETI identifies any important aspects of provision which remain, or have become subsequent to the original inspection, inadequate or unsatisfactory, it will report these findings.

Furthermore, ETI, in reporting improvement, may make recommendations on aspects of provision which, while satisfactory or good, could be improved further.

The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to seek:

9. Further information on the weighting allocated in school inspections to end of Key Stage assessments (as opposed to individual school pupil monitoring systems) as compared to other inspection findings

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

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

10. Commentary on suggestions of interference by ETI senior management with regard to the outcome of school inspections

The role of senior management of ETI is to moderate and quality assure the work of all inspectors and the reports which they produce.

11. Clarification as to the value placed by ETI on skills-based or vocational courses as opposed to academic courses when judging school performance

ETI takes full account of the whole curriculum, and the entire range of qualifications provided by a school.

ETI evaluates the extent to which the curriculum addresses and meets the needs, interests, abilities and aspirations of all of the pupils. ETI therefore looks at all courses delivered by the school and at the pupils' achievements in them. Indeed, ETI is uniquely placed to comment on the appropriateness of these courses and on the access they provided to further training and/or employment. This is because the ETI is a unitary inspectorate and as such also inspects all aspects of further education and training that lie with the Department of Employment and Learning.

In writing their reports on post-primary schools, ETI gives credit to appropriate provisions, both general and applied. ETI is also expected by the Minister to report on the readiness of the school to provide access to the Entitlement Framework, comprising both general and applied courses. ETI post-primary reports includes data tables which give full credit to the pupils' attainments in both general and applied courses, including data on the standards achieved in GCSE and GCE A level courses which includes all applied and vocational courses which are rated on a national qualifications framework as equivalent to GCSE and GCE A level.

Where courses lie on the qualifications framework and are equivalent to GCSEs then they are recorded, and reported, as such.

12. The Committee requested information on how ETI benchmarks its inspection activities; assesses Inspectors; and provides training and development for Inspectors

All inspectors, on appointment, undertake an intensive induction period lasting nine weeks. During this period the new colleague will work mainly in the school sectors in which s/he will eventually conduct most of their inspection activity.

This induction programme is carefully designed to expose the new inspector to all aspects of the inspection process from the conduct of a pre-inspection meeting to the final editing of an inspection report. At all times during this process the new colleague shadows an experienced colleague. The new colleague is also allocated a mentor who will provide professional and pastoral support for the new colleague's first year in the organisation.

As members of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) the ETI follows the NICS appraisal procedures.

All ETI have access to a comprehensive staff development programme to which a minimum of 15 days per annum are allocated. Five days are centrally programmed for all inspectors where they meet together to hear about and discuss current education issues and other items of corporate business. In addition to this there are a number of phase-specific and subject-specific training days where issues such as consistency of judgement and new models of inspection are discussed. Finally, all inspectors are expected to undertake five days of personal development – generally this takes place outside of prime inspection time and can take the form of paired inspection visits or meeting with other educationalists.

In regard to 'benchmarking' its inspection activities ETI carries out a comprehensive post-inspection evaluation which is conducted on its behalf by NISRA. ETI is a current holder of the Customer Service Excellence Standard. In all of these evaluations those who have been inspected have the opportunity to either record their views on inspection anonymously (in the case of NISRA) or to meet privately with an independent assessor to relate their experiences of inspection (Customer Service Excellence). In addition ETI has a close working relationship with the education inspectorates in the United Kingdom and Ireland and is a member of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI). This enables ETI to compare inspection practice with others and to develop and share good practice.

Yours sincerely



VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Committee for Education to DE 29.11.13



Northern Ireland
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Committee for Education

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29 November 2013

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1063

Dear Veronica

ETI Inquiry – Oral Evidence Session 27 November 2013

At its meeting on 27 November 2013, the Committee received a briefing from representatives of the Irish Medium Education sector, as part of its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek:

1. information on the number of Education and Training Inspectorate staff who are trained to assess Irish Medium Education schools;
2. information on how training for ETI staff with regards to Irish Medium Education is accessed; and
3. a copy of the template Management and Reporting System (MARS) report used as part of the inspection process in all schools.

A response by 13 December 2013 would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

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Signed Peter McCallion

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DE Correspondence 17.12.13



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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1063

17 December 2013

Dear Peter

I refer to your letter dated 29 November 2013. I will respond to each point below.

1. Information on the number of Education and Training Inspectorate staff who are trained to assess Irish Medium Education schools

Out of the total complement of 59 inspectors, 42 are mainly deployed across the primary and post-primary school sectors. Of these 42 inspectors, six are trained to inspect Irish Medium Schools, the equivalent of 14% of the operational schools staffing of ETI. Only 2.7% of schools are Irish Medium; the number of pupils attending IME schools or units within schools is equivalent to 1.3% of the school population. For consistency across all schools, these six inspectors work in English Medium Schools and ETI also deploys other inspectors of schools to work in IME schools.

2. Information on how training for ETI staff with regards to Irish Medium Education is accessed

All inspectors, on appointment, undergo an extensive induction programme. As part of the induction of a specialist inspector of schools s/he will learn about Irish-medium schools. Often s/he will accompany an experienced inspector on a visit to an Irish-medium school. All inspectors also have access to personal development days. How these days are spent is negotiated and agreed with the inspector's line manager. Inspectors who work in IME are encouraged to undertake regular immersion training over the summer period in the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking area) or to attend summer courses in Irish. Since 1996, inspectors from ETI have received invitations from Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate in the

Republic of Ireland to attend specialist training through the medium of Irish along with their specialist inspectors and have attended each time an opportunity has been offered.

3. A copy of the template Management and Reporting System (MARS) report used as part of the inspection process in all schools

MARS is the central recording tool used by inspection teams for management information purposes. It is aligned to the quality indicators of Together Towards Improvement. It should be noted that the MARS is for recording inspection outcomes and is generally completed during the inspection moderation meeting after the class observations and meetings with school personnel are complete.

MARS is not meant to be used as a checklist nor is there any 'mathematical formula' on the aggregation or averaging of the evaluations contained within the various sections to give an overall evaluation.

At all times inspectors use their judgement gained from their experience as practitioners and as inspectors visiting many classrooms and schools when arriving at the evaluations. The MARS is completed based on the decisions of the inspection team. The outcomes recorded are arrived at after much discussion and debate which takes place during the moderation meeting. It is here that the challenge function of the inspection process is most apparent; evidence is shared and, where appropriate, challenged. Everyone on the inspection team, including the Associate Assessor where there is one on the team, has the opportunity to contribute to this process.

A sample of a MARS report is attached.

Yours sincerely



VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

DE Correspondence 17.12.13

MARS - Record of Inspection Visit

Page 1 of 6

Post-Primary Proforma

Overall Effectiveness	O / VG / G / S / I / U
Q1. Leadership and Management	O / VG / G / S / I / U
Q1a. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting learners?	O / VG / G / S / I / U
Q1a.1. ICT: How effective are leadership and management in developing the use of ICT throughout the school?	O / VG / G / S / I / U
Q1a.2. Strategic Leadership: How effective are the senior management team /leadership including the governing body/ management committee in providing strategic leadership and clear direction in achieving high quality education and/or training?	O / VG / G / S / I / U
i. Strategic Leadership of the Principal	O / VG / G / S / I / U
ii. Strategic Leadership of the senior management team	O / VG / G / S / I / U
iii. Strategic Leadership of the middle management	O / VG / G / S / I / U
iv. Strategic Leadership of the governors	O / VG / G / S / I / U
Evaluate the extent to which the leadership:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides clear and realistic direction based on a knowledge of, and vision for, the school; • inspires confidence and respect among the staff and pupils and promote in them a sense of their own worth and a respect for others; • establishes clear and open channels of communication between staff, pupils, parents and governors; • works together appropriately to ensure effective governance and management of the school; • encourages learner involvement in discussions and decisions on aspects of school life that directly affect them, ensuring the student voice is represented; and • sets high standards and expectations underpinned by professional knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. 	
Q1a.2.v. Confidence Level for Governance	Not Applicable / High Degree of Confidence / Confident / Limited Confidence / No Confidence
Q1a.3. Action to Promote Improvement: How effective are the leaders and managers, at all levels in the use of self-evaluation leading to improvement in the quality of provision?	O / VG / G / S / I / U
i. How effective is the School Development Plan?	O / VG / G / S / I / U
Evaluate the extent to which the leadership:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensures that self-evaluation is rigorous, effective and leads to improvement and is underpinned by effective analysis and interpretation of relevant qualitative and quantitative data; • sets, shares and reviews realistic objectives and targets through an effective school development planning process which is underpinned by rigorous self-evaluation; • has in place a school development plan which has been agreed and contributed to at all levels and is supported by an appropriate action planning process; and • promotes effective and innovative strategies to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning. 	
Q1a.4. Staffing: How effective are the leaders and managers in recruiting, deploying, supporting and developing staff, at all levels, to provide high quality education / training?	O / VG / G / S / I / U
Evaluate the extent to which the leadership at all levels:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defines clear roles, responsibilities and functions, to support the achievement of key strategic objectives agreed in 	

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the school development plan to meet the needs of the pupils;

- *ensures staff are appropriately qualified, trained and experienced, have the necessary expertise and are kept up to date with developing trends to meet curricular and pastoral needs and management responsibilities;*
- *deploys all staff in ways which meet the needs of the pupils, utilises their expertise, interests and specialist knowledge;*
- *ensure appropriate arrangements for those teachers needing support to carry out their established or newly acquired duties;*
- *provides all staff with appropriate opportunities to undertake continuing professional development, evaluates its influence on learning and teaching and shares best practice;*
- *uses effectively the Performance Review: Staff Development (PRSD) cycle to identify and meet individual staff development needs;*
- *provides a range of opportunities for staff to develop leadership and management skills and capabilities, in order to build capacity within the organisation to meet present and future needs;*
- *deploys effectively classroom assistants/support staff/technicians; and*
- *monitors and evaluates the impact of staff development on learning and teaching.*

Q1a.5. Accommodation and Physical Resources: How effective are leaders and managers in the deployment of all resources to provide high quality education / training?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Evaluate the extent to which:

- *the available accommodation, including the school grounds, is used effectively and efficiently to meet the curricular, pastoral and social needs of the pupils;*
- *the impact of resources to support learning and teaching is monitored and evaluated;*
- *the accommodation and facilities provide a safe and stimulating environment well-suited to supporting the curricular activities of pupils, the work of staff and social and leisure activities where applicable;*
- *the premises are secure and safe; and*
- *access is suitable to the needs of all users.*

Q1a.6. Links and Partnerships: How effective are the links and partnerships with parents other providers (incl. schools), other agencies and employers and the wider community, to identify and to meet the current and future needs of learners?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Evaluate the extent to which:

- *parents are encouraged to become involved in promoting their child's learning - their views are sought and acted upon;*
- *parents receive clear and accessible information about policies, the curriculum programme and the operation of the school;*
- *relevant information is exchanged between professionals to ensure continuity and progression in the pupils' learning and pastoral care, particularly at key transition stages;*
- *the school makes regular contacts with local people and organisations to help foster positive attitudes and values among the learners;*
- *the school makes use of and provides services to the community and nearby schools by utilising its resources, particularly outside normal school hours;*
- *the school maintains effective links with statutory organisations, including educational support services, Health and Social Care and other agencies including CASS (ESA); and*
- *the school makes best use of links and partnerships with employers and external bodies to inform pupils about economic awareness, environmental sustainability, and their employability needs at both local and regional levels.*

Q1a.7. Equality of opportunity, diversity and good relations: How effectively do leaders and managers plan strategically to ensure equality of access, to foster good relations and to meet the diverse needs of learners and staff in the pursuit of good provision for learning?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Evaluate the extent to which leadership at all levels:

- *respects diversity and encourages understanding and greater cohesion across communities through well-developed curricular and pastoral links with other schools and relevant educational establishments;*

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- meets statutory requirements in relation to equality and diversity;
- has in place appropriate policies and procedures that meet legislative requirements and actively promote equality of opportunity and good relations for the organisation's learners and staff;
- ensures that the provision is open and accessible to all learners, regardless of identity and background and in a manner that takes account of their abilities; and
- provides targeted staff development opportunities to promote diversity, equality of opportunity and good relations.

Q1a.8. Public Value To what extent is the organisation one which is operationally feasible, provides value for money, meets the expectations of its all its stakeholders, fulfils government's expectations and is effective? **O / VG / G / S / I / U**

Evaluate the extent to which the leaders at all levels:

- make effective and efficient use of resources to support the delivery of the curriculum;
- manage finances effectively to ensure that the provision is both high quality and cost effective, and avoids unnecessary duplication; and
- monitor, evaluate and review the provision regularly to ensure it benefits the community and local and global economies.

Q2. Quality of Provision **O / VG / G / S / I / U**

Q2a. How effective are teaching, training, learning and assessment? **O / VG / G / S / I / U**

Q2a.1. Planning: how effective is planning to support and promote successful learning? **O / VG / G / S / I / U**

Evaluate the extent to which:

- the overall curriculum planning reflects the aims of the school and the priorities outlined in the School Development Plan;
- the school has clear, coherent planning for all areas of the curriculum which guides effectively the work of individual teachers and the staff as a whole;
- the long-term planning [schemes of work] ensures that the programme of learning for each pupil is broad and balanced, and promotes continuity and progression in the pupils' learning;
- the short/medium-term teachers' planning is effective and identifies the intended learning, differentiation, and evaluation;
- there is an evaluation of pupils' learning which is used to inform future planning; and
- there are opportunities for the pupils to contribute to the planning process.

Q2a.2. Teaching and learning: how effective is teaching and/or training in promoting successful learning? **O / VG / G / S / I / U**

Evaluate the extent to which teachers:

- create a supportive environment which is conducive to learning;
- convey and set realistically high expectations which challenge and inspire the pupils;
- use and build upon the pupils' ideas, interests and prior learning;
- develop the pupils' independence, creativity and managing risks for their learning;
- use an appropriate range of teaching and learning strategies which motivate the pupils and engage them purposefully in their work both collaboratively and independently;
- ensure that learning supports the development of the pupils' cross-curricular skills and the thinking skills and personal capabilities (TSPC); and
- consolidate the learning effectively.

Q2a.3. Assessment: How effective is assessment in promoting learning? **O / VG / G / S / I / U**

Evaluate the extent to which:

- the school's assessment policy reflects statutory requirements and provides clear guidance about the purposes of assessment, the methods to be used, the range and types of evidence to be retained, and the uses to be made of assessment information;
- teachers use an appropriately wide range of assessment for learning strategies, including, self and peer-assessment, to inform future learning and teaching;

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- pupils' work is marked frequently and consistently in ways which highlight the strengths and give feedback on what the pupil needs to do in order to improve;
- pupils identify personal learning targets;
- appropriate and realistic targets are set, monitored and tracked for individual pupils for learning, and attainment in end of key stage assessments and public examinations; and
- the school communicates to parents the pupils' progress and achievement.

Q2b. Quality of Provision: How well do the learning experiences, programmes and activities meet the needs of the learners and the wider community? O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q2b.1. Curriculum Provision: How does the curriculum offer a coherent and broadly balanced programme of learning which provides learners with clear progression opportunities? O / VG / G / S / I / U

Evaluate the extent to which the school:

- provides a sufficiently broad, balanced and flexible curriculum which is tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils and ensures appropriate progression opportunities;
- reflects the statutory curricular requirements and provides the pupils with access to a range of academic and vocational options which meet their needs;
- promotes a socially inclusive curriculum which ensures participation in education for all pupils;
- provides an appropriately wide range of non-formal and extra-curricular enrichment activities to meet the curricular and pastoral needs of all pupils
- ensures that development of the pupils' thinking skills and personal capabilities; and
- reviews regularly the curriculum in line with statutory educational requirements.

Q2b.2. Learning Experiences: How well do the learning programmes and activities match the needs and aspirations of all the learners and enable them to fulfil their potential? O / VG / G / S / I / U

Evaluate the extent to which:

- the learning experiences are of high quality and are matched to the individual needs, interests and aspirations of the learners; and
- the learning experiences contribute to the pupils' fulfilment, personal development and education.

Q2b.3. Curriculum Provision (11-16): How does the curriculum offer a coherent and broadly balanced programme of learning which provides learners with clear progression opportunities? O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q2b.4. Learning Experiences (11-16): How well do the learning programmes and activities match the needs and aspirations of all the learners and enable them to fulfil their potential? O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q2b.5. Curriculum Provision (16+): How does the curriculum offer a coherent and broadly balanced programme of learning which provides learners with clear progression opportunities? O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q2b.6. Learning Experiences (16+): How well do the learning programmes and activities match the needs and aspirations of all the learners and enable them to fulfil their potential? O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q2c. Quality of Provision: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q2c.1. Pastoral Care: How effectively do the care, advice and guidance and other support processes provided for learners promote their welfare, personal development and ensure achievement? O / VG / G / S / I / U

Evaluate the extent to which:

- the school has a caring ethos and shows a strong commitment to the welfare of the pupils and the staff;
- the pastoral care supports the pupils' learning;
- the school has comprehensive policies in line with DE guidance and implements them fully;
- the school has an ongoing whole-school programme to consult with stakeholders and addresses issues such as bullying, sectarianism, racism and good relations, that is integrated and consistent with the curriculum, reflected in

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day-to-day teaching and learning, part of the SDP and linked to pupil-support arrangements;

- there is an appropriate induction process for pupils and staff;
- the pastoral support is responsive to the needs of individual pupils addressing local and contemporary issues which effect their lives; and
- access is given to an appropriate range of personal and social services.

Q2c.2. Safeguarding (protecting children and vulnerable adults) Are the arrangements to safeguard and protect learners satisfactory or better?

Not Applicable / Comprehensive / Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory

Evaluate the extent to which:

- the pupils feel secure and free from emotional and physical harm; they understand that their concerns will be listened to sympathetically and appropriate action taken;
- the school implements fully a child protection policy which is in line with the requirements of the relevant DE Circulars;
- the school informs pupils and parents and all relevant parties of policies and procedures relating to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- the school monitors the children's awareness of the school's procedures for child protection; and
- the school manages effectively the records relating to Child Protection/Safeguarding issues and the Understanding the Needs of Children In Northern Ireland (UNOCINI) Guidance.

Q2c.3. Additional Learning Support: How effective is the organisation in providing additional learning support for those who have cognitive, physical, emotional or linguistic barriers to learning?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Evaluate the extent to which:

- the school implements the current DE guidance;
- the member of staff with responsibility for SEN has a clearly defined role, and receives appropriate time, training and resources;
- the school identifies, and determines accurately, the special educational needs of individual pupils and maintains effective links with parents, other professionals and support agencies.
- there are clear and realistic Education Plans compiled through appropriate consultation which are reviewed regularly;
- the learning support staff have received appropriate training and contribute effectively to the support and review of the pupils' learning programmes; and
- the school makes appropriate use of the finances allocated for special needs.

Q2c.4. Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG): How effective is the programme of CEIAG in meeting the needs, potential and interests of the learners?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Evaluate the extent to which:

- the school has a well-planned and coherent careers education programme, including the opportunity to engage in personal career planning;
- the pupils access impartial careers advice and guidance, including a broad range of up-to-date careers information to inform them of the educational and employment opportunities available to them;
- the pupils have appropriate opportunities for work-related learning and skills development and to develop their employability skills; and
- the pupils have opportunities to explore careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) areas.

Q2d. ICT: How effective are teaching, learning and assessment in ICT?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q3. Achievements and Standards

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q3a. How well do learners develop and achieve?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q3a.1. How far do learners achieve the highest possible standards of work and learning?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

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Evaluate the extent to which the pupils:

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

Q3a.2. How far do learners acquire and develop the dispositions, skills and capabilities for life-long learning , and contribute to (or lay the foundations for their eventual contribution to) the community and the economy?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Evaluate the extent to which the pupils:

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

Q3a.3. How far do learners demonstrate progression within the organisation, building on their prior achievements, and preparing appropriately for the next phase of their learning?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Evaluate the extent to which the pupils:

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

Q3a.4. How well do individual learners, at low levels of ability, surmount the barriers they may have to learning and achieve their full potential?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Evaluate the extent to which the pupils:

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

Q3a.5. How well do individual learners, at average levels of ability, surmount the barriers they may have to learning and achieve their full potential?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q3a.6. How well do individual learners, at high levels of ability, surmount the barriers they may have to learning and achieve their full potential?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q3a.7. ICT: How well do individual learners achieve and attain in the use of ICT?

O / VG / G / S / I / U

Q0a.1. Have there been any complaints raised by the organisation during the inspection?

N/A / No concern(s) raised / Concern(s) raised and resolved / Formal complaints procedure initiated

Committee for Education to DE 13.12.13



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Veronica Bintley
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer
Department of Education
Rathgael House
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Bangor
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13 December 2013

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1092

Dear Veronica

ETI and School Improvement Inquiry

At its meeting on 11 December 2013, the Committee noted a Departmental response (dated 28 November 2013) to queries relating to its Inquiry into the ETI and School Improvement process.

Members felt that point 9 – Further information on the weighting allocated in school inspections to end of Key Stage assessments (as opposed to individual school pupil monitoring systems) as compared to other inspection findings - was not adequately answered. The Committee therefore agreed to again write to the Department and seek a response.

Can you therefore please confirm as to if/how GCSE, A-level or End of Key Stage results are weighted or considered in determining the evaluation of a school?

Perhaps in your response, you might also comment on (page 122) of the recent OECD report which states: "The ETI does not use a scoring system to evaluate a school's overall effectiveness. Rather, each inspection team reaches a professional consensus taking account of all available evidence,

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including its direct evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement in the context of its knowledge of the school." Could you also please indicate how schools are advised in respect of this aspect of the inspection process and how transparency is assured?

A response by 10 January 2014 would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk

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DE Correspondence 10.01.14



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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1092

10 January 2014

Dear Peter

ETI AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INQUIRY

I refer to your letter dated 13 December 2013.

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

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

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

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

- Overall Effectiveness

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

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

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

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

ETI evaluates the extent to which the pupils:

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

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

ETI evaluates the extent to which the pupils:

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

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

ETI evaluates the extent to which the pupils:

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

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

ETI evaluates the extent to which the pupils:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Improvement: a process for self evaluation at:

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

Schools are encouraged to use the same, or similar, quality indicators in their own self-evaluation to help ensure that inspection and internal self-evaluation are symbiotic processes. Together Towards Improvement (TTI) indicators are also promoted through all forms of teacher education, including on-line education video resources. Independent annual evaluation of inspection carried out by The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) indicates that the TTI publications are the most well-known and most heavily-used of all ETI publications.

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

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "V. Bintley (mm)". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small "mm" in parentheses at the end.

VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Committee for Education to DE 10.01.14

Committee for Education

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10 January 2014

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1105

Dear Veronica

Education and Training Inspectorate Inquiry

At its meeting on 8 January 2014, the Committee noted your correspondence relating to the inspection of Irish Medium Education schools. The Committee also noted oral evidence from Parents Outloud and CCMS.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek:

- information on the Irish language fluency of its Irish Medium Education inspectors;
- an update on a reported new parental questionnaire process which is said to be under trial by ETI;
- a breakdown of ETI's financial and personnel resources in respect of the sectors which it inspects;
- the number and nature of specialist inspectors in ETI;
- clarity on the information and paperwork requirements that ETI requests from schools prior to an inspection; and
- an estimate of the uptake of self-evaluation among schools.

The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to seek its views on the benefits or otherwise of increased independence for ETI from the Department in-line with the practice in other jurisdictions.

A response by 24 January 2014 would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk

DE Correspondence 24.01.14 - response to letter of 10.01.14 on Irish Medium Schools

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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1105

24 January 2014

Dear Peter

Education and Training Inspectorate Inquiry

I refer to your letter dated 10 January. I will answer each point in turn.

Information on the Irish language fluency of its Irish-medium Education inspectors

Specialist Irish-medium inspectors are recruited under the normal procedures of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, involving open competition which is advertised publicly.

A specialist inspector of Irish is required to hold a degree-level qualification relating to Irish and to be fluent and proficient in spoken and written Irish.

An update on a reported new parental questionnaire process which is said to be under trial by ETI

During 2013 ETI reviewed and revised the parental (and the staff) questionnaire used on school inspections through consultation with focus groups and in trials in the summer term of 2013. The main purpose of the review was to improve the quality of the questions and to consider implementing an online version.

From September 2013, the parental questionnaire was issued on all inspections in a web-based, online, format, in addition to its continued availability in a paper format.

Unlike the original paper-based parental questionnaire which was distributed to a sample of parents, the web-based questionnaire is available to all parents.

ETI is monitoring the uptake of the web-based version by parents throughout this school year and will make an evaluation in due course.

A breakdown of ETI's financial and personnel resources in respect of the sectors which it inspects

School provision

If we define the school provision as including early years, primary, post-primary, special and alternative education provision then the percentage of ETI time allocated to the inspection of schools, based on the 2012-13 academic year, would be 71%.

Early years (EY)	6.5%
Primary (P)	33.3%
Post-primary (PP)	25.9%
Special education (Spec)	5.0%
Alternative education provision (AEP)	0.3%
Total	71%

The number and nature of specialist inspectors in ETI

As ETI is a unitary inspectorate, inspectors are recruited with experience and expertise in, and contribute to inspection in, a number of different specialist areas.

As a consequence, the numbers which follow represent the memberships of the specialist panels within ETI, supplemented by some individual specialisms. As inspectors are members of several such panels, therefore the totals below are much greater than the total number of inspectors.

English/Literacy:	9
The Arts and Physical education:	8
Environment, history, citizenship and Learning for Life and Work:	4
Modern Languages:	5
Mathematics/numeracy:	7
Science and technology:	8
Careers and employability:	4
ICT:	6
Personal development:	4
Pastoral care and safeguarding:	11
Special needs and inclusion:	10
Youth and community:	3
School design:	2
Initial teacher education:	6
Mechanical engineering:	1
Electrical and electronic engineering:	2
Construction and civil engineering:	1
Software engineering:	1
Agriculture:	1
Business education:	1
Retail management:	1
Health & social care:	1
Hospitality, catering and tourism:	1
Road safety and traffic education:	1
Primary Education:	11
Early Years Education:	6

Clarity on the information and paperwork requirements that ETI requests from schools prior to an inspection

The requirements prior to an inspection are set out in the inspection notification letter and schools are clear about what is required. They obtain further advice in advance of the inspection from the Reporting Inspector, if required.

In all sectors, schools are asked to complete an ETI child protection and safeguarding proforma.

In primary, special and post-primary schools, the governors are asked to complete a self-evaluation questionnaire in relation to the effectiveness of their roles and responsibilities. The school is asked to distribute guidance material informing parents, carers and staff as to how to access the questionnaires that seek their views of the school prior to the inspection.

In the early years sector, the principal/leader is asked to complete a short statistical information sheet and to check the pre-school setting information held on the Department of Education's database and to update it if necessary.

In the primary and special education sector (and in AEP inspections), the principal is asked to complete a basic information statistics table and to prepare a short presentation overview of the key work of the school.

In the post-primary sector, two proformas are provided on the ETI website for a school to complete prior to the inspection. (Schools are encouraged to use these documents for routine self-evaluation, even if they are not due to be inspected).

The first proforma:

<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-post-primary/inspection-overview-document.htm>

is a short 2/3 page overview of the school development planning documentation and processes to guide the inspection team in its review of this aspect of the work of the school.

The second proforma:

<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-post-primary/statistical-data-tables-charts-and-the-schools-evaluation-of-performance-in-public-examinations.htm>

comprises the school's own evaluation and review of its achievements and standards. Part of the evidence required for the school's review is qualitative and part of the evidence is quantitative.

The school extracts, into spreadsheets, the quantitative data it requires from its own school administration system (SIMS) and can obtain hands-on assistance from C2k officers should it require help. The data extracted is a small proportion of the information which the school holds and uses routinely for management purposes. The extraction process is automated so as to reduce as much as possible any specialist skill and effort needed. The files extracted are also available to the ETI team.

An estimate of the uptake of self-evaluation among schools

All schools are required to conduct self-evaluation as set out in the Department of Education's School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

All schools undertake self-evaluation of their provision and outcomes through the monitoring, evaluation and review of the effectiveness of their action plans which are drawn up as part of their school development plan.

ETI evaluates the appropriateness of the priorities in the school development plan, the effectiveness of the self-evaluation processes and the extent to which the processes lead to improvement in the provision and outcomes. ETI reports what it finds in the inspection report on each school.

ETI finds that the quality and effectiveness of the school self-evaluation varies considerably from school to school. For example, in the Chief Inspector's Report for 2010 – 2012 ETI reported that, in the post-primary sector, self-evaluation was less than effective in almost half of the post-primary schools inspected in that period.

The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to seek its views on the benefits or otherwise of increased independence for ETI from the Department inline with the practice in other jurisdictions

I note that you have agreed to write to the Department about the independence of ETI.

Yours sincerely

Veronica Bintley

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

DE Correspondence 31.01.14

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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1105

31 January 2014

Dear Peter

I refer to your letter of 10 January 2014 and in particular the last paragraph of your letter regarding the benefits or otherwise of increased independence for ETI from the Department in-line with the practice in other jurisdictions.

ETI's independence relates to the way in which it reports on education and training. In its inspection work and policy advice, ETI always reports without fear or favour and without interference from individuals or external agencies.

Inspectors carry out their work without any Ministerial influence and independently from all of the departments for which it provides inspection services.

The Department of Education will have its own views on the benefits or otherwise of increased independence for the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) from the Department. From an ETI perspective there are clearly advantages in having the DE Corporate Services and use of premises available to the organisation. It has always been the case that the regulations and legislation under which ETI operates is a matter for the NI Executive or government at that particular time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V Bintley (mun)', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Veronica Bintley
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

DE Correspondence 13.02.14

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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1164

13 February 2014

Dear Peter

Inspection

Following my letter of 31 January you pointed out that we had conveyed to you a view from officials in the Education & Training Inspectorate about the independence of the inspection function rather than the more formal view the Committee wished to receive.

As you know, the power to inspect (when it applies to schools, pre-school, youth and other provision for which DE has responsibility) rests with the Department.

The Minister's key priority is to ensure that inspection is effective and makes a positive contribution to improving educational outcomes – and therefore life chances – for children and young people. In that regard it is important to point out that current legislation places a very specific duty on inspectors to promote the highest standards of education and of professional practice.

Turning more specifically to your question about the value of a structure that might be perceived as more 'independent', it is important to note that the inspection function takes many different formats in different countries across the world. Even amongst our nearest neighbours in the south and in England, Scotland and Wales, different structures apply. Structural arrangements – and indeed structural changes – are, however, no guarantee of increased effectiveness; rather the more important consideration is whether inspection promotes high standards of education.

What is of course also important is that the inspection function is delivered in a manner that is free from Ministerial influence – and that there is proper accountability for how that function has been discharged. When they inspect, our inspectors are clear that they must carry out their duties impartially and in line with procedures that are open and transparent, drawing on their own knowledge and experience to make their own professional judgements on the quality of provision and to report those judgements in the best interests of children and young people. The Minister is satisfied that the necessary arrangements are in place to ensure that the inspection functions conferred on the Department by legislation are discharged, as my earlier letter made clear, without fear or favour and without interference.

The evidence available to the Department, including from the recent OECD Review of Assessment and Evaluation Frameworks, is that our own arrangements for inspection are very effective when compared to those in other systems. Of course the Department, including ETI, continually evaluates its processes and procedures and looks forward to the recommendations flowing from the Committee Inquiry in anticipation that these too will be driven by the desire to improve the quality of education for children and young people.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "V Bintley (mun)". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Veronica Bintley

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Committee for Education to DE 17.01.14 - Assessment and Customer Service Review

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17 January 2014

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1121

Dear Veronica

ETI and School Improvement Inquiry

Please accept my thanks for the responses to-date from the Department in respect of the Committee's Inquiry into the ETI and the School Improvement Process. The Committee agreed to revise the end-date for its Inquiry to Spring 2014. I therefore anticipate that the Committee may agree its report on the Inquiry in late March or early April 2014.

At its meeting on 15 January 2014, as the Committee agreed to write to the Department to request:

- information on schools which undertake assessment by other 3rd party organisations e.g. Investors in People etc.; and
- further information on the procurement, independence and suitability of EMQC Ltd which undertakes the customer service review of the Education and Training Inspectorate.

The Committee also agreed that in order to enhance its understanding of the self-evaluation process, it would undertake a visit to an appropriate school. I would be most grateful if you could identify possible schools in the greater Belfast area with well-embedded self-evaluation practices which might host a Committee visit.

If you wish to discuss any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

A response by 31 January 2014 would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Peter McCallion

Committee Clerk

DE Correspondence 31.01.14 - response to letter of 17.01.14 on Assessment and Customer Service Review

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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1121

31 January 2014

Dear Peter

ETI and School Improvement Inquiry

I refer to your letter of 17 January 2014. I will answer each point in turn.

Information on schools which undertake assessment by other 3rd party organisations eg Investors in People etc

The ETI does not maintain information on schools which have undertaken assessment by third party organisations such as Investors in People. The contact for IIP in Northern Ireland, who may be able to assist, is:

Investors in People Northern Ireland
Department for Employment and Learning
Waterfront Plaza
8 Laganbank Road
Belfast BT1 3BS

Further information on the procurement, independence and suitability of EMQC Ltd which undertakes the customer service review of the Education and Training Inspectorate

The Customer Service Excellence ®¹ assessment process is rigorous and the standard is regarded highly. In January 2014 a full re-assessment confirmed that ETI continues to meet the criteria for the award (report expected to be published in February 2014). The reaffirmation of this award along with the recent OECD report confirms that ETI is a highly professional organisation, committed to continuous improvement, serving those that it inspects effectively and contributing significantly to improvements in education and training.

Background

The Government wants services for all that are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering – with the citizen always and everywhere at the heart of service provision. With this in mind Customer Service Excellence ® was developed to offer services a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within their organisation.

1 Customer Service Excellence is a trade mark of the Cabinet Office and is used under licence.

The foundation of this tool is the Customer Service Excellence ® Standard which tests in great depth those areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers, with particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. There is also emphasis placed on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction.

The Customer Service Excellence ® Standard, developed to replace Charter Mark, lies at the heart of a Government strategy to provide 'efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering' public services.

Customer Service Excellence ® is primarily aimed at public bodies, providing them with the tools to drive customer-focused services.

How does it work and what are the benefits?

Customer Service Excellence ® is designed to operate on three distinct levels:

1. **As a driver of continuous improvement.** By allowing organisations to self assess their capability, in relation to customer focussed service delivery, identifying areas and methods for improvement;
2. **As a skills development tool.** By allowing individuals and teams within the organisation to explore and acquire new skills in the area of customer focus and customer engagement, thus building their capacity for delivering improved services;
3. **As an independent validation of achievement.** By allowing organisations to seek formal accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence ® standard, demonstrate their competence, identify key areas for improvement and celebrate their success.

Licensed accreditation bodies:

There are four providers of Customer Service Excellence ®:

- G4S Assessment Services (UK) Ltd
- Centre for Assessment Ltd
- EMQC Ltd
- SGS Assessment Services (UK) Ltd

Procurement:

ETI must be assessed by an external, independent assessor. Therefore ETI are unable to use an internal equivalent; for example, internal professional services or staff substitution, for either full or partial completion of the assessment.

In order for ETI (and ISB) to be recognised as achieving Customer Service Excellence ®, ETI must be assessed successfully, on an annual basis, against the criteria of the standard by one of the licensed certification bodies, accredited by the accreditation service for England, Scotland, Wales and the North of Ireland.

ETI requested and obtained quotations from all four companies.

EMQC Ltd were chosen to carry out ETI's Customer Service Excellence ® assessment as, overall (taking into consideration in-house costs), EMQC Ltd provided the lowest quotation and therefore provided best public value for money.

Independence and suitability of EMQC Ltd:

EMQC Ltd is an international organisational improvement and assessment company that works in partnership with Government and other agencies to help deliver accreditation services for high-quality, performance-enhancing, national standards such as the matrix

Standard, the Merlin Standard, Customer Service Excellence ® , Internal Champion Programme, the Information Standard, SFEDI and others.

EMQC Ltd work across both the public and private sectors with organisations of all sizes, providing expert advice on development and performance issues alongside a portfolio of diagnosis, bench-marking, performance review and assessment services.

Yours sincerely

Veronica Bintley

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Committee for Education to DE 24.01.14

Committee for Education

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24 January 2014

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1141

Dear Veronica

RaISe Paper: Parent Councils

At its meeting on 22 January 2014, the Committee noted the appended paper from Assembly Research (RaISe) on Parent Councils in Scotland.

The Committee agreed to forward the paper to the Department for comment in respect of the needs/benefits or otherwise of introducing Parent Councils in Northern Ireland.

A response by 7 February 2014 would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk
Enc.

DE Correspondence 05.02.14

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5 February 2014

Dear Peter

Raise Paper - Parent Councils

Thank you for your letter of 24 January.

The Department understands that School Boards in Scotland were formerly composed of a Head Teacher, one staff member, a local councillor and parents until The Scottish Schools Parental Involvement Act 2006 replaced them with Parent Councils. Parent Councils consist of parents, teachers and co-opted members only. The responsibilities of these Parents Councils are limited because the relevant education authority retains control over most aspects of school management including financial management. It would not therefore be feasible to replace school Boards of Governors in the north of Ireland with Parent Councils of a similar type and form without major changes in the current system of administration.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

VERONICA BINTLEY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Committee for Education to DE 07.02.14

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7 February 2014

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1166

Dear Veronica

ETI and School Improvement Inquiry – Formal Intervention Process

At its meeting on 5 February 2014, the Committee received a briefing from the Department regarding the consultation feedback on proposed revisions to the Formal Intervention Process.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity on:

- the number of schools which had responded to the consultation which are in, or have recently been in, the Formal Intervention Process; and
- further information on the seven schools which will enter the Formal Intervention Process once the revised policy is introduced.

A response by 21 February 2014 would be appreciated.

The Committee agreed to reserve its position on the proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process pending the conclusion of its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion

Clerk
Committee for Education

DE Correspondence 18.02.14

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18 February 2014

Dear Peter

ETI and School Improvement Inquiry – Formal Intervention Process

Following a briefing from the Department regarding the consultation feedback on proposed revisions to the Formal Intervention Process (FIP), the Committee has sought clarity on the two points listed below:

1. the number of schools which had responded to the consultation which are in, or have recently been in, the Formal Intervention Process; and
2. further information on the seven schools which will enter the Formal Intervention Process once the revised policy is introduced.

In addressing both in turn I can confirm that:

1. a total of four of the 17 schools which responded to the consultation, are in, or have recently, been in FIP; one school has since exited the process; and
2. of the seven schools referred to, four are from the 'controlled' sector, two are 'catholic maintained' and one school is from the 'other maintained' sector. The decision as to whether the seven schools (two primary, five post primary) would go into FIP would depend on the outcome of their follow-up inspection (FUI). Under the proposals in the consultation if the FUI evaluation remains as 'satisfactory' or regresses to less than 'satisfactory' the school would enter FIP. The school would then be given a further 12 months to improve to at least 'good' with targeted support being provided by the managing authority.

Yours sincerely

Veronica Bintley

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Committee for Education to DE 24.02.14 - District Inspectors

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7 February 2014

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1165

Dear Veronica

ETI and School Improvement Inquiry

At its meeting on 5 February 2014, the Committee noted correspondence relating to its Inquiry into ETI and the School Improvement process – this included a further submission from Parents Outloud which is appended.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity on a number of issues raised at the DI event:

- Can the Department advise on the qualifications, teaching and school leadership experience of ETI Inspectors?
- Can the Department advise if/why District Inspectors are no longer the Reporting or Deputy Reporting Inspector for inspections of schools within their districts?
- Can the Department advise if/why District Inspectors have seen a reduction in so-called “District Time” – i.e. time spent undertaking pastoral visits to schools in a DI’s district?

The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity on a number of issues raised by Parents Outloud:

- Can the Department explain the reported increase in ETI’s budget set out in the Parents Outloud submission – in particular can DE reconcile this increase with the previously reported 20% cut in ETI’s budget for the current budget period?
- Can the Department comment on Parents Outloud’s suggestion that the number of inspection visits per inspector is lower for ETI than for Ofsted?
- Can the Department clarify the Chief Inspector’s reported remarks on Radio Ulster relating to the frequency of “sustaining improvement” inspections?
- Can the Department provide comment on the other suggestions included in the Parents Outloud submission: e.g. provision of inspection reports to parents; the development of

a school complaints channel for parents involving ETI; the inclusion of the assessment of parental engagement in school inspections? Etc.

If you require clarification or wish to discuss whether a response might be more appropriate from ETI or DE or both – please do not hesitate to contact me.

A response by 21 February 2014 would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion

Clerk

Committee for Education

Enc.

DE Correspondence 24.02.14 - response to letter of 7.02.14 on District Inspect

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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1165

24 February 2014

Dear Peter

ETI and School Improvement Inquiry

I refer to your letter of 7 February 2014. I will answer each point in turn.

1. *Can the Department advise on the qualifications, teaching and school leadership experience of ETI inspectors?*

While the specific qualifications and experience of an individual inspector is personal to them, the following more general points can be noted:

- a. All inspectors have worked at senior level in an educational organisation. For example, the criteria used in the recruitment of an inspector of primary education include that the candidate must have each of:
 - i. a qualification which meets the requirement to teach in grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland;
 - ii. at least 10 years teaching experience in the primary sector of which at least 3 years within the last 5 years must be in a promoted post as either Principal or Vice-Principal of a primary school;
 - iii. at least 2 years experience of the effective use of self-evaluation to bring about improvement in the context of primary education; and
 - iv. must have completed successfully accredited post-graduate study related to primary education.
- b. Since the Education and Training Inspectorate is a unitary inspectorate, inspectors have opportunities to work in more than one phase. Inspectors who work in post-primary, further education or work-based learning tend to have a subject specialism, for example ETI has PE, science and history inspectors to name but a few. Other inspectors may be specialists of, for example, Early Years, Primary Education, Youth Work, Special Education and/or Irish-medium education.

2. Can the Department advise if/why District Inspectors are no longer Reporting or Deputy Reporting Inspector for inspections of schools within their districts?

From September 2013 the District Inspector (DI) will no longer be the Reporting Inspector (RI) in most circumstances (except in AEP and Early Years). The ETI had been moving in this direction over the previous year. This demonstrates objectivity as best international practice states that the DI is not the RI to prevent any lack of objectivity that may arise, perceived or otherwise, from ongoing contact between the district inspector and his/her schools. It enables ETI to allocate workloads more fairly (an issue raised by inspectors) as RI duties will not be dependent on how many schools in a district are being inspected. It also means that inspection outcomes in a particular district will not be attributed to one individual.

From September 2013 all RIs on school inspections have been scheduled an inspection preparation day to familiarise themselves with the school. DIs are expected to keep cumulative records for each organisation for which they are DI which can be shared with the RI (conforming to the requirements of the FOI Act 2000).

Where possible, the DI will be on the team and can be the Deputy Reporting Inspector for an inspection within their district; however, it is accepted that there are competing business needs, which means that this is sometimes not possible. The DI works with the school in any follow-up activity including leading the Follow-up inspection.

3. Can the Department advise if/why District Inspectors have seen a reduction in so-called "District Time" i.e. time spent undertaking pastoral visits to schools in a DI's district?

From September 2013 business rules were agreed and implemented to bring about greater equity in the allocation of district time to district inspectors reflecting the number of district, phases and associated responsibilities. This move was in direct response to concerns raised by district inspectors over a number of years regarding a perceived lack of equity.

From September 2013, district days are ring fenced for district work with a minimum quota allocated as per point c below. Prior to September 2013, most interim follow-up visits (IFUVs) and on occasions follow-up inspections (FUIs) were conducted during district time; however, since September 2013, all IFUVs, FUIs and more recently sustaining improvement inspections are centrally programmed and are over and above the allocated quota of district days. Prior to September 2013 pre-inspection preparation days were also conducted during district time but since September 2013 these are now centrally scheduled over and above the allocated quota of district days.

The minimum quota of district days are allocated on the following basis (noting that district inspectors may be allocated additional district days depending on available time and competing business needs):

- approximately 10 district or scrutiny inspection days across the academic year (during prime inspection time) per inspector per DI responsibility (when district time is required), (i.e. 10 days for EY, 10 days for primary DI, 10 days for post-primary DI, 10 for IME, etc); and
- approximately 5 Area Board Co-ordinator days across the academic year (during prime inspection time) per Area Board Co-ordinator.

In addition to district time (for post-primary inspectors), specialist time is also allocated on the following basis:

- approximately 10 days for a Principal Inspector Area of Study (English and mathematics) across the academic year (during prime inspection time);
- approximately 5 days for a Principal Inspector Area of Study (Arts and physical education, environment and citizenship, modern languages, science) across the academic year (during prime inspection time); and

- approximately 5 specialist days per specialist inspector across the academic year (during prime inspection time).

Note: ultimately, whilst some district inspectors may have lost some district days, others may have gained district days in order to bring about greater equity across the organisation.

The programme of district visits complements and supplements the centrally determined inspections and provides a valuable opportunity for the DI and staff of the organisations involved to engage professionally, outside the context of the formal inspection programme. This different context does not in any way lessen the need for inspectors to adhere to the principles governing inspection and at all times report as they find in order to promote improvement in the interests of learners. (See attachment on roles and responsibilities of a DI.)

There are circumstances in which a DI may decide to visit an organisation primarily for pastoral reasons. However, the majority of district visits are not pastoral.

4. *Can the Department explain the reported increase in ETI's budget set out in the Parents Outloud submission – in particular can DE reconcile this increase with the previously reported 20% cut in ETI's budget for the current budget period?*

ETI has had a savings delivery plan in place since 2011 which is reducing the cost of ETI to the Department of 20% over four years. This is being implemented in relation to core inspection costs. In the years 2011/12 and 2012/13 the cost of ETI was

increased by the outworking of the NICS Pay and Grading Review¹. In addition, an additional inspector of primary education was employed on a two-year secondment in 2012 to backfill for inspectors who were carrying out an evaluation of the "Sharing in Education" programme. This inspector was employed using funding from outside the Department.

5. *Can the Department comment on Parents Outloud suggestion that the number of inspection visits per inspector is lower for ETI than for Ofsted?*

The Department is not aware of the nature or accuracy of the evidence base on which Parents Outloud based their suggestion that the number of inspection visits per inspector is lower for ETI than for Ofsted. It is important to note that the two organisations organise their work differently and work in separate jurisdictions.

ETI would welcome an opportunity to meet with representatives of Parents Outloud to help clarify the inspection process to them and listen to their views on improvements in the inspection process and ultimately to the educational outcomes of children in schools in Northern Ireland.

6. *Can the Department clarify the Chief Inspector's reported remarks on Radio Ulster relating to the frequency of "sustaining improvement" inspections?*

"Sustaining improvement" inspections are short (usually one-day) inspections being piloted in schools where provision has been found to be outstanding or very good at the time of the most recent inspection.

It is the intention of ETI that all schools will have a proportionate risk-based inspection activity at least once every three years. The introduction of "sustaining improvement inspections" is a further element in the six-year development of proportionate risk based inspection which commenced in 2010.

1 More information on this review is available in the DFP document, entitled: "Details of the NICS Pay and Grading Review."

7. Can the Department provide comment on the other suggestions included in the Parents Outloud submission: e.g. provision of inspection reports to parents; the development of a school's complaints channel for parents involving ETI; the inclusion of the assessment of parental engagement in school inspections? Etc.

ETI, as part of their existing procedures, ask schools to ensure that they inform parents regarding the publication of the report of an inspection and that they inform Inspection Services Branch that they have done so.

With regard to a channel for complaints, ETI has no locus in investigating individual complaints. However, if a complaint is raised with ETI by a parent, it is normally referred to the DI to discuss with the principal on his/her next visit.

ETI would welcome the opportunity to meet with Parents Outloud to discuss the practical outworking of this and other suggestions they may have relating to parental engagement.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

Veronica Bintley

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Roles & Responsibilities
District Inspector

THE ROLE OF THE DISTRICT INSPECTOR

1. Most inspectors are deployed as district inspectors (DI) with responsibility for a group of organisations within sectors and phases – the pre-school sector, primary schools, post-primary schools, colleges of further education, training organisations and youth organisations. In the context of Teacher Education, the link team leader equates to the DI. The role of the DI set out in this document builds on established good practice in this important aspect of the work of the Inspectorate and is focused on promoting improvement in a changing context for that work.
2. The term 'leader' is used in the document to refer to positions such as head teacher, principal, director, manager or person in charge. The term 'teacher' is used inclusively to refer to roles such as teacher, tutor, lecturer or instructor.
3. The role of the district inspector (DI) is set in the context of the purpose, aims, objectives and values of the Inspectorate as reflected in the organisation's mission and vision statements, in relation to its strategic themes and annual business plan, and also with regard to the letter and spirit of the Charter for Inspection. In addition, the role of the DI needs to be understood in relation to other roles within the organisation's structure, especially the roles of the MI, the area board co-ordinator (ABC) and of inspectors with specialist responsibilities. The contribution of the group of DIs working in a specific phase or sector adds an important collective dimension to the individual role of the DI.
4. The duty of the Inspectorate as laid down in the Education Reform Order (ERO) 1989 may be (re-)interpreted from 2000 onwards in the context of (i) providing inspection services to the Department of Education, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure; (ii) contributing to policy formulation and review in these departments; (iii) providing advice to Ministers; and (iv) responding to queries and questions raised within the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Inspectorate should promote the highest possible standards of education and training, and of professional practice, in all of the education, training and youth organisations for which the Inspectorate has a statutory inspection function, by:
 - a. inspecting, monitoring and reporting on the standards of education/training provided by these bodies and the standard of professional practice among the staff of these organisations;
 - b. advising the Departments and Ministers on curriculum and other policy matters; and
 - c. monitoring, inspecting and reporting on the nature, scope and effectiveness of the advisory and support services provided by the education and library boards.
5. In the main, the DI engages with individual organisations within his/her district through three types of inspection activity:

- › centrally-programmed inspections and surveys, including district inspections, in which, if feasible, the DI is also the RI
- › follow-up inspections, and post-inspection contacts, in which the DI's function is that of monitoring and reporting on the progress of the organisation in addressing the issues identified, with particular reference to improvements in learning and teaching, standards achieved, quality of leadership, and the effectiveness of external support;
- › a programme of visits (district visits) planned and implemented by the DI.

There are circumstances in which a DI may decide to visit an organisation, primarily for pastoral reasons.

6. The programme of district visits complements and supplements the centrally-determined inspections and provides a valuable opportunity for the DI and staff of the organisations involved to engage professionally, outside the context of the formal inspection programme. This different context does not in any way lessen the need for inspectors to adhere to the principles governing inspection and, at all times, to report as they find in order to promote improvement in the interests of learners.

7. The programme of district visits should be planned and implemented so as to contribute to the Inspectorate's mission of promoting improvement, and to the three strands of the Inspectorate's work set out in section 3. The DI's priorities in planning the programme will take account of his/her existing knowledge of

the organisations based on personal experience, district records, inspection reports and, where appropriate, notes of visits by specialist colleagues. Nonetheless, it would be important for a DI newly appointed to a district to make personal contact with the organisations within a period of time, considered as reasonable for the sector or phase, after assignment to the district.

8. To be effective in the role, the DI needs to develop productive and purposeful working relationships with the leaders and other staff of the organisations in the district, with staff of support agencies, with the representatives of the employing authorities, with managing/governing bodies and with staff of relevant statutory bodies / agencies, as appropriate.

Through the programme of district visits, the DI should:

- o develop his/her knowledge and understanding of the organisations, through direct observation of practice, and through dialogue with the leader of the organisation and other staff, while always taking cognisance of the organisation's view of itself, the basis for this view and any plans and priorities for development aimed at bringing about improvement;
- o be aware of significant or changing factors in the organisation's circumstances and context that may influence the organisation, its work and its performance;
- o supplement firsthand knowledge with relevant documentation (agreed for the phase or sector) and quantified data,

*Roles & Responsibilities
District Inspector*

including data available in Departmental and Inspectorate databases;

- › as appropriate, discuss evidence-based evaluation with the leader of the organisation and other staff, affirm good practice, acknowledge and encourage progress towards improvement, discuss issues arising/areas for improvement and strategies for working on these, and, where necessary, challenge the organisation's thinking and/or practice;
- › build up a picture of significant strengths, area for improvement, and changes/trends in the organisation's provision, performance and development in respect of quality indicators, and their constituent elements, as set out in materials such as Together Towards Improvement Through the Process of Self-Evaluation, the IQRS document, and the DVD Training Applications; and
- › explain Inspectorate procedures and Departmental policy, as they affect the organisation.

- › provide advice on inspection priorities within the district and on the form of inspection best suited to individual organisations;
- › identify significant issues arising in the district, and report on these and on their implications to the relevant ABC, MI and ACI;
- › contribute to advice or information, including issues pertaining to the implementation and adequacy of policy, required by the ABC, MI or ACI;
- › provide briefings requested by departmental branches, for example on the occasion of Ministerial visits; and
- › contribute effectively to the work of the ELB team of inspectors, under the leadership of the ABC.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Policy, Planning and Improvement Division
August 2002

9. To make the best use of his/her knowledge of the organisations in his/her district, the DI should maintain cumulative records for each organisation, in a format agreed for the phase and sector and conforming to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (2002).

10. The knowledge gained through the programme of district visits will add to that obtained through the inspection programme and will enable the DI to:

Committee for Education to DE 28.02.14

Committee for Education

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Veronica Bintley
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer
Department of Education
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28 February 2014

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1231

Dear Veronica

Associate Assessors

Please pass on the Committee's thanks to officials for the briefing on 26 February 2014 on self-evaluation in schools.

At its meeting on 26 February 2014 the Committee also noted a draft summary of the issues raised at the Associate Assessors' informal briefing event on 19 February 2014, held as part of the Committee's Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process. The Committee agreed to forward the draft summary (attached) to the Department for information.

The Committee also noted further information relating to the Committee's Inquiry including the document entitled "The Role of the District Inspector". The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek further information on the role of Associate Assessors, in particular in respect of their involvement in inspection teams.

A response prior to 12 March 2014 would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion

Clerk
Committee for Education

Enc.

DE Correspondence 10.03.14

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10 March 2014

Dear Peter

I refer to your letter of 28 February 2014.

Please find attached the Associate Assessor Handbook, which outlines on pages 5-7 the Associate Assessors' (AAs) involvement in inspection teams.

- The Handbook for Associate Assessors was developed to support AAs as they become part of the inspection team.
- It was issued to AAs at their training days in 2013 in its current draft form.
- As part of part ongoing engagement with stakeholders, the AAs have been asked to evaluate the document on inspection.
- ETI will be asking for feedback by the end of March 2014 as part of our ongoing consultation with stakeholders.

Training for AAs is usually carried out twice each academic year, normally in the first and second term dependent on need. On 7 March 2014 ETI are training AAs to be more involved on inspections (see programme attached). ETI are also seeking their views on the revision of performance levels.

Below are examples of comments from AAs in the most recent training October 2013 in response to the following question.

Evaluation Comments from AAs

How have you used the knowledge and skills you have acquired and/or developed in your role as an AA to improve the quality and provision and / or outcome in your setting?

- Every inspection helps to re-evaluate our school's provision.
- Awareness of what the whole process is about.
- Importance of capacity to continually self-evaluate.
- Knowledge gained affirms practice and leadership.
- The training has been worthwhile and thought provoking.
- Updated information on key issues e.g. safeguarding.
- Improved my staff training ability and my observation skills.
- More aware of my responsibility to strive for good practice.
- Used examples to share with staff.
- Experience was used on a daily basis in classroom environment.

- Promotes continuous professional development.
- Supports my work.
- More confidence in practice and supporting others.
- Used to enhance self-evaluation process.
- Have used formats for classroom observation for SMT meetings.
- Information has been disseminated to leadership team and discussed in relation to improving teaching and learning.
- Increase in my own confidence impacting on school improvements.
- Several things I have observed in classroom I have brought back to school.
- We have bought the full DVD of the clips you showed today and have used them in training.
- Encourages me to continue to evaluate my own school by viewing outstanding schools.
- Used best practice examples and implemented in my own school.
- Observed excellent practice and shared it with teaching staff in our school.
- Better insight into the process and this can be communicated to staff.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

Veronica Bintley

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Education and Training Inspectorate

Associate Assessor Handbook



2013-2014



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



PROMOTING IMPROVEMENT IN THE INTERESTS OF ALL LEARNERS

Introduction

Welcome to the role of Associate Assessor (AA) in the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). We acknowledge your professional expertise and your commitment to enhancing and supporting the inspection process across a wide range of organisations in which the ETI operate. In partnership with the inspectors, you will strive to and fulfil the mission statement of:

‘promoting improvement in the interests of all learners’.

In order to ensure an effective and efficient service, the AA training, which you will complete on an incremental basis, seeks to develop the knowledge, skills and qualities required by you to deal with the range and variety of the duties that will be assigned during your time working with the ETI.

This handbook aims to bring together all the information which might be required by an AA about the practices of the ETI. It will be updated and modified, as new procedures and protocols are introduced.

There is an expectation that you will work with the inspection team to evaluate the quality of the learning and practice in an organisation in a manner that is professional and respectful to the organisation’s context and within the protocols and values of the ETI.

The ETI Code of Conduct

The ETI will:

- recognise that the key priority must be the interests and well-being of the learners, in terms of the quality of education and training which they experience, and the outcomes they achieve;
- be sensitive to the circumstances of the organisation, and ensure tact and courtesy towards all with whom the inspector/s come into professional contact;
- evaluate objectively and consistently, be honest in communicating findings and demonstrate openness to ensure that evaluations reflect accurately the organisation’s achievements;
- show concern for accuracy and reliance on evidence-based evaluation;
- show fairness in dealing with individuals and groups;
- respect the organisation’s privacy and treat confidential issues concerning the organisations in an appropriate way;
- comply with our statutory duties to make sure the organisations receive equality of service;
- endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection;
- take responsibility and be accountable for the quality of our work.

- be committed to ensuring that queries are answered promptly and concerns dealt with, within a defined timescale;
- be sensitive to the effect on others of evaluations and reports, but without compromising the principles, values and standards of ETI;
- take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues; and
- act with integrity at all times.

Core Values

Truth

Honesty coupled with openness and sensitivity make sure that there is a free flow of information, within agreed guidelines, across and outside the organisation. We will be honest, open and sensitive in all of our dealings with colleagues, customers and stakeholders.

Dignity

We will treat everyone with whom we come into professional contact (both inside and outside the organisation) with respect and consideration.

Example

We will work towards the highest standards of courtesy, behaviour and professional expertise and credibility.

Service

We will use our professional expertise to provide our customers, stakeholders and our colleagues with an effective service, which aims to promote improvement in the interests of all learners.

An AA will need to have access to a form of transport that will enable them to participate in inspections across Northern Ireland.

Background

An AA is usually a current practitioner¹ who holds a post of responsibility within their own organisation, who has been appointed as an AA through public advertisement and interview, and has successfully completed induction training.

An AA will normally join at least two inspections or inspection activities each year in the course of their tenure².

Confidentiality

AAs are required to sign a confidentiality agreement at the beginning of their tenure, and adhere to professional confidentiality before, during and after all inspections. AAs are also required to declare any conflict of interests that may exist prior to an inspection, or during an inspection if an issue arises.

During inspection activity, in line with the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) 'Laptop and mobile devices Security policy', (with the exception of the data provided by ETI) AAs are not permitted to record any data pertaining to the inspection on personal devices³.

Aims

By working with AAs, the ETI aims to:

- enable others to share in the process of inspection;
- provide the opportunity for current practitioners to experience, and to contribute to the inspection process;
- bring a current practitioner's perspective to the inspection process and to its continuous improvement;
- develop the concept of self-evaluation leading to improvement in relation to learning and teaching; and
- enable the AA to have a deeper understanding of how the process of self-evaluation helps the organisations in which we work to be more effective.

¹ If an AA retires, or leaves the profession, they will be unable to continue to work as an AA on inspection.

² If the organisation in which the AA is employed is evaluated as satisfactory or less following an inspection, the AA will not normally be deployed on inspections during the tenure of their appointment in order to allow them to focus on the necessary improvement work within their own organisation.

³ For example, personal laptops, iPads/tablet PCs, mobile device, etc.

Induction and training⁴

The induction provided includes training on:

- the principles of inspection;
- the procedures, protocols, and processes used in inspections;
- observing and evaluating lessons/sessions as relevant to a phase;
- recording and assigning performance levels;
- engaging in professional discussion with teachers⁵; and
- writing evaluatively.

Further professional development and training will be provided as necessary by ETI.

The AAs will have an opportunity to participate in paired observations of lessons/sessions with inspectors in order to help them to quality assure and moderate evaluations and performance levels.

Prior to an inspection activity

Inspection Services Branch (ISB) will:

- contact the AA to inform them of their inclusion on an inspection team and the name of the Reporting Inspector (RI).

The RI will contact the AA to:

- ensure that all relevant documentation in relation to the inspection has been received;
- discuss details of the inspection, including roles and responsibilities; and
- answer any general queries, or specific concerns, about the inspection.

The AA should contact ISB immediately if there is a problem relating to the inspection documentation, or advice is required, for example, on directions for travel or housekeeping.

The AA will:

- acknowledge receipt of documentation by email;
- complete the Conflict of Interest form and return to ISB; and

⁴ An AA must complete the relevant induction and training programme in order to join an inspection team.

⁵ The term teacher should be taken to mean teacher, lecturer, trainer or youth worker.

- contact ISB immediately if there is a problem relating to attendance at the inspection, the inspection documentation, or advice is required on, for example, booking and paying for hotel accommodation (Appendix 4).
- If the AA needs to cancel his or her attendance at the inspection, s/he should contact ISB during Monday to Friday, 09:00-17:00. Phone: 028 9127 9726 or E-mail: inspectionsservices@deni.gov.uk

If this occurs at the weekend, please email or telephone the RI before the morning of the inspection

Role of an AA during an Inspection

The RI has responsibility for determining the way in which an AA is deployed during any given inspection, taking account of their experience and expertise.

The RI is also responsible for ensuring the integrity and quality of the inspection process. The AA as a member of the inspection team will be managed by the RI, who will monitor the work of the team and provide feedback, guidance and support to team members, as well as take action if any issues or performance matters arise.

Open communication between the RI/inspectors and the AA throughout the inspection is essential.

The AA will be an integral member of an inspection team and will:

- uphold at all times the ETI's core values of truth, dignity, example and service;
- gather analyse and interpret relevant evidence, take notes of meetings and discussions, and assist the RI and inspection team as required;
- observe and evaluate learning and teaching, and engage in professional discussion with the teacher in order to promote improvement (including sharing key strengths and areas for development or reflection)⁶;
- observe and evaluate aspects of the organisation's work, as agreed with the RI;
- discuss and clarify issues/findings with the RI and other inspectors, as appropriate;
- where appropriate, and following a brief from the RI, engage in professional discussion with the organisation being inspected, in relation to the context of inspection, in order to promote improvement;
- ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times; and
- be aware that the work of ETI is subject to the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 1998..

⁶ If a lesson/session is evaluated as less than satisfactory, the RI should be informed as soon as possible.

If an AA takes a lead in evaluating an aspect of the work of the organisation:

- the findings will be moderated by, and agreed with, the RI and/or an inspector;
- in collaboration with the RI and/or an inspector, the AA may be asked to draft evaluative text (including key strengths and areas for improvement); and
- the AA will be accompanied by the RI or an inspector in reporting back any formal evaluations⁷.

Safeguarding

In the event of a learner making a disclosure the AA must follow the ETI's guidance on Safeguarding (appendix 2).

Engagement, interaction and exchange with an organisation's staff members

Observation is an important part of all inspection activity. Where possible, arrive at the start of a lesson, alert the staff member to your presence and, without causing disruption, introduce yourself. The staff member will have been asked in advance to have a free seat for the AA and will have set out documentation and samples of work. It is important to engage with the learners; listen to their responses, discussions and show an interest in their work. Move around the room and read the work displayed on the walls. If appropriate, talk to the staff member, but do not hold up the lesson. At the end of the lesson it is important to engage the staff member in a brief exchange highlighting strengths and any areas for improvement/reflection.

In best practice, exchange is done sensitively when it is clear that the staff member/classroom assistant is able to engage with the inspectors and, not at times, when they are totally engaged with children.

A note of the content of the exchange should be made in the Record of Inspection booklet.

Lone working

There are occasions when members of the inspection team work by themselves. In this context, AAs may find themselves in a wide range of situations: for example, they are often at venues working alone, travelling between locations, working outside normal working hours and working with children or young adults with behavioural problems.

The AAs have a responsibility to make sure that their working practices throughout inspection are in accordance with the organisation's Safety in Lone Working Guidance (Appendix 3).

The Moderation Meeting (MM)

The AA will attend and contribute to the MM by:

- contributing to the inspection team's evaluations, and overall evaluation, of the organisation's provision; and

⁷ It is at the discretion of the RI as to who leads at a formal report back.

- evaluating the inspection procedures overall.

Written records

All written records relating to an inspection that are produced by an AA must be fit for purpose and submitted within the required timescale. At the conclusion of the MM, the AA must give all notes taken during the inspection (and any documentation belonging to the organisation) to the RI. Materials may be subject to a FoI or DPA request in line with the Department of Education's FoI policy.

Post-inspection

The AA will not be required to:

- lead in the writing of the inspection report; or
- edit an inspection report.

Travel and subsistence

The AA will be entitled to claim travel and subsistence expenses, at the standard NICS rates, for the duration of the inspection. An expenses form will be sent directly to the AA from ISB prior to the inspection. The RI will check and sign the completed form before the AA returns it to ISB.

Key documents available on the ETI [website](#)⁸

Contact

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County Down
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Fax: 028 9127 9721
E-mail: inspectionsservices@deni.gov.uk

⁸ Link to TTI would be good to have an AA link into the website for relevant documents

APPENDIX 1

ASSOCIATE ASSESSOR – CONFLICT OF INTEREST**Associate Assessor Name:** _____**Organisation to be visited:** _____**Date of Inspection:** _____**Reporting Inspector:** _____**SECTION A – NO KNOWN CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

I declare that there is at present no known conflict of interest*. If any such conflict/further conflicts should arise during the course of the visit, due to changing circumstances or reassigned inspection activity, or if I am unsure if a circumstance constitutes such a conflict, I will bring this to the immediate attention of the Reporting Inspector.

Signed: _____**Print Name:** _____ **Date:** _____**SECTION B – KNOWN CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION**

Please record below the assigned inspection work where any potential/actual conflict of interest exists and provide details of the potential/actual conflict:

Signed: _____**Print Name:** _____ **Date:** _____

* Example of a conflict of interest might include:

- partner/spouse/close family member currently teaches in the school/organisation or is a member of the governing body/management committee.
- child is currently attending the school/organisation, or has attended the school/organisation within the past 5 years;
- Associate Assessor has taught in or has been a member of the governing body/management committee of the school/organisation within the past 10 years;
- Associate Assessor has, through employment or former employment (eg through work in an Education and Library Board, had a close association in supporting the school/organisation.

APPENDIX 2

WHAT TO DO

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult discloses to you abuse by someone else:

- i. Allow him or her to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but do not investigate or ask any leading questions.
- ii. You must refer information according to the policy and procedures in the organisation, and those of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI); you must not investigate.
- iii. Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement.
- iv. Let him/her know you are glad they have shared this information with you.
- v. Advise the child or young person that you must pass the information on.

The content of a disclosure of abuse by someone else should be referred to:

- i. the head of the establishment and/or the designated member of staff for safeguarding/child protection, the MI Safeguarding, the relevant phase ACI and the ACI Safeguarding.

If you receive an allegation about any adult or about yourself:

- i. Immediately tell the head of the establishment and/or the designated member of staff for safeguarding/child protection or chair of governors/management committee, the MI Safeguarding, the relevant phase ACI and the ACI Safeguarding.
- ii. Try to ensure that no-one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

In all cases:

- i. Record the facts and report these as above.



Education and Training Inspectorate

**SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN,
YOUNG PEOPLE AND
VULNERABLE ADULTS**

**A Code of Good Practice for
Members of Inspection Teams**

August 2013

YOU SHOULD

- treat all children, young people and vulnerable adults with respect;
- provide an example of professional conduct you wish others to follow;
- ensure that there is another adult present during your inspection activities with children, young people or vulnerable adults, or at least that you are within sight or hearing of others;
- respect a child's, young person's or vulnerable adult's right to personal privacy;
- encourage those children, young people or vulnerable adults to whom you talk to tell you if they are uncomfortable with any line of questioning with them;
- remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned;
- recognise that special caution is required in moments when you are discussing sensitive issues with children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- operate within the ETI's Organisational Values and Associated Behaviours and the procedures of the establishment.

YOU SHOULD NOT

- have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate or attention-seeking behaviour;
- make suggestive/derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- jump to conclusions about others without checking facts;
- initiate 'caring' physical contact with a child, young person or vulnerable adult (eg a hug);
- exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues;
- rely on your good name or that of ETI to protect you from scrutiny of your conduct;
- believe 'it could never happen to me';
- take a chance when common sense, policy and practice suggest another more prudent approach;
- ignore the Child Protection/Safeguarding guidelines and procedures operating within the establishment.

APPENDIX 3

Personal Safety in Lone Working

Risk Assessment

Reporting Inspectors should remind inspection teams of their responsibilities in relation to the health and safety of themselves and others.

Associate Assessors should exercise their responsibility by:

- having regard to the advice on health and safety provided by the organisation being inspected;
- drawing on their knowledge of health and safety practice in their own specialist area;
- being observant as they go about their business;
- having regard to good practice in dealing with people who may be anxious or disturbed; and
- identifying and, where appropriate, withdrawing from risky situations.

Likely Scenarios

Two generic situations which are likely to present themselves outlined below along with some recommendations on how to combat these risks.

Travelling By Car

- Plan your route; write down some directions before you leave, use a map and keep it handy in case you need directions.
- Let someone know where you are going, who you plan to see and some contact details, the time you are expected to arrive and return.
- Check you have enough fuel and oil before starting your journey and think what you would do if you need to change a tyre or your vehicle suffers a mechanical breakdown.
- Ensure you have a mobile telephone with you in case of emergencies and check the battery is properly charged. Do not use the mobile telephone when driving.
- Keep valuables such as bags, mobile telephones, laptop computers out of sight - they are easy pickings for a snatch thief in stop-go traffic. Keep windows closed use sunroof, air-conditioning or fan for ventilation.

- If you think you are being followed or feel threatened, breath out slowly and relax, keep driving until you come to a place such as a police, fire or ambulance station or a garage forecourt.
- If a car pulls up alongside you and the occupants try to attract your attention, ignore them and do not make eye contact.
- If you see an accident or someone tries to flag you down, ask yourself if it is genuine and if you could really help it might be best to drive on to the nearest police station.
- If you break down, pull as far off the road as you can and switch on your hazard lights. Use your mobile telephone or walk to the nearest telephone and seek assistance, emphasise to the contact that you are travelling alone. Exit your car from the passenger side, as you are less likely to become involved in a collision with another vehicle. If you stay in your car, lock the doors.
- Avoid parking your car in an isolated area, if you must do so endeavour to ensure adequate lighting. Do not leave valuables in the car.
- Consider appropriate breakdown cover.
- Do not drive when overtired, take breaks on long journeys and build this time into your overall journey time.
- Check the road conditions before travelling and in the winter, is that early morning meeting really necessary?

Off-Site Visits

For example, visits to learners at work placements; visits to detached youth workers; or observing outdoor education sessions.

- Plan the visit in advance, making clear the purpose of your visit.
- Tell someone where you are going and your expected time of return.
- Carry and display your identity card at all times.
- Always consider the risks beforehand making appropriate enquiries, those whom you are visiting can provide valuable advice on the local area.
- Avoid parking in isolated areas or 'dead ends' with inadequate lighting; ask about parking when planning your journey.
- When travelling on foot carry only necessary items, try not to carry visible valuables.
- It is recommended that you carry a fully charged mobile telephone to call for help, should a potentially threatening situation occur.

- When holding meetings that involve one-to-one with staff members or learners, ensure that proper procedures are followed, for example, leaving the door open where appropriate.

Record Keeping

- Every situation will be different and the level of sophistication in the procedure to be adapted will vary in relation to the degree of risk. There are some basic principles, which can be used in determining the level of reporting to be used.
- Whilst lone-working, it is important that an Associate Assessor contacts the Reporting Inspector to notify him/her of their whereabouts, should there be a perceived threat or risk. If deemed necessary reporting should include contact on arrival at, and departure from, offsite locations.
- Any change to details should immediately be notified to the line manager or the designated person for record keeping.

Incident Reporting

Associate Assessors must report all threats or incidents, which pose a risk to their personal safety. Local management will investigate all such events and incidents. The investigation should focus on the cause and specific characteristics of the incident in order that preventative measures can be taken to reduce the risk of reoccurrence. A formal record will be kept of the incident, which will capture some basic details such as:

- Personal details, name, work address, home address, vehicle registration number.
- Incident details, date, time place and nature of incident.
- Reporting details e.g. Police station, name of officer informed.
- Witness details, name and contact details (address or telephone number).
- Line manager details, name, grade, signature and date of receipt of incident report.

Post-Incident Support

The first level of support is likely to be from the Reporting Inspector and Managing Inspector.

Conclusion

Associate Assessors are asked to put the guidance into practice, thereby ensuring, as far as possible, that we all remain safe and secure as they go about their professional duties.

Claim for Reimbursement of Travel and Subsistence Expenses Incurred by Associate Assessors

CLAIMANT DETAILS

APPENDIX 4

Name: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms _____ Address: _____
Post Code: _____ National Insurance No: _____

Bank/Building Society: _____ Address: _____

Sort Code: _____ Account Number: _____ Building Society Roll Number: _____

Name of organisation being inspected:	Reason for claim:

Please indicate phase: Early Years / Primary / Post-primary / Special / FE and Work Based Learning / Irish Medium Education

Date	Time Out	Time Return	<u>Detail of Journey</u>	Miles Claimed <i>(Note 1)</i>	Passenger Name	Passenger Miles	Subsistence Day/Overnight <i>(Notes 2 & 3)</i>
Totals							

SUMMARY OF CLAIM

Allowance Claimed	Number	@ Rate	Total
Mileage (<i>see Note 1</i>)		45p/mile	
Passenger Miles		5p/mile	
Day Subsistence (<i>see Note 2</i>)		£4.25	
Day Subsistence (<i>see Note 2</i>)		£9.30	
Night Subsistence (<i>see Note 3</i>)	-	-	-
• Bed and Breakfast (attach receipts)		Up to £80.00	
• Lunch and Dinner		£18.30	
• Overnight with Friend		£25.00	
• Personal Expenses		£5.00	
Residential Allowance (<i>see Note 4</i>)		£5.00	
Incidental Expenses (<i>attach receipts</i>) (<i>see Note 5</i>)			
Total Amount Claimed			

Has substitute cover been claimed?

If applicable, are all relevant receipts attached?

Please complete the Declaration overleaf and pass this form to the Reporting Inspector for signature.

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Yes ☐ No

Declaration			
I declare that:			
I made the journeys detailed in this claim and all expenses have been actually and necessarily incurred by me.			
I hold a valid driving licence and my motor insurance policy covers the vehicle on official business and my vehicle is maintained in a roadworthy condition.			
Signed:		Date:	
1.	Mileage Allowance Rates	Notes	45p/mile
	Passenger mileage allowance (first passenger)		5p/mile
	Additional passengers		5p/mile
2.	Day Subsistence Allowance (<i>not payable when a meal is provided</i>)		
	When away for over 5 hours		£4.25
	When away for over 10 hours		£9.30

3.a.	Night Subsistence Allowance for a 24 hour period when staying in a Hotel	
	Actual receipted Bed and Breakfast Cost up to a maximum limit of	£80.00 plus
	Amount to cover cost of lunch and dinner	£18.30 plus
	Personal Expenses Allowance when away for over 24 hours	£5.00
b.	Night Subsistence Allowance for a 24 hour period when staying with a friend or relative	£25.00 plus
4.	Residential Allowance – where all expenses are met directly by DE	£5.00
5.	Incidental Expenses eg Car Park fees, Postage, Photocopying – must be supported by receipts	

Certification

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the facts given in this claim are correct and that the expenses were actually and necessarily incurred.

Signed: (Reporting Inspector)

Date:

Checked and Authorised: (Inspection Services Branch)

Date:

Signed: (Paul McAlister, Assistant Chief Inspector)

Date:

This form should be returned by the Reporting Inspector to Miss Jacqui Patterson,
Inspection Services Branch, DE (telephone 028 9127 9621 for queries)
at the end of the inspection period

Committee for Education to DE 07.03.2014

Committee for Education

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Veronica Bintley

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer
Department of Education
Rathgael House
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Bangor BT19 7PR

7 March 2014

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1259

Dear Veronica

Education and Training Inspectorate – Investors in People

At the meeting of the Committee for Education on 5 March 2014, a Member raised a query regarding the Investors in People (IiP) accreditation in respect of the Education and Training Inspectorate.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek confirmation that ETI has obtained this accreditation and detail on ETI's accreditation in respect of the following IiP areas: strategic planning, effective management, culture and communication, developing people and managing performance.

If you require further clarification on the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

A response by 21 March 2014 would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion

Clerk
Committee for Education

DE Correspondence 25.03.14

Peter McCallion

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Tel No: (028) 9127 9849
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Email: veronica.bintley@deni.gov.uk

Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1259

26 March 2014

Dear Peter

Education and Training Inspectorate – Investors in People

In connection with your letter dated 7 March 2014.

The Department of Education as a whole is subject to an Investors in People assessment. The Education and Training Inspectorate is not assessed in a separate capacity.

As outlined in previous correspondence the Education and Training Inspectorate has been awarded Customer Service Excellence in its own right.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

Veronica Bintley

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Committee for Education to DE 14.03.14

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Ms Noelle Buick
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County Down
Noelle.buick@deni.gov.uk

14 March 2014

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1278

Dear Noelle

ETI and School Improvement Process Inquiry – draft summary report

The Committee for Education would like to thank you, Faustina Graham, John Anderson and Heather Jackson for the very informative briefing on Wednesday 12 March 2014 as part of the Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and School Improvement Process.

During the Q&A it appeared that you had indicated that ETI does not share draft school inspection reports with the Department.

As you are aware, in AQW 26136/11, DE advised: “Inspection teams share the key findings with their DE colleagues once the inspection has concluded. Subsequently, they forward the published report. Each school inspected receives a letter from DE congratulating them on the outcome or alternatively outlining what action is required by the Board of Governors in response to the inspection findings.”

Also in oral evidence to the Committee on 16/10/13, Faustina indicated:

“Truthfully, looking at the number of inspection reports that go through our hands, in our directorate dealing with schools, the processes that would have been described in answer to that question are exactly what happens in the Department. Colleagues in the school improvement team in the Department will receive the same information that the school receives. In other words, at the verbal report back with the school, we leave a summary sheet, which is a short, one-page document that sums up the findings of the inspection. That is left in confidence with the school, and that is exactly the same information that is passed on to the Department. After that, we work through our processes and the inspection report is published. There is no contact between ourselves and colleagues in the Department before the publication of that report. The process will be continued in schools where there is an entry into the formal intervention process, because that will kick-start a process, but it is clearly outlined in annex C of Every School a Good School what the process is. We follow it to the letter, and we have to, given the volume of reports that we deal with.”

I would be most grateful if you would clarify if ETI indeed share a draft summary version of all or any of its school inspection reports with DE prior to the final report being agreed with the school? Can you also clarify if ETI only shares draft summary reports with DE where the school is likely to go into Formal Intervention?

The Committee is keen to conclude all evidence-taking for the Inquiry, I would therefore be most grateful if you would respond at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion

Clerk

Committee for Education

DE Correspondence 21.03.14

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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1278

21 March 2014

Peter

Draft School Inspection Reports

Thank you for your letter of 14 March 2014 requesting clarification in relation to school inspection reports. I can confirm that ETI does not share draft school inspection reports with colleagues in the Department.

At the end of every inspection there is a verbal report given to the principal and governors of the school. At this time a short written summary of the Performance Levels for achievements and standards, quality of provision for learning, leadership and management and overall effectiveness (4 PLs in total), and an outline of any areas for improvement (key findings) is provided to the school. The intention is to allow the school to begin any preliminary work on identified areas for improvement as soon as possible and in advance of the publication of the report.

If a school has received an overall evaluation of inadequate or unsatisfactory then it will enter into the Formal Intervention Process. In that case, the Department of Education (DE) expects a management response from the school within 30 days of the inspection, providing a broad outline of the actions the governors intend to take in response to the inspection findings. In the case of an inadequate or unsatisfactory evaluation, ETI will provide DE colleagues in the School Improvement Team with the short summary document that was given to the school, to enable the process to proceed as efficiently as possible for all concerned. This document is not provided to DE colleagues for inspections where the outcome is satisfactory or above.

If the child protection and safeguarding arrangements are evaluated as unsatisfactory senior DE colleagues will be informed in writing as soon as possible.

Other than what is outlined above there is no information provided to DE colleagues in advance of publication of the report. For absolute clarity, there is no interference by the Department in any of the inspection evaluations. ETI independently and without fear or favour determine the evaluation outcomes.

I enclose a copy of a sample document with the name of the school redacted to let you see the level of information provided.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

Veronica Bintley
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION FROM THE STANDARD INSPECTION

This document is confidential to the staff and Board of Governors. Inspection performance levels are provisional, subject to moderation through ETI's quality assurance process and are not final until the report is published. The Reporting Inspector will mediate any changes to the Principal.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

The standards achieved by the pupils are inadequate.

PROVISION FOR LEARNING

The quality of learning, teaching and assessment is satisfactory.

The quality of the care, guidance and support of pupils is good.

The curricular provision for the pupils is satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of the strategic leadership and management to raise standards is inadequate.

THE MAIN AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT INCLUDE THE NEED¹ TO:

- raise the inadequate standards at GCSE and A-level;
- improve the quality of the learning and the teaching in order to meet better the needs of all the pupils; and
- provide effective strategic leadership to raise the standards attained by the pupils through a rigorous school development planning process.

CONCLUSION

In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the learners.

The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-18 month period.

¹ The main strengths in the work of the school have been discussed during the detailed oral report back. To assist the school in moving forward, without delay, on the post-inspection action planning process, the main areas for improvement have been summarised within this summary of key findings.

Committee for Education to DE 28.03.14

Committee for Education

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Veronica Bintley
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28 March 2014

Our Ref: PMcC/SMcG/1309

Dear Veronica

ETI & School Improvement Inquiry: Sharing of Draft Reports

At its meeting of 26 March 2014 the Committee noted your response, dated 21 March 2014, which clarified that ETI does not share draft school inspection reports with colleagues in the Department (except in the case of schools which are to enter Formal Intervention).

The Committee also noted that your response appears to contradict an answer given by the Department to AQW 26136/11-15.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an explanation as to how the response of 21 March 2014 can be reconciled with the answer given to AQW 26136/11-15.

A response at your earliest convenience would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion

Clerk
Committee for Education

DE Correspondence 8.04.14

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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1309

8 April 2014

Dear Peter

Thank you for your letter of 28 March 2014 requesting further clarification in relation to school inspection reports. I reiterate that there is no interference by the Department in any of the inspection evaluations. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) independently and without fear or favour determines the evaluation outcomes.

There is no contradiction in the response in AQW 26136/11-15 and the response provided to the Committee on 21 March 2014. However, I hope that the further clarification outlined below resolves any perceived ambiguities.

The AQW 26136/11-15 stated: To ask the Minister of Education what arrangements exist between his Department and the Education and Training Inspectorate once a school inspection is completed (my highlight). The inspection is only completed /concluded when the inspection report is published. There are two stages to this process 1) a copy of the final report is issued to the school by the ETI, usually two to three days before its publication on the ETI website. At that point the School Improvement Team in the Department is copied into the final report that issues to the school. 2) When this final report is actually published on the website, the Press Office and others on the circulation list are copied into the published report for ease of access. The version that issues to the school and that published on the website are identical.

In your letter of 14 March 2014 you asked for additional clarification in relation to Formal Intervention; Can you clarify if ETI only shares draft summary reports with DE where the school is likely to go into Formal Intervention? This is clarified in the response of 28 March 2014 which states that the short summary document, the same document that is given to the principal and governors at the verbal report, is provided to the School Improvement Team. The rationale for this is outlined in the response of 28 March 2014.

Yours sincerely

Veronica

Veronica Bintley
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 5

List of Witnesses

List of Witnesses

Date	Name	Organisation
16-Oct-13	Paul McAlister	Department of Education
	Noelle Buick	Department of Education
	John Anderson	Department of Education
	Faustina Graham	Department of Education
23-Oct-13	Mark Langhammer	Association of Teachers and Lecturers
	Karen Sims	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
	Nuala O'Donnell	Irish National Teachers' Association
	Avril Hall-Callaghan	Ulster Teachers Union
	Gerry Devlin	General Teaching Council NI
	Carmell Gallagher	General Teaching Council NI
	Sharon Beattie	Dromore Nursery School
	Colm Davis	Tor Bank School
06-Nov-13	Gerry McGuinness	BELB
	Paddy Mackey	WELB
	Ray Gilbert	NEELB
	Kim Scott	SEELB
	Tony McMullan	NIPSA
	Janette McNulty	NIPSA
13-Nov-13	Clare Majury	National Association of Head Teachers
	Fern Turner	National Association of Head Teachers
	Frank Cassidy	Association of School and College Leaders
	Scott Naismith	Association of School and College Leaders
	Stephen Black	Association of School and College Leaders
	David Knox	Association of School and College Leaders
	Johnathan Manning	Edenbrook Primary School
27-Nov-13	Áine Andrews	Gaelscoil na bhfál
	Roisin Brady	Gaelscoil na bhfál
	Dr Michael Ó Duibh	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
11-Dec-13	Prof. Vani Borooah	University of Ulster
	Prof. Colin Knox	University of Ulster

Date	Name	Organisation
08-Jan-14	Terry Murphy	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
	Malachy Crudden	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
	Liz Fawcett	Parents Outloud
	Roisin Gilheany	Parents Outloud
	Robert Salisbury	Parents Outloud
05-Feb-14	David Hughes	Department of Education
	Karen McCullough	Department of Education
19-Feb-14	David Hughes	Department of Education
	Gayle Kennedy	Department of Education
	Dale Heaney	Department of Education
	Karen McCullough	Department of Education
26-Feb-14	Faustina Graham	Department of Education
	John Anderson	Department of Education
	Noelle Buick	Department of Education
	Heather Jackson	Department of Education
05-Mar-14	Prof. John Gardner	University of Sterling
	Bryan Jess	Carrick Primary School
	Carmell Gallagher	General Teaching Council NI
	Sharon Beattie	Dromore Nursery School
11-Mar-14	Carmell Gallagher	General Teaching Council NI
	Colm Davis	Tor Bank School
	Bryan Jess	Carrick Primary School
12-Mar-14	Heather Jackson	Department of Education
	John Anderson	Department of Education
	Faustina Graham	Department of Education
	Noelle Buick	Department of Education



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 6

Additional Information

Contents

1. Additional information from the West Belfast Partnership Board
2. GTCNI: Rising to the Challenge OECD Paper
3. Clerk's summary – District Inspector informal briefing event 24 Jan 2014
4. Clerk's summary – Associate Assessor informal briefing event 19 Feb 2014

West Belfast Partnership Board

FAO: Peter McCallion

Dear Peter

In your letter of 8 November 2013 you stated that the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for Education had requested further information on the work undertaken by the West Belfast Partnership Board's, Education and Training Forum (ETF) in response to the ETI inspection of West Belfast 2009.

The ETF responded to the ETI's Area Based Evaluation of Education and Training in West Belfast (2009) by undertaking a number of tasks which are outlined in the attached report: West Belfast Partnership Board, Education and Training Forum 2011 – 2012, Outcome Report, December 2012. Should you require further information or wish to arrange a Committee visit, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to hearing from the Committee.

Janice McHenry

West Belfast Partnership Board

218-226 Falls Road
Belfast BT12 6AH
Tel: 028 90809202
janice@wbpb.org

West Belfast Partnership Board Education and Training Forum Report December 2012



**West Belfast Partnership Board
Education and Training Forum
2011 – 2012**

Outcome Report



West Belfast Partnership Board
218 – 226 Falls Road
Belfast BT12 6AH

Telephone: 028 9080 9202

Further copies of this report can be downloaded from:

Website: www.westbelfast-partnership.com

FOREWORD

One of the key priorities of the West Belfast Partnership Board is education and training; we believe strongly that all children and young people living in West Belfast should have the opportunity to achieve to their full potential. How we, the Partnership Board, assist in supporting their needs are a measure against which our work should be judged.

The West Belfast Partnership Board's Education and Training Forum, formed in late 2010, was tasked with focusing on particular recommendations arising out of an Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), Area Based Evaluation Report. The ETI report focused on the quality of strategic planning, learning and transition arrangements for education and training in west Belfast. This Education and Training Forum Outcomes Report, reflects the work and outcomes of the Forum from its inception to completion of their designated tasks.

Whilst the West Belfast Partnership Board recognise that there is much to be done to improve transition arrangements, quality assurance and strategic planning in education and training, we hope that the work of the Forum will make some small contribution; which when partnered with other relevant organisations work, will make a difference to the future of our children and young people.

We offer this report to our Forum members, elected representatives, and interested statutory, community and voluntary groups working with children and young people in the west of the city and beyond. In the hope that our experience and information may be shared to the benefit of all who are supportive of improving the quality of education and training provision generally but specifically in West Belfast.

There are many new education and political initiatives emerging from our leaders and these initiatives need to take cognisance of the changing needs of our young people and the demands being placed on them. The new West Belfast Education and Training Forum is at the planning stage and we very much hope that this Report will inform their thinking and indeed the thinking of the 'change makers and stakeholders' in our community. We take this opportunity to thank the West Belfast Partnership Board, Education and Training Forum members for giving so generously of their time and expertise and in producing this Report.

Geraldine McAteer, CEO West Belfast Partnership Board
Tom Armstrong, Chair Education and Training Forum

December 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2009 the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) undertook a west Belfast area based evaluation of the quality of strategic planning; learning and transition arrangements for education and training in west Belfast.

Their report; published in 2010¹, highlighted a number of areas for development and encapsulated these in a number of 'key priorities for action' for the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), the key educational stakeholders and the organisations.² This report is written in the context of 'the organisations' response to the ETI recommendations: specifically the response of the West Belfast Partnership Board's, Education and Training Forum (2011 - 2012)

The West Belfast Partnership Board's, Education and Training Forum

Following publication of the report, a number of organisations under the umbrella of the West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB) met to discuss how action could be taken to address those key priorities highlighted in the report which were of importance to WBPB constituent groups. That discussion led WBPB and these constituent groups to replace the existing WBPB Education and Training Subcommittee with an Education and Training Forum (ETF).³

The ETF was tasked with developing a workable response to three key priorities. The ETF Terms of Reference particularly set the Forum the task of achieving the following outcomes⁴:

- To develop and drive a strategic plan for education and training across West Belfast whilst taking consideration of recent recommendations e.g. ETI Area Based Inspection Report, and
- the development of a set of strategic recommendations to be incorporated into the WBPB Strategic Plan 2012 - 2015;
- the development of an integrated and co-ordinated Transitions Proforma; and
- the development of a generic Quality Assurance Template for Education and Training.

¹ Available on the Education and Training Inspectorate website: www.etini.gov.uk

² Organisations include pre-school providers, primary schools, post-primary schools, special schools, further education colleges, training organisations, alternative education providers and the youth service.

³ WBPB, ETF Membership - Appendix A

⁴ ETF Terms of Reference - Appendix B

The ETF under the chairmanship of Mr Tom Armstrong responded to this challenge by setting up three working groups as follows:

1. Transitions Working Group;
2. Strategic Development Working Group; and
3. Quality Assurance Working Group.

Outcomes

Transitions Working Group

A key recommendation from the ETI in regard to Transitions was around portability of pupil/student information. The Transitions working group in conjunction with partner organisations developed two Transition Proforma; Pre-school to age 16 and Post 16. Having developed the Proforma the Forum decided to test and trial these by undertaking a small scale pilot with the purpose of establishing effectiveness and potential areas for concern.

There were two main learning points arising from the Pilot:

1. The proforma appeared to generate a good overview of individual attainment and social/emotional data.
2. There is a major issue in how data is generated and how it moves with the individual at each stage of their educational journey, particularly following Post 16 Education when routes into Education and/or Training become diverse and choices for young people increase.

A number of factors impeding the introduction of a generic Transitions Proforma were established. The resolution of which would need to be addressed by agencies other than the WBPB.

Given the small scale of the Transitions Proforma Pilot, and the limited resources available to undertake the task, the WBPB Education and Training Forum consider the outcome of the Pilot to be positive in that it highlighted many of the issues which need to be resolved prior to the introduction of a generic Transitions Proforma.

Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance Working Group undertook to investigate existing Quality Assurance templates and make recommendation to the ETF on a generic Quality Assurance model. A Quality Assurance model was developed with the assistance of Mr Gerry Kelly, formerly of the ETI, who consulted with Community partners in the creation of the generic Self Evaluation template.

This process also highlighted issues relating to the embedding of a template in the work of both statutory and community based organisations, they are as follows:

- The majority of organisations involved with Education and Training have developed or agreed with their funders a specific Quality Assurance model, and may view this template as duplication of existing arrangements rather than complementary to those arrangements.
- The importance of a generic format which provides an effective benchmarking tool therefore needs to be discussed further with all organisations.
- The Department of Education and Department of Employment and Learning would need to lend their support to the use of the template in order to further its use.
- Training in the completion of this Self Evaluation template is necessary in order to ensure that participating organisations develop a clear understanding of the benefits of a generic template with which they can measure and benchmark performance to improve outcomes for their clients.

Strategic Planning

The Strategic Planning Working Group comprised representatives from key educational organisations within the area, from early years to Post 16 Education. This group undertook to make recommendation to the Education and Training Forum and the West Belfast Partnership Board on a strategic direction for Education and Training in west Belfast.

The working group reported to the Education and Training forum and the recommendations, subsequently incorporated into the Board's current Strategic and Operational Plan for 2012 – 2015 are as follows:

- Establish a revised West Belfast Partnership Board, (WBPB) Education and Training Forum with membership to include business and employer representatives and re-framed Terms of Reference. With new TOR's to include identification of resources and funding for action.
- Develop a WBPB, PR strategy to publicize the work of organisations/people in west Belfast and the role of the WBPB in supporting that work.
- WBPB should identify education and training opportunities in Numeracy, Literacy, career planning, parental support and Continued Professional Development and focus on an identified project for specific support and resources (e.g. Strategic Investment Fund). The WBPB to align closely with the Education and Skills Authority/City Council, as appropriate, in respect of design and implementation of area based education and training projects.
- A WBPB Think Tank to agree future actions should be created.

- The WBPB to support the Education and Training Forum to have enhanced recognition and status as the local hub for disseminating information and training on learning and training issues.
- Review the West Belfast Partnership Board Membership and Reporting Policy for respective user groups.
- WBPB Education and Training Forum to monitor a standardised Quality Assurance procedure, and use agreed Transition proforma (pre-school to third level education).

Conclusion

Having completed the task of recommending a strategic direction, formulating a generic Transitions proforma and developing a Quality Assurance template, the current Education and Training Forum stood down.

A new West Belfast Partnership Board, Education and Training Forum will be in place early in 2013. The TOR's for this Forum will be based on the recommendations of the 2011 - 2012 Forum and current developments in the wider field of education and training.

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1.0 Context

1.1 In 2009 the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) undertook a west Belfast area based evaluation of the quality of strategic planning; learning and transition arrangements for education and training in west Belfast.⁵ The evaluation was structured around three main areas:

- strategic planning for education and training within the area;
- the quality of learning for young people within the area; and
- the effectiveness of the transition arrangements for children and young people within and across the various sectors.

1.2 The Inspectorate's aim was to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the work by educational organisations in:

making connections for learning for children and young people.

They also assessed:

the extent to which a range of organisations in the west Belfast area work together to provide coherent and relevant educational pathways for learners.

Their report, published in 2010⁶, highlighted a number of areas for development and encapsulated these in a number of 'key priorities for action' for the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), the key educational stakeholders and the organisations.⁷ This report is written in the context of 'the organisations' response to the ETI recommendations: specifically the response of the West Belfast Partnership Board's, Education and Training Forum.

2.0 ETI Key Priorities for Action - Organisations

2.1 The organisations need to:⁸

- *build more effectively on the prior learning at key transition stages in order to raise the standards for all learners and in particular to address the needs of those learners who leave education with no qualifications;*
- *ensure that their individual development plans are aligned well with an overall strategic plan for the area including the inclusion of joint*

⁵ An Evaluation of the Quality of: Strategic Planning; Learning; and Transition Arrangements for Education and Training in the west Belfast Area.

⁶ Available on the Education and Training Inspectorate website: www.etini.gov.uk

⁷ Organisations include pre-school providers, primary schools, post-primary schools, special schools, further education colleges, training organisations, alternative education providers and the youth service.

⁸ Page 10 ETI West Belfast Area Based Inspection Report

curriculum planning with other schools to ensure continuity and progression in learning across transition stages between different phases; and

- *use, where possible, commonly agreed quantitative and benchmarked data, for the tracking of individual learner's attainment as they progress within and across organisations and ensure the better collection of, and transfer onwards of, necessary information about learners who are entering and leaving their organisations, particularly information on the standards they attain.*

3.0 The West Belfast Partnership Board's, Education and Training Forum Response

3.1 Following publication of the report, a number of organisations under the umbrella of the West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB) met to discuss how action could be taken to address those key priorities which were of importance to WBPB constituent groups. That discussion led WBPB and these constituent groups to replace the existing WBPB Education and Training Subcommittee with an Education and Training Forum (ETF).⁹

3.2 The ETF was tasked with developing a workable response to the three key priorities above. The ETF Terms of Reference particularly set the Forum the task of achieving the following outcomes¹⁰:

- To develop and drive a strategic plan for education and training across West Belfast whilst taking consideration of recent recommendations e.g. ETI Area Based Inspection Report, and
- the development of a set of strategic recommendations to be incorporated into the WBPB Strategic Plan 2012 - 2015;
- the development of an integrated and co-ordinated Transitions Proforma; and
- the development of a generic Quality Assurance Template for Education and Training.

3.2 The ETF under the chairmanship of Mr Tom Armstrong responded to the challenge by setting up three working groups as follows:

1. Transitions Working Group;
2. Strategic Development Working Group; and
3. Quality Assurance Working Group.

⁹ WBPB, ETF Membership - Appendix A

¹⁰ ETF Terms of Reference - Appendix B

4.0 The Transition Working Group

- 4.1 The Transition Working Group was to investigate existing Transition Proforma and make recommendation to the ETF on a generic Proforma which would be tested and trialled to establish if it would provide, as per the Inspectorate's recommendation:

Commonly agreed quantitative and benchmarked data, for the tracking of individual learner's attainment as they progress within and across organisations and ensure the better collection of, and transfer onwards of necessary information about learners who are entering and leaving their organisations, particularly information on the standards they attain.

- 4.2 The group considered a number of key elements such as:

- what are the key Transition points to be considered;
- who are the key stakeholders to be accessed;
- what information should be collected to ensure the tracking of individual learner's attainment across organisations?

The outcome was the development of two evaluation forms. One for children up to 16 years of age and one for those entering post 16 Education and Training. The ETF considered that these should provide adequate, timely and relevant information at key transition points in a young person's journey through their education and training journey.¹¹

- 4.3 However, both the Forum and the Working Group recognised that the proforma would need to be tested in the environments in which it was to be used in order to ensure that the document was fit for purpose. Consequently a Transition Pilot commenced in summer 2012 and completed in November 2012.
- 4.4 The participating groups were representative of pre-school, nursery, primary and post primary schools. The Post Primary Schools undertook to contact those Education and Training organisations to which their pupils were transferring.
- 4.5 Transition Pilot Outcomes:
- A total of 125 Transition forms were distributed by WBPB in hard copy.
 - 100 Transitions forms were distributed by the organisations involved.

¹¹ Appendix C1 and C2 - Copy of Proforma

- The organisations involved returned an Evaluation Form to the WBPB.
- There was a nil return from post 16 organisations.
- The Evaluation Questionnaire recorded the following:¹²
 - 56% of the returning organisations stated that the proforma provided additional information which may enhance the current level of support provided to a child entering the school;
 - 44% responded that the proforma did not supply additional useful information. When prompted to why this was the case, it was determined that face to face meetings were held with teachers at transition point 'Nursery to Primary' and that those meetings provided similar information;
 - Some organisations found it 'Very Difficult to obtain the information on individual pupils while others found it easy. On further investigation it transpires that geographical location was a major factor in creating a difficulty in obtaining the information, i.e., when pupils were moving from Nursery to Primary within the same location information was easy to obtain and was difficult when this was not the case.
 - The most useful information provided by the proforma was as follows:
 - Attendance
 - Family Circumstances
 - Behaviour and attitude
 - Education Attainment
 - Health
 - Additional Support Needs
 - Support Agencies involved with the individual
 - Parent/Guardian Details
 - Areas for Development
 - Respondents varied in the amount of work it needed to gather information, ranging from moderate to substantial.
 - Reactions to the value of the Proforma were mixed, In some cases it was felt that it 'added value' and in others that it was a repeat of a system already in place. One organisation made the following comment:

¹² Appendix D:1 and D:2 – Evaluation Questionnaires – Nursery to Age 16 and Post 16

The timing of the transition form meant that the transition information was in addition to what had already been done. However as a proforma I would recommend it as a tool to use but it needs to be universal in it's use.

4.6 Conclusion - Transitions Pilot

The key recommendation from the ETI in regard to Transitions was around portability of pupil/student information. Two main learning points arising from the WBPB Transitions Pilot were:

1. The proforma appeared to generate a good overview of individual attainment and social/emotional data.
2. However; there is a major issue in how data is generated and how it moves with the individual at each stage of their educational journey, particularly following Post 16 Education when routes into Education and/or Training become diverse and choices for young people increase.

A number of issues impeding the introduction of a generic Transitions Proforma were established. The resolution of these issues would need to be addressed by agencies other than the WBPB.

Issues:

1. There is a need to identify the best time to forward the proforma to the stakeholders involved, as it is crucial for schools/training organisations etc., to have the information at a time when staff are available to collate and review the information.
2. It is important that a generic proforma be sanctioned by the relevant authorities – DENI / DEL and their associates- BELB / CCMS etc. Having credibility and a currency is important and the project highlighted the fact that these same organisations had already designed or were in the process of designing similar proforma. One agreed proforma is sufficient.
3. There is a need to further inform all the stakeholders of the rationale for the proforma and the objectives for its use well in advance of circulation. How stakeholders are informed of the rationale and who undertakes the task of disseminating information are important questions.
4. The impact of how the information is used will be important as a justification of its purpose and this will also help to refine the proforma. Again how the impact is evaluated and who carries out the evaluation are important questions.

5. There are issues of data protection requiring regulation to be in place.
6. The additional workload involved in completing, circulating, monitoring and storage of the information need to be considered. Although it is apparent that much of this information is already provided by and to stakeholders using their individual systems.
7. Tracking mechanisms need to be developed in order to ensure that a full picture of an individual's attainment, needs and progress are recorded.

Given the scale of this Transitions Proforma Pilot, and the limited resources available to undertake the task, the WBPB Education and Training Forum consider the outcome of the Pilot to be positive in that it highlighted many of the issues which need to be resolved prior to the introduction of any generic Transitions Proforma.

5.0 The Quality Assurance Working Group

- 5.1 The Quality Assurance Working Group undertook to investigate existing Quality Assurance templates and make recommendation to the ETF on a generic Quality Assurance model, which would once tested and trialled provide effective self-evaluation arrangements, as per the Inspectorate's recommendation:

That there is a need to:

develop more effective self-evaluation arrangements within individual organisations and across the geographical area, focusing in particular on improving further the quality of education and training provision and the standards achieved by learners;¹³

- 5.2 Mr Gerry Kelly, formerly of the ETI was engaged to consult with Community partners in the creation of a generic Self Evaluation template. Gerry in consultation with the ETF working group developed the template which is attached as Appendix E.
- 5.3 There are a number of issues relating to the embedding of the template in the work of both statutory and community based organisations, they are as follows:
 - The majority of organisations involved with Education and Training have developed or agreed with their funders a specific Quality Assurance model, and may view this template as duplication of existing arrangements rather than complementary to those arrangements.

¹³ ETI Report page 5

- The importance of a generic format which provides an effective benchmarking tool therefore needs to be discussed further with all organisations.
- The Department of Education and Department of Employment and Learning would need to lend their support to the use of the template in order to further its use.
- Training in the completion of this Self Evaluation template is necessary in order to ensure that participating organisations develop a clear understanding of the benefits of a generic template with which they can measure and benchmark performance to improve outcomes for their clients.

6.0 Strategic Planning Working Group

6.1 The ETI report stated that there was a need to:

*align the strategic and operational plans of organisations and their key partners within the area;*¹⁴

6.2 The ETF Strategic Planning Working Group comprised representatives from key educational organisations within the area, from early years to post 16 education. This group undertook to make recommendation to the ETF and the WBPB on a strategic direction for the West Belfast Partnership Board in regard to Education and Training in west Belfast.

6.3 The recommendations which were incorporated into the WBPB current Strategic and Operational Plan for 2012 – 2015 are as follows:

- Establish a revised West Belfast Partnership Board, (WBPB) Education and Training Forum with membership to include business and employer representatives and re-framed Terms of Reference. With new TOR's to include identification of resources and funding for action. Further operational comment on a possible framework for a re-constituted ETF are at Appendix F¹⁵
- Develop a WBPB PR strategy to publicize the work of organisations/people in west Belfast and the role of the WBPB in supporting that work.
- WBPB should identify education and training opportunities in Numeracy, Literacy, career planning, parental support and Continued Professional Development and focus on an identified project for specific support and resources (e.g. Strategic Investment Fund) The WBPB to align closely with the Education and Skills Authority/City

¹⁴ ETI report page 5

¹⁵ Possible elements of an ETF Framework

Council, as appropriate, in respect of design and implementation of area based education and training projects.

- A WBPB Think Tank to agree future actions should be created.
- The WBPB to support the Education and Training Forum to have enhanced recognition and status as the local hub for disseminating information and training on learning and training issues.
- Review the West Belfast Partnership Board Membership and Reporting Policy for respective user groups.
- WBPB Education and Training Forum to monitor a standardised Quality Assurance procedure, and use agreed Transition proforma (pre-school to third level education).

Appendix F: WBPB – ETF Strategic Recommendations 2012

7.0 Conclusion

Having completed the task of recommending a strategic direction, formulating a generic Transitions proforma and developing a Quality Assurance template, the current Education and Training Forum stood down.

A new Education and Training Forum with TOR's based on the recommendations at Appendix F will be in place early in 2013.

Appendix A

WBPB Education and Training Forum Membership

Ms	Tina	Adair	BELB
Mr	Tom	Armstrong	CBS
Ms	Louise	Brennan	ISCYP AEP
Ms	Yvonne	Connolly	Footprints Women's Centre
Ms	Monica	Culbert	Good Shepherd Nursery School
Ms	Tina	Gregory	Clanmore Surestart
Mr	Ronan	Heenan	Diaryfarm Training
Ms	Pauline	Kersten	Conway Education Centre
Ms	Mary	Lyons	Springvale Learning
Mr	Peter	McAlister	SEELB
Mr	Padraig	McCathail	Colaiste Feirste
Mr	Keith	McCaugherty	Holy Trinity Youth Centre
Ms	Sharon	McCullough	Lenadoon NP
Ms	Angela	Mervyn	Andersonstown Neighbourhood Partnership
Ms	Trish	Moore	Barnardos
Mr	Terry	Murphy	CCMS
Mr	Cathal	O'Doherty	St Pauls Primary School
Mr	Joe	Reid	Belfast Met
Ms	Deirdre	Walsh	Whiterock Children's' Centre
Ms	Margaret	Watson	BELB
Ms	Janice	McHenry	WBPB

Appendix B

West Belfast Partnership Board

Education and Training Forum Terms of Reference

This Forum was set up to address Education and Training provision across West Belfast - and addresses the relevant needs and aspirations of our people - through promoting access, participation and outcomes.

1. To develop and drive a strategic plan for education and training across West Belfast whilst taking consideration of recent recommendations e.g. ETI Area Based Inspection Report.
2. To work towards raising attainment levels and outcomes in education, training and lifelong learning across Greater West Belfast.
3. To advocate on relevant issues on behalf of Education and training Stakeholders across Greater West Belfast.
4. To develop a participation model ensuring inclusion of the voice of Education and Training Stakeholders.
5. To promote the greater sharing of information and good practice among Education and Training Stakeholders.
6. To provide a collective voice in relation to strategic policy issues facing education and training in West Belfast.

Appendix C: 1

Insert school logo
Insert school address

Confidential Transition Information - Nursery to Age 16

[Progression between Family, pre-schools, Schools, Educational Stages, Alternative Education Centres, Other providers].

Referral Agency: _____

Representative Name & Contact details: _____

Pupil / Student Name: _____

Pupil / Student D.O.B: _____

Name of School / Other Education Provider: _____

Previous School / Other Education Provider: _____

Parent/Guardian/Student's Signature *(for authorisation where applicable)*:

Attendance overview (%): _____

Family Circumstances - [Social, Emotional, Behavioural Needs: *[where applicable]*

General overview on behaviour and attitude:

Level of Educational Attainment / Key Stage / Qualifications Obtained:

Health Requirements:

Additional Support Needs: (specify)

Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	Stage on SEN Code of Practice

Does / did the named young person have an Educational Statement while attending
 previous school / Other Education Provider: Yes ☐ No ☐

Support Agencies involved with the child/young person	Key contacts	Telephone

Parent/Guardian Details: _____

Relationship to Child/Young Person:

Name:

Address:

Telephone and/or mobile number:

Follow up Actions by:

Sending Organisation	
Literacy/Numeracy Support	
Social, Emotional, Behavioural support	
Interest Areas	
Areas for Development	

Receiving Organisation	
Literacy/Numeracy Support	
Social, Emotional, Behavioural support	
Interest Areas	
Areas for Development	

Any further comments:

Return Form to: Insert address marked **Confidential**

Appendix C: 2**INSERT ORGANISATION LOGO/NAME HERE****Transition Information - Post 16** [progression into School based Post 16, FE, Training Organisations, Employment/Other]**Name of FE College / Training Organisation / Other Education Providers:****Referral Agency & Representative:****Contact details:****Post Primary School:****Student's Name:****Student's D.O.B:** _____ **Date:** _____**Student's Signature for Authorisation of Information:****Attendance (%) over Years 11 & 12:****General overview on behaviour and attitude:****Level of Educational Attainment / Qualifications Obtained:****Health Requirements:****Educational Welfare Officer/Careers Service Advisor Comment:**

Student/Parent Comment:

Additional Support Needs:

Literacy

☐

Numeracy

☐

ICT

☐

Did the named student have an Educational Statement while attending Post Primary/ Primary education? Yes ☐ No ☐

Support Agencies involved with the student:

Parent/Guardian Details:

Relationship to student: _____

Name:

Address:

Telephone and/or mobile number:

Follow up Actions by:

Sending Organisation

--

Receiving Organisation

--

Appendix D: 1



**West Belfast Partnership Board – Education and Training Forum
Transition Pilot Nursery to Age 16 Proforma Evaluation Questionnaire**

Name of Participating Organisation:	Contact Name:																				
Please place an X in the appropriate box/boxes																					
<p>1. What was your organisations role in the Transition Proforma Pilot?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A distributor of completed proforma <input style="float: right;" type="checkbox"/> • A receiver of completed proforma <input style="float: right;" type="checkbox"/> • Both a distributor and receiver <input style="float: right;" type="checkbox"/> 																					
<p>2. Type of Organisation: Tick as appropriate</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Programme for 2 year olds</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Nursery School</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Primary School</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Post Primary School</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Alternative Education Provision (AEP)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Post 16 – Training Organisation</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Further Education School</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>Other (specify) _____</p>		Programme for 2 year olds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nursery School	<input type="checkbox"/>	Primary School	<input type="checkbox"/>	Post Primary School	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alternative Education Provision (AEP)	<input type="checkbox"/>			Post 16 – Training Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>			Further Education School	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Programme for 2 year olds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nursery School	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
Primary School	<input type="checkbox"/>	Post Primary School	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
Alternative Education Provision (AEP)	<input type="checkbox"/>																				
Post 16 – Training Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>																				
Further Education School	<input type="checkbox"/>																				
<p>3a. How many Transition Proforma were distributed and/or received by your organisation:</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>'Nursery to Age 16':</td> <td>Distributed</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Received</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>'Post 16':</td> <td>Distributed</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Received</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table> <p>3b. How did you distribute the Transitions Proforma?</p> <p>email <input type="checkbox"/> paper copy <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3c. How did you record information received? Electronically <input type="checkbox"/> Hardcopy <input type="checkbox"/></p>		'Nursery to Age 16':	Distributed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Received	<input type="checkbox"/>	'Post 16':	Distributed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Received	<input type="checkbox"/>										
'Nursery to Age 16':	Distributed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Received	<input type="checkbox"/>																	
'Post 16':	Distributed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Received	<input type="checkbox"/>																	

For the receiving organisation																			
4. Did the proforma provide additional Information which may enhance the current level of support provided to a child/young person entering your organisation?	<div>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></div> <div>No <input type="checkbox"/></div>																		
5. If you answered No to question 4: what further information should be included in the proforma?																			
6. Which of the following information did you or your colleagues find most useful: (X all that apply) <table border="0"> <tr> <td>1. Attendance</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Family Circumstances</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Behaviour and attitude</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Educational Attainment</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Health</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. Additional Support Needs</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>7. Support Agencies involved with the individual</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>8. Parent/Guardian Details</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>9. Areas for Development</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		1. Attendance	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Family Circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Behaviour and attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Educational Attainment	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Additional Support Needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Support Agencies involved with the individual	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Parent/Guardian Details	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Areas for Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
1. Attendance	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
2. Family Circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
3. Behaviour and attitude	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
4. Educational Attainment	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
5. Health	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
6. Additional Support Needs	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
7. Support Agencies involved with the individual	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
8. Parent/Guardian Details	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
9. Areas for Development	<input type="checkbox"/>																		
For the completing organisation																			
4. How many individuals did you contact when completing the Proforma (e.g. Parents/Teachers)	<input type="text"/>																		
The number of organisations contacted (e.g. schools)	<input type="text"/>																		
Was this contact more, the same or less than usual at Transition periods?																			
More <input type="checkbox"/>	the same <input type="checkbox"/>																		
	Less <input type="checkbox"/>																		
5. How easy was it to obtain the information required to complete the proforma? If there was a particular difficulty please specify:	<div>Very Difficult <input type="checkbox"/></div> <div>Difficult <input type="checkbox"/></div> <div>Easy <input type="checkbox"/></div> <div>Very Easy <input type="checkbox"/></div>																		

6. Did completing the proforma 'Add' to your normal workload?	<table><tr><td>Substantially</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr><tr><td>Moderately</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr><tr><td>It didn't</td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr></table>	Substantially	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moderately	<input type="checkbox"/>	It didn't	<input type="checkbox"/>
Substantially	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Moderately	<input type="checkbox"/>						
It didn't	<input type="checkbox"/>						
7. If you answered 'Substantially' or 'moderately' do you think it was a valuable exercise? If not why not?	<table><tr><td>Yes</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td><input type="checkbox"/></td></tr></table>	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Yes	No						
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>						
8. Any further Comments:							

Thank you for taking part in the Pilot of the Transitions Proforma

Completed questionnaires should be returned to: janice@wbpb.org by 5 November 2012

APPENDIX D: 2**Evaluation of West Belfast Pilot Post 16 Transition Proforma**

Please complete and return this evaluation form to the address at the bottom of the enclosed Post 16 Transition Forms.

Background Information

The development of the Transition proforma was initiated following a recommendation made by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in a West Belfast Area Based Inspection. The purpose is to provide adequate, timely and relevant information at key transition points in a young person's learning journey. Several schools in west Belfast are participating in an evaluation of this Transition proforma and would like to establish the value of the information received by Post 16 organisations.

1. How many forms have your organisation received from west Belfast Schools/Alternative Education Provision?

Enter number

2. Name of your organisation

3. Enter type of organisation

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

4. Was the content of the form suitable for your needs?

1 Yes

2 No

3 not applicable

5. Is the information adequate and relevant in supporting a Learner's induction and integration into their course?

☐ a. not adequate - more/less information required (specify)_____

☐ b. adequate

☐ c. not relevant – different information is required (specify)_____

☐ d. relevant

- 6. Would the information improve your course planning and delivery?**

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ I already receive this information from another source

Comments

Thank you for participating

Appendix E



WEST BELFAST PARTNERSHIP

THE SELF-EVALUATIVE FOLLOW-UP AND QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS

The West Belfast Partnership requested me to assist them in their response to the Education and Training Inspectorate Report. As you know the Inspectorate will be following up on the matters arising in their report.

I know that your involvement has and remains entirely voluntary but I am also aware, as you are, of how important this work is for west Belfast and its young people and that this has been described as ‘ground-breaking work’.

I have been requested to produce a generic response template based on your self-evaluation or quality assurance of any progress made. Since the WBPB, wishes you to have ownership of the process, I have worked with a number of organisations to obtain ideas and thoughts in producing something which is both easy to use but sufficiently robust.

What I would want from you at the meeting is - what matters have you been working on since the ETI report- how well is it going- what evidence can you provide to demonstrate improvement etc. It's on this basis that I will pull together something for all of us.

BACKGROUND

Inspection evidence across Europe demonstrates that effective self-evaluation within (a) major support organisations, or (b) coherently done across groups of single institutions within an area or region, plays a key role in initiating and maintaining action for improvement. Crucially, this complements well the improvement work done within single educational institutions and thus improves the quality of learning and teaching and the standards achieved by individual learners.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) holds the view that effective “follow-on work” following inspection or “follow-on to inspection” (FOTI) work by major support organisations, or groups of institutions within a region, is an important element in bringing about lasting and sustainable improvement in quality of experiences and standards reached for individual learners. A success criterion that needs to be met for

the FOTI process is the extent to which the major support organisation or group of single institutions, “follows on” and ensures effective improvement work from the original inspection.

In the Inspectorate’s view, a key and necessary part of this is how rigorously and effectively the support organisation or group of single institutions collectively conducts **their own evaluation of the progress made since the initial inspection on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection team.**

THE SELF-EVALUATIVE PROCESS FOR AN ORGANISATION

The organisation is asked to produce for ETI a written report of the progress made in the **main areas for improvement** identified in the original inspection.

What goes into the Organisation’s Self-Evaluative Report?

It is up to the individual organisation to decide on the length and format or layout for its response. It is recommended that it should be short and manageable. It should focus on the key issues only and for each issue no more than two A4 pages. This section provides you with possible headings for each issue or for a composite response. You may wish to write on each issue/ initiate separately or one composite overall response. This was written to help create a generic way for responding across all of the organisations.

Whatever format is employed each organisation’s self-evaluative report should state clearly:

- the **areas for improvement** identified in the initial inspection report – how do the development plan and action plans reflect the priorities for action outlined in the WBPB’s response to the inspection;
- the **baseline position** on the priorities identified for improvement- what was or was not happening at the time of the inspection in the organisation- what was going well or not so well;
- the **quality indicators** you were or are using or intending to use to measure improvement – this is the **evidence** you have used / gathered to evaluate the progress made and the quality of education/leadership now provided on each of the priorities; the sources **of the evidence**, and **how the evidence was gathered [SEE APPENDIX 1]**;
- the **action taken** on the priorities- what has the organisation done since the inspection?
- any **support or help obtained from external agencies or from any source, if it was appropriate / useful and how was it used- it will also mean the new / additional resources you have used**;
- the **progress** you have made on the key priorities or the key areas for improvement-- What do you believe has yet to be achieved- what work needs to be done;

- the **quality of outcomes**, including standards reached, in the areas for improvement identified; and
- the **conclusion[s] and any recommendations** for ongoing action- what matters need to happen to ensure success- In addition, the organisation may wish to give its own evaluative summary / conclusion for each issue and an overall summary comment. Appendix 2 below suggests those which are currently in use in DE/ETI- they provide a range of descriptors which you may wish to use.

FURTHER, THE ORGANISATION MAY WISH TO OUTLINE OTHER INITIATIVES WHICH IT HAS PROGRESSED FROM THE ORIGINAL INSPECTION WHICH IT BELIEVES IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

SEE APPENDIX 3 FOR A SUMMATIVE RESPONSE TEMPLATE

OVERALL:

The focus of the organisation's self-evaluation and self-evaluative report should provide sufficient evidence of progress made on all of the issues identified but ETI recognise that some issues may take much more time than others and some are much easier to address than others.

The organisation may prioritise the issues worked on and work at different rates on these issues; that is for the organisation to decide on these.

Self-evaluation is not a reason to postpone working on some of the areas for improvement. Organisations should be careful to ensure that the areas for improvement are important, can make a real difference and are being addressed in a holistic manner, and in a way that ensures the progress can be sustained.

THE QUALITY ASSURANCE ROLE OF ETI

What is the point of the QA process and the object of the ETI QA report?

The key objectives of the QA by ETI are:

- to evaluate and report on the progress made in **the key areas** for improvement identified during the original inspection;
- to evaluate and report on the quality of the **management/leadership in addressing** the key areas for improvement identified during the original inspection;
- to evaluate how well the organisation is taking forward the process of **self-evaluation** leading to improvement;
- to gauge the quality of **external support** provided for the organisation in the interim period, if relevant; and

Provide an overall comment / conclusion on the progress made

APPENDIX 1 (Quality Assurance)

TYPES OF EVIDENCE

It is up to the organisation to select and agree the appropriate forms of evidence- these are only meant to assist you – they are only suggestions and some may not suit your circumstances but may help you to think of more suitable ones.

WRITTEN PLANNING

A key aspect of evidence will be overall planning and Action Plans linked to the WBPB Strategic Plan[s].

In their development plans, how does the organisation's plan reflect WBPB plans / priorities/ strategic objectives – and thus the WBPB's response to the inspection – this may entail a combination of Short and Long Term Action Plans.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

There is a range of quantitative data which you can use to help you reach an evaluation. This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive:

- examination results - levels of attainment
- value-added measures of performance
- learner's progress from prior levels of attainment
- learner's progress in meeting targets
- overall progress towards set targets
- data collected locally
- analysis of other key performance data, such as: finance, learner attendance, learner exclusion rates, progression rates and leavers' destinations

PEOPLE'S VIEWS

You can ask people what they think. This list provides some suggestions for you:

- individual interviews with members of staff
- individual interviews with parents
- group discussions
- discussions with members of a learner forum
- focus groups
- working parties
- questionnaires and surveys to gauge satisfaction and to elicit suggestions for improving effectiveness- staff/ learner/parents/ other stakeholders
- written responses and detailed comments
- team meetings at all levels

DIRECT OBSERVATION

If appropriate, you can engage in direct observation of learning and teaching / training / support. For example:

- shadow individual learners
- follow a class / group
- observe lessons /sessions
- presenters / teachers to reflect /record /comment on their own teaching/ training
- joint presenting /teaching / observe each other in pairs

You can engage in direct observation of a range of documents. For example:

- learner's work and responses to tasks
- reports to and from parents
- programmes or schemes of work
- presenter's / teachers' plans
- progress reports
- organisational development plans
- policies and guidelines
- minutes of meetings / action points and follow-up work

APPENDIX 2: Quality Assurance

What Descriptors might the Organisation use to Comment on Quality?

This is a matter for the organisation. The organisation is free to choose whatever quality indicators it judges appropriate for its evaluation of the progress made in each identified key area or area for improvement and provide an overall comment on progress made. The organisation could use descriptors and performance levels such as those available from the Inspectorate website (www.etini.gov.uk) which are also summarised below. The organisation should however select appropriate descriptors to record the summary of the evaluation of two key elements:

- The **quality** of education/support now provided in each key area or area for improvement which were inspected. You are also at liberty to comment of areas which were already good or better but which have also progressed since the inspection.
- The **progress made overall** during the follow-up period - as a final concluding comment or statement.

For each of these, the organisation may choose from the following six descriptors and associated performance levels:

OUTSTANDING:

In the areas inspected, the quality of education/training/support provided by this organisation/region is now outstanding.

VERY GOOD

In the area[s] inspected, the quality of education/training/support provided by this organisation/region is now very good. The organisation/region is meeting very effectively the educational needs of the learners and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

GOOD

In the area[s] inspected, the quality of education/training/support provided by this organisation/region is now good. The organisation has important strengths in most of its educational/support provision. The organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address a few remaining minor areas for improvement.

SATISFACTORY

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education/training/support provided by this organisation is now/remains satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The organisation has demonstrated evidence of improvement but aspects of the areas for improvement in standards/learning and teaching/leadership and management remain to be addressed.

INADEQUATE

In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education/training/support provided by this organisation is now/remains inadequate; the significant areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. Important/substantial areas for improvement identified during the original inspection in standards/learning and teaching/leadership and management remain to be addressed urgently.

UNSATISFACTORY/ POOR

In the areas inspected, the quality of education/training/support provided by this organisation is now/remains unsatisfactory; the major areas for improvement significantly outweigh the strengths in the provision. Major areas for improvement identified in the original inspection in standards/learning teaching/leadership and management remain to be addressed urgently.

To make a subsequent statement on the overall **progress made** since the time of the original inspection the organisation could, along with their other evidence of improvement, compare the overall performance level published in the conclusion of the original inspection report to that selected by the organisation at the end of the follow-up inspection period, and then choose from the following as a summary statement of overall progress.

Finally, it is important that the organisation's evaluation is accurate, and is backed up by appropriate first-hand evidence as in Appendix 1 above or other robust and suitable evidence.

APPENDIX 3 THE SUMMATIVE RESPONSE TEMPLATE - TO BE USED FOR EACH AREA OF IMPROVEMENT – QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

RESPONSE TEMPLATE FOR EACH AREA OF IMPROVEMENT
THE AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT
THE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS - ACTION PLANS - PRIORITIES FOR ACTION - LINKS TO WBPB RESPONSE
THE BASELINE POSITION AT THE TIME OF THE ORIGINAL INSPECTION
QUALITY INDICATORS AND EVIDENCE USED TO MEASURE IMPROVEMENT
ACTION WHICH HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN – WHEN AND BY WHOM? AND THAT WHICH IS INTENDED TO TAKE PLACE
EXTERNAL SUPPORT OBTAINED- WHERE FROM AND HOW VALUABLE?
TYPES OF RESOURCES EMPLOYED, OBTAINED AND UTILISED
PROGRESS MADE TO DATE – OUTCOMES AND EVIDENCE- EVALUATIVE CONCLUSION
OVERALL SELF-EVALUATIVE CONCLUSION – GENERAL COMMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

APPENDIX F – Education and Training Forum Recommendations

Key Recommendations to the West Belfast Partnership Board Strategic Plan 2012 - 2015

- Establish a revised West Belfast Partnership Board, (WBPB) Education and Training Forum with extended membership to include business and employer representatives and re-framed Terms of Reference. New TOR's to identify resources and funding for action.
- Develop a WBPB PR strategy to publicize the work of organisations/people in west Belfast and the role of the WBPB in supporting that work.
- WBPB should identify education and training opportunities in Numeracy, Literacy, career planning, parental support and Continued Professional Development and focus on an identified project for specific support and resources (e.g. Strategic Investment Fund) The WBPB to align closely with the Education and Skills Authority/City Council, as appropriate, in respect of design and implementation of area based education and training projects.
- A WBPB Think Tank to agree future actions should be created.
- The WBPB to support the Education and Training Forum to have enhanced recognition and status as the local hub for disseminating information and training on learning and training issues.
- Review the West Belfast Partnership Board Membership and Reporting Policy for respective user groups.
- WBPB Education and Training Forum to monitor a standardised Quality Assurance procedure, and use agreed Transition proforma (pre-school to third level education).

GTCNI Response to OECD - Rising to the challenge



A contribution to the development of a holistic value-added Assessment and Evaluation Framework for Northern Ireland

Contents

■ Acknowledgement

This paper draws extensively on research-informed perspectives within

- the OECD NI report (Dec 2013)
- the OECD '*Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment*' Report (March 2013), and
- '*Data-driven Improvement and Accountability*' (Hargreaves A & Braun H Oct 2013).

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Rising to the Challenge

A contribution to the development of a holistic value-added Assessment and Evaluation Framework for Northern Ireland

1 Introduction

1.1 Context

This paper has been developed in response to the OECD's recent report on assessment and evaluation processes in Northern Ireland which highlights that consensus is a pre-requisite for the successful implementation of policy reform and that building consensus is an iterative process of proposals and feedback to build ownership, trust, respect and transparency.

1.2 Aim

The paper focuses on the pupil assessment component of the framework and primarily on the Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 elements which have proved contentious to date. While acknowledging that CCEA is the lead agency in this area, this paper responds to the OECD's challenge that *'there is much to be gained from cross-fertilisation of distinct perspectives into compromises than from antagonism and the imposition of particular views over other stakeholder groups'* (OECD Dec 2013: 44).

The aim of the paper is to 'rise to the challenge' to contribute proactively to the iterative process of developing a more holistic, value-added assessment (and evaluation) framework for Northern Ireland, with clear synergies between the key components of pupil assessment; teacher and leadership appraisal and school and system evaluation. While each of these components is already a facet of official policy, the OECD has highlighted the need for developments and refinements within each to avoid *'duplication of procedures and prevent inconsistencies of objectives.'* (OECD 2013) and establishing clear *'synergies'* between the components *'for better learning'* (OECD March 2013).

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the paper are to stimulate discussion and seek consensus on:

- The fundamental principles that should underpin Northern Ireland's approach to assessment (and evaluation) to ensure consistent objectives;
- manageable value-added solutions to addressing remaining concerns; and
- the key components and principles that should inform a holistic and integrated assessment framework (to be aligned with a refined evaluation framework¹).

The aspiration is to 'future proof' Northern Ireland's assessment and evaluation processes to make us a world leader in value-added assessment and accountability.

2 Agreeing Principles

2.1: Shared Agreement

There is shared agreement about the key components of official assessment policy (OECD P 57-63) including the focus on:

- formative assessment and teachers' professional judgement;

1 Refinements of the evaluation framework should build on OECD recommendations and the outcomes of the NI Assembly Inquiry

- strengthening assessment literacy among teachers and promoting student engagement in self- and peer-assessment;
- moderation to build teacher assessment literacy/capacity and to increase trust in teacher professional judgements;
- strong communication with parents and reporting on student progress;
- providing central diagnostic tools; and
- effective use of data and information systems to track progress in student learning.

The challenge is to ensure that each of these components (assessment for learning, moderation, effective use of data and reporting on progress) is implemented in manageable ways to support the primary purpose of improving teaching and learning.

2:2 Fundamental underpinning principles

The impact of data-driven accountability is profoundly influenced by the breadth and depth of data used; the care with which it is analysed; the use to which the analysis is put; the consequences that flow from it; and how these consequences affect different groups of teachers, students and schools. The OECD team highlights that:

- Effective use of data can help teachers and schools to evaluate pupil progress and their own teaching and to make appropriate data and research-informed classroom, school and system interventions in pursuit of continuous improvement and to inform accountability.
- Conversely, inappropriate and narrow use of data can lead to the distortion of teaching and learning and distraction from the broader purposes of schooling, with the danger of a deterioration of services, morale and commitment. For example an over-emphasis on narrow measures may well achieve improvement in numerical data in priority policy areas but is no guarantee of real improvement in overall education standards, due to an artificial emphasis on meeting designated targets while other equally important areas are neglected.

To ensure that a focus on data-driven accountability generates more positive and fewer negative outcomes.....:

It is proposed that a clear consensus and commitment is established around the following 5 fundamental underpinning principles: viz. broader purposes; broader data; sensitive analysis of data; value-added; and supportive accountability

- 1 **Broader purposes:** as opposed to excessive concentration on meeting targets on just one or two policy areas such as 'Count Read Succeed';
- 2 **Broader data:** that serves all system level goals so that the focus of teaching and learning is not distorted and no one indicator carries disproportionate weight. The OECD team's advice is that such data should take account of measures such as the development of critical thinking and personal capabilities, dispositions to learn and overall well-being.
- 3 **Sensitive analysis of data:** taking account of *contextual factors* to enable comparisons that are fair to schools and pupils. To ensure sophisticated analysis of genuine trends, as opposed to 'bull-whip' responses to what may be short-term and unrepresentative blips, data analysis must take account of :
 - *the fallibility of data* drawn from different forms of evidence involving non-scientific scoring systems and human judgements with significant margins for error.

- *The volatility of data* such as that derived from small class, key stage or school sample sizes which can make schools' value-added estimates vary inexplicable from year to year if the fluctuations are erroneously interpreted.
 - *Timescales factors* such as over- dependence on most recent evaluations which can contain potentially volatile swings in results from one year to the next, that are not representative of broader trends.
 - *Changes in 'standards'* such as when curriculum and/or assessment instruments are themselves changed making it impossible to draw conclusions about whether standards have improved.
- 4 **Value-added:** taking account of *school and individual pupil contextual factors* to enable comparisons that are fair to schools and pupils (rather than reliance on "raw" results which may more accurately measure the school's intake, rather than the value it has added to student outcomes).
 - 5 **Supportive accountability:** not attaching external rewards or punitive consequences to the extremes of performance but rather operating on the assumption that poor performance is largely due to insufficient capacity and/or resources rather than to lack of effort or deliberate intransigence.

3. Addressing Challenges

The OECD team has helped to clarify the key challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve consensus. The implications of each of the research-informed position is summarised below and workable proposals offered.

3.1 The use of teacher assessment

It has been clearly communicated in the most recent proposals relating to statutory assessment that teacher assessment against Levels of Progression is primarily designed for diagnostic and formative purposes. The OECD team cites three research-informed views in relation to the use of this data:

- that assessment designed for diagnostic and formative purposes should not be used for summative or accountability purposes as this would likely compromise its primary purpose (Linn, 2000);
- that the more purposes an assessment is intended to serve, the more each purpose will be undermined by compromises made during the design process (Pellegrino et al,2001); and
- that it is possible for an assessment to have multiple purposes as long as they are not logically incompatible (Newton 2007).

There is overwhelming evidence since teacher assessment against levels was first introduced in Northern Ireland two decades ago that the primary diagnostic and formative purpose of teacher assessment has been severely compromised by its dual use for accountability purposes. The clear and consistent message is that:

- the qualitative professional purpose of teacher assessment against progression criteria (for the improvement of teaching and learning and for informed feedback to pupils and parents) is considered by teachers to be extremely valuable; but
- the current quantitative measures as framed (and their use for accountability purposes) are considered of little or no utility to pupils, schools, parents, policy makers or politicians (GTCNI survey findings 2013).

- the evidence of distortion associated with their secondary use for accountability purposes is logical incompatible with their primary purpose and therefore educationally unacceptable.

It is proposed that teacher assessment should be used for diagnostic and formative purposes only to inform summative reporting to pupils and parents.

3.2 Levels / Indicators of Progression

It is acknowledged that it is not an easy task to develop criteria that are clear, [sufficiently detailed and fine grained] and widely agreed upon (Looney, 2011b; Nusche et al., 2011) but that this is crucial to inform subsequent teaching and learning and to develop a shared understanding of what may constitute a specific performance at the different stages of learning progression.

Progression in learning is subtle and complex. There is no single linear developmental pathway which is neatly age-related with an expected end-point. Nor is the demands of 'a level' equivalent between key stages due to variation in context.

It is proposed that, when revising the Levels/ Indicators of Progression:

- **appropriate account is taken of progression in conceptual knowledge and understanding and associated thinking skills form an explicit and integral part of refined criteria; and**
- **numeric levels are replaced by progress indicators** *for example pre foundation, foundation, emergent, developing, competent, consolidated, advanced*

Framing progression indicators in this way will facilitate the effective use of the criteria by all teachers in all subject teachers and phases to promote a common understanding of standards within and across the curriculum. *A generic model and an exemplification of how the model can be used at classroom level in all key stages (including key stage 4 and 5) can be offered as a basis for discussion and development.* It may still be possible to translate this data into quantitative equivalence for aspects of system level performance analysis.

3.3 Moderation

We concur with the view that the involvement of teachers in moderation should develop their assessment capacity and improve the reliability of teacher assessed summative outcomes. In line with the proposal that teacher assessment should be used for diagnostic and formative purposes and to inform summative judgements, but not for accountability purposes, the continued emphasis within the latest moderation proposals towards verifying teacher and school numerical level judgements for accountability purposes is considered inappropriate.

It is proposed that the purposes of moderation support is to quality assure school's internal assessment processes and to enhance teacher capacity:

- **to use 'assessment for learning' pedagogy**
- **to devise appropriately challenging assessments**
- **to make valid assessments against knowledge and skills-based criteria across the Northern Ireland Curriculum.**

3.4 Contextual value-added

One of the strongest predictors of academic achievement is the socio-economic background of pupils and parental education. Statistical models can be used to incorporate a range of factors relating to contextual background. For example, *'In Sweden a model is used to assess a school's expected performance by adjusting its actual results with regard to student characteristics including parental education. A comparison is made between the school's expected and actual results to provide a measure of value added.* (Perry C. NIAR Oct 2013)

It is proposed that, in addition to the Free School Meals (FSM) Index, other mechanisms are explored to inform the development of a statistical model to enable the stratification of schools by intake (for example the use of such as Super Output areas potentially refined by using Geographical Information System (GIS) analysis of individual pupils post-codes (as in New Zealand) or parental education (as in Sweden))

3.5 Pupil value-added

'Individual value added' aims to measure the progress made by a pupil between different stages of education. The advantage of value-added assessment measurement over criterion or norm-referenced assessment is that it focuses on how far a pupil has progressed at the end of a specific period (for example, at the end of the school year or key stage, compared to the start). This requires a pre-test (or the use of relevant data passed on by the from the previous teacher) and a post-test (end of year/cycle) to determine what pupils have learned during a particular course of study. This data provides results that can be compared across classrooms and years. The more information teachers can gain about a pupil's potential, learning dispositions and progress, the better able they will be to tailor the learning environment and ways of teaching and learning to enable pupils to maximise their potential.

It is proposed that: a range of research-informed assessment tools and approaches should used to identify individual strengths and areas for development and to predict outcomes which can be used to evaluate value-added (See section 4 for detail)

3.6 Revision of government targets

The proposal to use value-added as opposed to raw outcomes has major implications for the nature of government educational targets and the way in which these are monitored and reported on by the NI Audit Office.

It is proposed that government educational targets are based on research-informed analysis of performance against a broad range of measures that align with system goals and are monitored in a way which avoids distortion of those goals

4 Proposed Assessment Tools and Processes

4.1 Assessment tools

The OECD team reported that both primary and post-primary schools have identified the need for diagnostic measures to monitor pupil and cohort progression against individual base-line starting points to enable comparisons that are fair to students and to schools and to facilitate the exchange of pupil information from primary to post-primary schools. Key considerations are:

- the diagnostic qualities and ease of use of the proposed mechanisms;
- who can access the data in what form for what purpose; and, crucially
- how it is used subsequently and reported for system accountability to ensure that it enhances and does not distort teaching and learning or overburden teachers.

Before describing the various tools, least what is suggested appears overly complex, it should be noted that all of the proposed tools:

- already exist in paper and digital format;
- are research informed and have been validated fit for purpose;

- can be customised to the specific context of NI;
- generate sophisticated statistical and narrative reports for teachers and senior management which provide valuable educational insights in relation to individual pupils, groups and cohorts;
- collectively address all assessment and value-added purposes; and
- should be affordable if procured as an integrated package at system level.

Many of these tool are already in use (independently paid for) by schools in Northern Ireland.

It is proposed that an existing range of diagnostic, predictive, performance monitoring and reporting tools is used as part of a holistic assessment framework to provide valuable data to enhance teaching and learning and enable value added reporting (as described below and illustrated in Figure 1 over)

4.2 Base-line assessment

Productive language on entry to school is a key indicator and determinant of ability to learn. A range of baseline tools exists to assess spoken language on entry to school, for example, *The Renfrew Bus Story (RBS)*, which is enjoyable for children, is a quick to administer short screening assessment which used 'narrative re-tell' or storytelling to assess receptive and expressive oral language for young children age 3 years to 6 years 11 months. The outcomes provide a quantitative and qualitative assessment of each child's oral language skills based on rich language data to identify children with language impairments, as well as to predict of later language and academic skill (Stothard, Snowling, Bishop, Chipchase, & Kaplan, 1998).

4.3 Cognitive abilities analysis

From the age of 7 it is possible to generate a comprehensive profile of individual pupil's dispositions to learn; and abilities to reason with, and manipulate, different types of material through a series of Verbal, Non-Verbal, Quantitative and Spatial Ability tasks. (Recent research has confirmed the importance of assessing pupils' spatial ability in order to develop and support skills that are important across the curriculum and particularly important for success in STEM subjects and careers).

The analysis of outcomes provides teachers with a comprehensive profile of individual pupil's reasoning abilities, to identify strengths, weaknesses and learning preferences and to generate indicators of future attainment (for example at KS2, KS3, GCSE, AS/A Level). The data can be used, alongside attainment data (and other factors known to impact on learning, such as attendance and attitude), to set individual pupil targets; to plan focused teaching and learning (with interventions for different individuals or groups of pupils) and to monitor progress and track progress.

4.4 Learning dispositions analysis

Analysis of pupils' attitudes towards themselves as learners and their attitudes towards school on an individual basis can provide insights into motivation, and well-being to enable early identification and early intervention strategies to be provided for those at risk. Insights can help teachers and schools to set smarter monitoring and tracking targets to improve student well-being, behaviour and attendance and to reduce disaffection. The improvement of dispositions to learn and attitudinal measures such as improvement in liking, for example reading, can inform targets and interventions.

4.5 Occasional standardised assessment

While teachers' professional judgments are based on on-going day to day assessment, the use of occasional standardised tests can give teachers an informed snap-shot of how

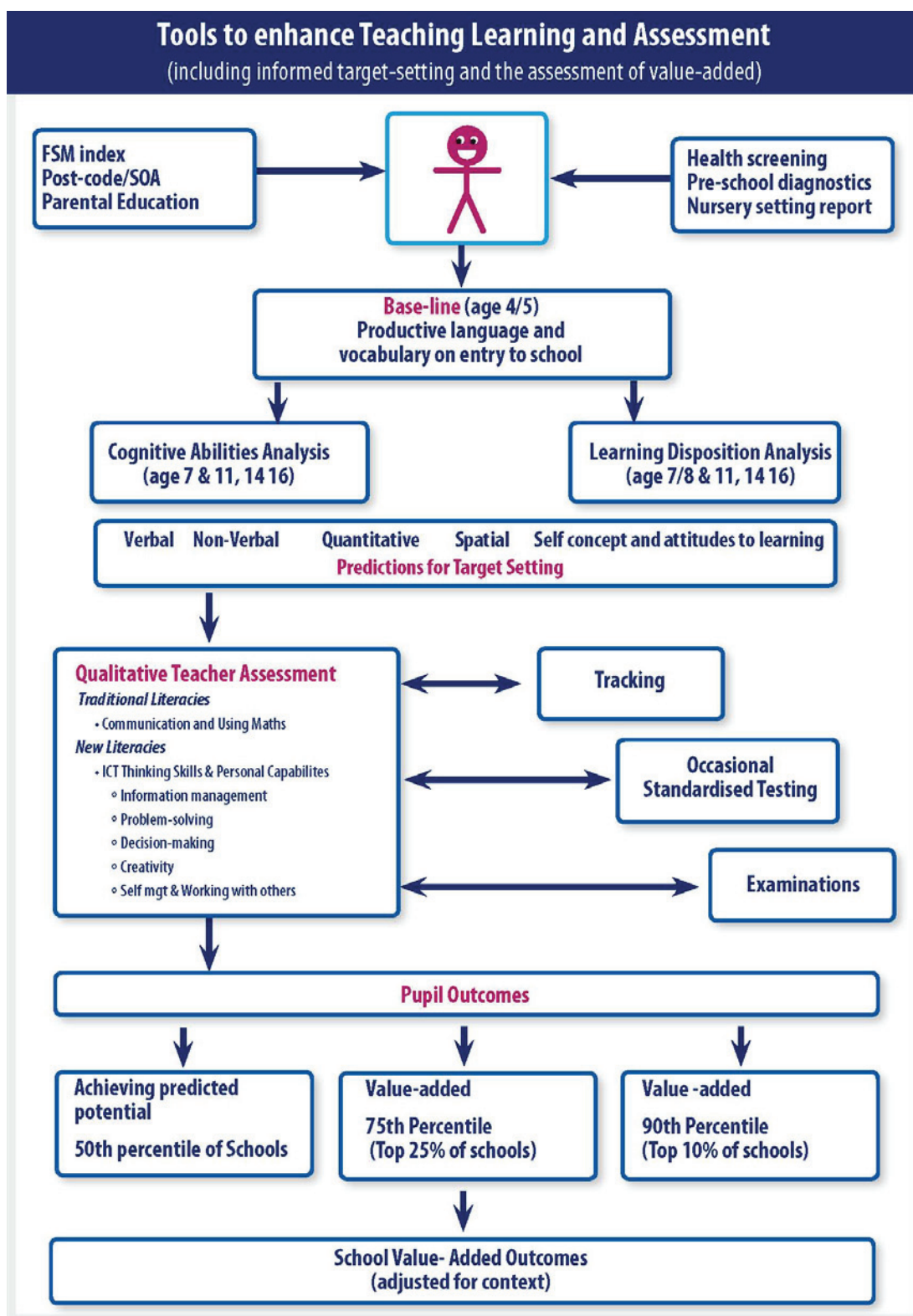
individuals and pupil cohorts compare against UK/NI standards on traditional literacies (i.e. communication and using maths). The occasional use of standardised tests (a few weeks after the beginning of the year and/or at the end of a year) can provide helpful in-depth information to establish a baseline and possible gaps in learning in order to plan and adapt teaching and against which to track monitor and report progress. Outcome scores can provide insights into bands of performance across a cohort and short-comings in progress in skill areas to inform the focus of future teaching and learning

4.6 On-going Teacher Assessment

The information provided by these diagnostic, predictive and monitoring tools aim to inform on-going teacher assessment for learning, which is at the heart of raising standards, involving the development of:

- stimulating curriculum planning
- appropriately challenging assessment tasks
- shared learning intentions
- agreed success criteria,
- effective questioning,
- peer/self assessment and
- targeted feedback on next steps in learning.

(An approach to devising and assessing tasks using revised progression indicators involving both traditional and 'new' literacies can be provided for discussion)



4.8 Reporting outcomes and calculating value-added

The combination of outcomes from cognitive abilities analysis, dispositional analysis, base-line and occasional standardised progress data will help teachers and schools to set informed aspirational (but achievable) targets for each individual pupil. The assessment of pupil achievement and value added should draw on the extent to:

- Evidence of meeting or surpassing predicted targets
- Improvements in dispositions to learn and sense of well being

- Internally moderated assessments of
 - ICT and
 - the development of thinking skills and personal capabilities

The outcomes can be adjusted using appropriate statistical models to give a measure of contextualised school value-added.

4.9 Transfer of data

The transfer of detailed pupil data from teacher to teacher and school to school is crucial to:

- to avoid gaps in information
- to assist future planning; and
- to prevent unnecessary and costly duplication of processes

It is proposed that rich pupil data is transferred each year in an agreed format to assist future planning, teaching, learning and assessment

5 Moving Forward

5.1 Pilot testing and phased implementation

Best practice recommends that any proposed model be thoroughly piloted and that feedback from the pilot be used to assess and amend the model as necessary before procurement and planned, phased roll-out on a systemic scale.

The advantages of the model proposed is that some of the core components are already in use (and paid for independently) by a large number of schools in Northern Ireland. However, it is not known how many schools make use of the full suite of components and their analytical reporting and value-added potential

It is proposed that a number of case-study schools be identified at both primary and post-primary level to explore the quality, educational utility and manageability of the proposed model and associated diagnostic and monitoring tools before considering customised procurement.

5.2 Full economic appraisal

The majority of schools in Northern Ireland already expend significant funds on standardised testing but many (possibly most) do not make use of the analytical predictive and advisory components that are available alongside these tools to enhance their educational utility. The proposed has the potential to achieve stakeholder buy-in because of: familiarity with, and trust in, the diagnostics already offered by elements of the model; the synergies between the various components;

its ease of use and manageability and its potential to address all quality assessment and data analysis needs for the foreseeable future, freeing up teachers' time to focus on the core professional task of quality teaching and learning to meet pupils' needs and to improve their outcome.

It is proposed that a full economic appraisal is undertaken of the merits of procuring a completely integrated suite of tools that has the support of all stakeholders in terms of:

- **The use of quality information for educational and accountability purposes,**
- **manageability and teacher time saved for core professional purposes; and**
- **freeing up other agencies from a focus on accountability to a focus on providing much-needed capacity building support.**

5.3 Interim arrangements

While the merits, cost and potential procurement of the model are explored:

It is proposed that:

- **Teachers continue to assess and report to parents in qualitative terms as working at, above or below expected standards;**
- **Schools are invited to register to have their internal assessment processes quality assured by CCEA; and**
- **Best practice schools are enabled to act as centres of good practice for other schools in their catchment /area learning community.**

6. Capacity Building

The OECD Team recommends that to achieve effective implementation will require capacity building at all levels of the education system.

6.1 Teacher skills in the use of formative assessment for learning

Agreement on the fundamental principles that the sole purpose of teacher assessment and moderation is for the improvement of teaching and learning and the quality assurance of moderation purposes will free up CCEA capacity to focus on supporting assessment for learning as opposed to accountability. Scotland has supported a major 'assessment as, for and of learning' initiative. The NCCA in the Republic of Ireland is currently providing £100K of bursaries for practicing teachers to undertake PhD study in assessment for learning and ICT to develop deep capacity within the system.

It is proposed that over the next few years that assessment support resources should focus on developing teacher assessment for learning capacity; and

6.2 Senior management skills in managing data and pedagogical leadership

Agreement on the use of broader data for informed target-setting and the assessment of value-added will require Principals and senior management in schools to be able to understand, interpret and use data in increasingly sophisticated ways in pursuit of improved teaching and learning for improved outcomes. The latest digital developments in pupil assessment facilitated the immediate feedback to senior managers and teachers (as well as pupils and parents) of outcomes in the form of analytical and advisory graphical and narrative reports to support more focused teaching and focused interventions for individuals and groups.

It is proposed that there should be a major emphasis over the next few years on: the development of

- **Principal's pedagogical leadership skills and**
- **Senior management skills in managing and interpreting data.**

6.3 System capacity for value-added assessment

In order to ensure the transfer of skills in the development of research-informed assessment tools opportunity should be taken as part of any procurement exercise to ensure the transfer of knowledge and skills.

- **In time consideration might be given to establishing a centre of excellence in diagnostic, predictive and standardised assessment and analysis in Northern Ireland.**

7: Summary of Proposals

Fundamental principles	It is proposed that.....
	A clear consensus and commitment is established in relation the following 5 fundamental underpinning principles: viz. broader purposes; broader data; sensitive analysis of data; value-added; and supportive accountability
The use of teacher assessment	Teacher assessment should be used for diagnostic and formative purposes only to inform summative reporting to pupils and parents.
Levels of Progression	It is proposed that, when revising the Levels/ Indicators of Progression: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progression in conceptual knowledge and understanding and associated thinking skills form an explicit and integral part of refined criteria; • numeric levels are replaced by progress indicators
Moderation	The focus of moderation is to quality assure school's internal assessment processes and to enhance teacher capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to use 'assessment for learning' pedagogy; • to devise appropriately challenging assessments; • to make valid assessments judgements.
Contextual value-added	In addition to FSM other mechanisms are explored to inform the development of a statistical model to enable the stratification of schools by intake (<i>for example the use of such as Super Output areas potentially refined by using Geographical Information System (GIS) analysis of individual pupils post-codes (as in New Zealand) or parental education (as in Sweden)</i>)
Pupil value-added	A range of research-informed assessment tools and approaches should be used to identify individual strengths and areas for development and to predict outcomes which can be used to evaluate value-added
Revision of government targets	Government educational targets are based on research-informed analysis of performance against a broad range of measures that align with system goals and are monitored in a way which avoids distortion of those goals

Assessment tools and processes	It is proposed that :
	<p>A suite of diagnostic, predictive, performance monitoring and reporting tools (<i>illustrated in Figure 1 over</i>) is used as part of a holistic assessment framework to provide valuable data to enhance teaching and learning and enable value added reporting to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base-line assessment of oracy on entry to school • Cognitive abilities analysis • Learning dispositions analysis • Occasional standardised assessment of traditional literacies • Teacher assessment of 'Traditional' and 'New literacies'
Transfer of data	<p>Rich data is transferred from teacher to teacher and school to school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to avoid gaps in information • to prevent unnecessary duplication of assessment and • to assist future planning.
Piloting the model	<p>A number of case-study schools be identified at both primary and post-primary level to explore the quality, educational utility and manageability of the proposed model and associated diagnostic and monitoring tools before considering customised procurement.</p>
Full economic appraisal	<p>A full economic appraisal is undertaken of the merits of procuring a completely integrated suite of tools that has the support of all stakeholders in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of quality information for educational and accountability purposes, • manageability and teacher time saved for core professional purposes; and • freeing up other agencies from a focus on accountability to a focus on providing much-needed capacity building support.
Interim arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers continue to assess and report to parents in qualitative terms as working at, above or below expected standards; • Schools are invited to register to have their internal assessment processes quality assured by CCEA; and • Best practice schools are enabled to act as centres of good practice for other schools in their catchment /area learning community.

Capacity Building	It is proposed that:
Teacher skills in the use of formative assessment for learning	Assessment support resources should focus on developing teacher assessment for learning capacity
Senior management skills in managing data and pedagogical leadership	<p>There should be a major emphasis over the next few years on the development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal's pedagogical leadership skills and • Senior management skills in managing and interpreting data
System capacity for value-added assessment	In time consideration might be given to establishing a centre of excellence in diagnostic, predictive and standardised assessment and analysis in Northern Ireland.

Clerk's summary – District Inspector informal briefing event 24 Jan 2014

Committee for Education

Informal briefing event with District Inspectors
Thursday 24/01/14 at 6.00pm in Room 115

Present:

Members -	Mervyn Storey	Staff -	Peter McCallion
	Danny Kinahan		Karen Jardine
	Stephen Moutray		Sharon McGurk
	Robin Newton		Sharon Young
	Sean Rogers		
	Pat Sheehan		

Note of Issues Raised

Suggested questions below were issued for guidance:

1. How effective is ETI's / District Inspectors' current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement – does ETI / do District Inspectors satisfactorily assess the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment?

Participants passionately argued that the District Inspector (DI) role – which is unique to Northern Ireland – is a key strength of our school inspection and improvement process. It was suggested that DIs are best-placed to appreciate and understand the context in which schools operate and learners develop.

Participants set out the wide range of activities that DIs are involved with including particularly inspectorial work but also thematic and other reports on shared education and special education etc. DIs also referred to the support that they provide to the Education and Library Boards and Area Learning Communities etc.

As DIs have contact with many schools it was argued that they are well-placed to disseminate best practice to struggling schools; help schools through improving iterations of the school evaluation process; and provide principals with necessary perspective. As DIs often work as inspectors in different phases they are also able to mentor schools on pupil transitions and are able to maintain a longitudinal picture of pupil progress. It was contended that DIs are an invaluable knowledge repository and maintain a unique “corporate memory” of educational policy.

It was argued that DIs, acting as the “critical friend” and supporting school's own self-evaluation processes, have had a measurable positive effect on school practices and pupil outcomes. DIs indicated that 80% of follow-up inspections saw schools improving by at least 1 grade.

Some participants indicated that principals often feel that they can confide in DIs in respect of matters relating to school leadership which can not readily be discussed with their staff or governors. That said, it was strongly argued that the pastoral nature of the relationship between DIs and schools does not in any way prevent DIs from making difficult judgements or delivering unwelcome advice to schools in respect of their effectiveness.

Participants disputed many of the claims made in oral and written evidence to the Committee in respect of an opaque or unrepresentative or biased inspection regime – DIs highlighted the

professional framework (set out in Together Towards Improvement and The Reflective Teacher) against which schools are inspected. Participants also referenced a wide-range of evidence sources used by DIs including: the first hand review of pastoral care procedure and practices; the use of classroom observation; interactions with children, parents ,governors, teachers and school leaders; as well as schools' pupil tracking processes in addition to end of Key Stage and other examination outcomes.

Participants pointed out that the inspectors who were much criticised in evidence to the Committee were the same DIs who were much praised in other evidence – often by the same witnesses. Some participants conceded however that despite agreed procedures and the undeniable positive impact of inspection, some schools may have a limited understanding and an adverse outlook in respect of the inspection process.

Participants argued that the DI role had altered in recent years. It was suggested that a pressure on resources and a greater focus on undertaking a fixed number of formal inspections per year had served to limit DIs' ability to provide pastoral support to schools. Some participants indicated that DIs were now limited to 2 to 3 days per term for pastoral visits and that this was wholly inadequate. Some participants sharply contrasted the more evaluative nature of pastoral DI visits with the more rigid inspection focus associated with formal inspection visits.

Participants highlighted new inspection practices which effectively excluded the local DI from the inspection team – previously it had been the practice for the DI to be in a supporting role to the lead inspector. It was argued that the latter practice ensured that the context in which the school operated was taken into consideration. It was further argued that the current practice prevented this.

Participants felt that school inspection had become a high stakes endeavour linked to Area Planning outcomes. Some participants said that this context coupled with the requirement to increase the number of inspections and the changes to the DI role might account for much of the recent adverse feedback from schools.

In respect of the assessment of the value-added by schools, participants suggested that evidence provided by schools in this respect was patchy at best. It was suggested that further training and support for schools was required if a fair and consistent picture of the value-added was to be developed.

Some participants highlighted their dissatisfaction with the current use of inspection descriptors e.g. “inadequate”; “unsatisfactory” or other terms such as “failing schools” arguing that such terms obscure the real message from an inspection. Some participants suggested that these should be replaced with less pejorative terminology.

Many participants also agreed that the format and language in inspection reports should be clearer and written with the end user in mind – i.e. the school or parents. Some participants suggested that format changes could make reports shorter, more understandable and easier and quicker to write.

Participants generally indicated that the Curriculum Advisory Support Services (CASS) have been significantly rundown and as a consequence the school improvement process has been undermined.

Some participants sharply contrasted ETI's previous philosophy and approach to inspection and improvement with that of Ofsted – the latter was characterised as purely audit-based and often limited to merely following-up on the findings of previous inspections; the former was characterised as pastoral and inspection for improvement.

2. What are the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties? What are the gaps (if any) both in terms of the ETI review process; the role of District Inspectors and the support services provided by the Department or the Education and Library Boards?

Some participants identified the following issues as impacting on schools experiencing difficulties: the quality of educational provision; the quality of leadership and management; and the quality of teaching and learning.

Some participants argued that poor relationship management within schools can have a hugely detrimental impact on many important aspects of a school's effectiveness. Participants suggested that DIs can often identify poor relationship management from the schools' self-evaluation material. It was suggested that management skills are a key requirement for school leaders which are not necessarily met by the current training and development opportunities for teachers and principals.

As above, it was felt that the rundown of CASS was detrimental to all schools and particularly those experiencing difficulties. Participants believed that CASS was a good support system for all schools and was essential for those in the Formal Intervention Process (FIP). Some participants felt that DIs were in certain regards being used in place of CASS. Some participants felt that inspection and CASS should remain entirely separate. Others argued that there was some merit in the Education Scotland arrangements whereby CASS and inspection are more aligned.

Many participants highlighted the absence of specialist inspectors in subjects like PE, history or science. It was argued that the loss of specialist inspection expertise was to the detriment of the teaching of these subjects in schools.

3. What alternative approaches and/or models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection, might ETI / District Inspectors adopt in the assessment of value added and school improvement?

Participants highlighted ETI's extensive and valuable work with inspectors in other jurisdictions – indicating the importance of such work to improving policy and practice.

Some participants identified positive aspects of other inspection regimes e.g. Education Scotland's practice of working more closely with external partners, some of which include academics, teacher training providers, Arms Lengths Bodies etc.

Some participants suggested that ETI's inspection regime focused too strongly on English and Maths and the assessment of added-value should include more subjects such as STEM, History, PE.

Participants generally felt that the Northern Ireland inspection and improvement regime compared well with other jurisdictions.

4. What priorities and actions are needed (if any) to improve ETI's / District Inspectors' approach to the school improvement process? Are alternative measures of pupil achievement or enhanced powers, improved governance and transparency measures for ETI needed to enhance school inspection / improvement?

Participants generally believed that the DI role was a valuable and unique asset of school inspection and improvement in Northern Ireland. It was felt that the pastoral aspects of the role should be protected and strengthened – an adequate level of "District Time" should be set aside for DIs so as to allow them to concentrate on developing their knowledge and providing support to local schools.

Participants generally argued that inspection should focus on improvement in schools rather than simply attainment.

Participants strongly felt that an audit-focused approach linked to rigid inspection timetables for all schools regardless of risk – as in Ofsted - was not the way forward for the school inspection process in Northern Ireland.

Participants argued that a key objective for the future is the strengthening of the self-evaluation process in schools. This is currently inconsistently undertaken by schools. A higher level of confidence in this process could, it was argued, free-up DIs to concentrate on pastoral support for all schools and the provision of specialist focused support for struggling schools.

A number of participants argued that in order to re-affirm the integrity of the inspection process, ETI must be independent from the Department. These participants also suggested that the newly independent inspectorate be aligned with the school support services currently provided by CASS. The new governance arrangements should be devised in such a way as to reflect the culture and needs of the Northern Ireland school system and should not simply reflect practices in other jurisdictions. Other participants indicated that governance changes and the realignment of ETI with CASS had not been widely considered or supported by DIs.

Clerk's summary – Associate Assessor informal briefing event 19 Feb 2014

Committee for Education

Informal briefing event with District Inspectors
Wednesday 19/02/14 at 6.00pm in the Long Gallery

Present:

Members -	Jonathan Craig	Staff -	Peter McCallion
	Danny Kinahan		Karen Jardine
	Trevor Lunn		Sharon McGurk
	Robin Newton		Sharon Young
	Sean Rogers		

Note of Issues Raised

1. How effective is ETI's current approach in respect of school inspection / improvement – does ETI satisfactorily assess the value added in those schools which have lower levels of examination attainment?

Many Associate Assessors (AAs) highlighted very positive views on the Inspection process; the role of the District Inspector; the very professional manner in which the Inspectorate conducted themselves; the genuine way in which the AAs are integrated into inspection teams; the value of Senior Teachers in schools operating as AAs as part of an excellent Continuous Professional Development process; and the ability of ETI to impact in a very constructive manner on the process of school improvement.

Associate Assessors (AAs) strongly felt that despite reduced inspection timescales and the reducing frequency of school visits, inspection remained a necessary and valuable component of the school improvement process.

Many AAs argued that the role of the inspector had changed. Inspections, it was suggested, have become a more information intensive, highly pressurised undertaking requiring an ever increasing time commitment from inspectors. It was argued that as a consequence, some pastoral input and contextual knowledge was being lost and that this was to the detriment of effective inspection and the facilitation of subsequent school improvement.

Some argued that AAs had a critical role to play in providing a degree of mentoring for schools as well as supplying the missing context in inspection teams. These AAs also advised that in some instances teachers and more senior staff struggled to understand supporting documentation from ETI - including e.g. Together Towards Improvement – and that AAs were ideally placed as experienced senior practitioners to advise struggling principals and teachers. Others argued that AAs had only a restricted involvement in inspection teams; were not permitted to give feedback to schools and that they therefore could only have a very limited impact on inspection outcomes or school improvement.

Participants reported varied experiences in their own schools in respect of District Inspectors (DIs) – some reported regular meetings and a productive relationship; others indicated that they had not met or had any dealings with their DI for 5 or more years.

Some AAs reported dissatisfaction with inspection of pre-school provision – indicating that inspection outcomes were not always the result of a transparent process; provision was

sometimes subject to different treatment depending on whether it was voluntary or statutory and descriptors were in some instances arbitrarily applied.

In respect of the descriptors generally used in inspection reports in all schools, some AAs commented that these were not always applied consistently and varied somewhat depending on the phase under inspection and the composition of the inspection team. Some AAs highlighted the very adverse impact that certain descriptors - “Unsatisfactory” or “Inadequate” - can have on teachers and whole school communities. These AAs suggested that alternative less pejorative descriptors should be adopted or that in addition to the ETI descriptor, schools should be allowed to set out their own views on their strengths and weaknesses in reports.

In respect of the value-added by schools, AAs supported the commentary from DIs that this was difficult to assess in the absence of robust measures which are consistently applied across schools. AAs commented on the flawed and inconsistent reporting by schools of End of Key Stage results and indicated that in their present form these could not be used as a measure of the value-added by schools.

Some AAs reported concerns that the absence of an agreed measure served to disadvantage schools with socio-economically deprived pupils who had poor prior attainment. Some AAs indicated that they believed that banding schools according to levels of Free School Meal Entitlement did not give a consistent prediction or reasonable basis for comparison of school attainment.

2. What are the key issues impacting on schools experiencing difficulties? What are the gaps (if any) both in terms of the ETI review process and the support services provided by the Department or the Education and Library Boards?

AAs – like DIs – indicated that poor leadership or bad relationship management within schools can have a hugely detrimental impact on every important aspect of a school’s effectiveness. AAs referenced the difficulties faced by teachers with a poor or incompetent principal or ineffective BoG. AAs indicated that meetings between principals, BoGs and inspection teams did not always occur. It was argued that this feedback was a useful component of the school improvement process. It was suggested that ETI’s inspection of leadership and management should extend beyond the role of the principal or BoG and include teachers and other staff.

Some AAs also highlighted the difficulties facing principals attempting to support and manage incompetent teachers. Some AAs highlighted the absence of individual teacher feedback from inspection teams / reports. These AAs argued that such feedback was very useful for principals and would facilitate school improvement.

AAs highlighted the adverse impact on struggling schools of the rundown of CASS - one AA referred to CASS as the “missing service”. Most AAs felt that the restriction of CASS services to struggling schools was undermining the school improvement process for others.

Some AAs commented on the unhelpful representation of struggling or improving schools in the media. It was felt that this served to undermine good school leadership and did nothing to improve parental understanding or buy-in for improvement measures.

3. What alternative approaches and/or models of good practice in other jurisdictions in terms of school inspection might ETI adopt in the assessment of value added and school improvement?

Participants highlighted in very positive terms ETI’s extensive and valuable engagement with inspectors in other jurisdictions, indicating the importance of such work to improving policy and practice.

Some participants highlighted other models of good practice in e.g. the Area Learning Communities where principals met to discuss difficulties and share best practice. It was argued that such practices are essential to limit the isolation which busy principals often feel.

Some AAs suggested that an extensive programme of teacher CPD including longer placements in ETI be undertaken which would help teachers to focus on inspections and best practice in other schools.

Some AAs commented on the limited duration and infrequency of inspections, claiming that inspection teams would almost never gain a true picture of the effectiveness of a school. These AAs argued for more frequent short or no notice visits and inspections which, it was felt, would reduce non-useful preparation time and inspection stress in schools.

4. What priorities and actions are needed (if any) to improve ETI's approach to the school improvement process? Are alternative measures of pupil achievement or enhanced powers, improved governance and transparency measures for ETI needed to enhance school inspection / improvement?

Some participants spoke very highly of the positive impact of ETI on the school improvement process. Others argued that inspection should be focused on facilitating improvement in schools rather than on simply measuring attainment and auditing compliance. Indeed all AAs agreed that, what was described as, an Ofsted-like compliance auditing inspection regime was not the way forward for Northern Ireland.

Some AAs commented favourably on the arrangements in Scotland wherein the inspectorate is aligned with the school support services. Other AAs highlighted the tension between the inspection and the improvement functions and suggested that this would be difficult/impossible to manage if both functions were in the same organisation.

AAs generally indicated that a well embedded self-evaluation process in schools might facilitate a lighter-touch inspection regime. It was argued however that the success of self-evaluation was very much linked to the quality of school leadership and the commitment of teaching staff at many levels in a school. Many AAs commented on the patchy understanding of self-evaluation in a number of phases and the need for more training and support for schools.

Some AAs commented that there was a need for an independent professional body like ETI to publicly comment on and review DE policy. Other AAs expressed considerable reservations in this regard highlighting questions in respect of the actual value of statutory independence for ETI or a formal change to its role in this regard. These AAs contended that ETI already made a very positive impact on school improvement that was the envy of inspectorates in other jurisdictions and that changes to ETI's governance arrangements were unnecessary.



Northern Ireland
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Appendix 7

Research Papers

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1. Assessing Value Added in School Inspection and Supporting Improvement
2. Approaches to School Inspection
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4. Parent Councils in Scotland
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Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Research Paper

3rd October 2013

Caroline Perry

Assessing value added in school inspection and supporting improvement

NIAR 520-13

This paper considers the factors in schools that can influence student outcomes, and potential approaches to measuring the value schools add. It also examines processes for reviewing school performance and supporting improvement within schools.

Key Points

- School inspections and exam results provide an accountability framework for schools, and there is increasing recognition of a need to assess value added;
- A range of factors influence school and student performance. Many of these are mostly outside the school's control, however there is clear evidence that a school's practices account for differences in outcomes for schools with similar contexts;
- During an inspection ETI teams take into account a range of contextual factors, such as free school meal entitlement, and draw on their wider experience of visiting schools in a range of contexts in coming to their judgement;
- The Department plans to require schools to publish the proportion of pupils making the expected progress between each Key Stage from 2015/16;
- However, this only applies at Key Stages 1-3 and there are no current plans to assess value added at Key Stage 4 and post-16;
- ETI monitors schools identified as requiring improvement more closely, in line with many jurisdictions internationally; schools evaluated as less than satisfactory enter the Formal Intervention Process (FIP);
- The Department has proposed a number of changes to the FIP, including that schools rated 'satisfactory' and not improving to at least 'good' within 12 months will be placed into the process and given a further 12 months to improve;
- Factors influencing improvement include the nature of feedback from inspection, appropriate support and resources and the quality of teaching and leadership;
- In NI the ELBs provide support to schools through their CASS – however these resources have been reduced substantially in recent years;
- Areas that could be given further consideration include:
 - The robustness and transparency of ETI's approach to assessing value added;
 - The Department's plans to assess value-added using end of Key Stage assessments given stakeholders' concerns around their reliability;
 - The lack of proposals for assessing value-added at Key Stage 4 and post-16;
 - The format and methods of reporting of inspection findings to schools;
 - The proposed changes to the FIP, for example in light of wider research suggesting that disadvantaged schools can be slower to improve;
 - The availability and effectiveness of support for schools through CASS given the substantial reduction in services; and the capacity of CASS to provide support for the potentially increased numbers of schools entering the FIP

Executive Summary

Introduction

School inspections and exam results provide an accountability framework for schools, and as such, there is growing recognition of the need for robust measures to take account of the contribution schools make to student outcomes. This paper discusses a number of factors that can influence outcomes, potential methods of measuring value-added and considers processes for reviewing and supporting underperforming schools.

Factors influencing school performance

A range of factors influence school and student performance. Many of these are mostly outside the school's control, with socio-economic background one of the greatest predictors of outcomes. Other factors include parental education, the home learning environment, and the quality of early years education and care previously received.

However, the evidence shows that a school's policies, practices and resources help to account for differences in performance between schools working in similar contexts. Key factors include the quality of teaching and leadership; the professional development of teachers; and the effective use of data.

Assessing value added

Concerns around the use of "raw" results in assessing the performance of schools have been highlighted in the international literature. Such results may more accurately measure the school's intake, rather than the value it has added to student outcomes. There are two broad approaches to measuring value added in terms of results:

- **Simple value added:** measures the progress made by a pupil between different stages of education (prior attainment is known to have the greatest influence on results);
- **Contextual value added:** uses a statistical model incorporating a range of factors relating to contextual background.

In Northern Ireland the Department of Education intends to require schools to publish the percentage of pupils making the expected progress between each Key Stage from 2015/16. This would give a measure of value added based on prior attainment, however, it only applies at Key Stages 1-3 and the Department states that there are no current plans to assess value added at Key Stage 4 and post-16.

Other potential issues include the lack of confidence among stakeholders regarding the reliability of end of Key Stage assessments highlighted in a recent survey and the robustness of free school meal entitlement (FSME) as a measure of deprivation.

With regard to school inspection, ETI states that inspection teams take into account a range of contextual factors, including levels of FSME; pupil enrolment trends; parental and community support; and the attendance, motivation and behaviour of pupils. The district inspector (who will have visited the school on many occasions) helps to inform inspectors of the school's particular context.

In coming to its overall judgement, the inspection team draws on its experience of visiting schools working in a range of contexts, and combines this with experience of the evidence presented by the school.

Approaches elsewhere

The evidence suggests that worldwide, countries are increasingly using socio-economic data for value added modelling. In Sweden a model is used to assess a school's expected performance by adjusting its actual results with regard to student characteristics including

parental education. A comparison is made between the school's expected and actual results to provide a measure of value added.

In England published performance data includes the progress made by students between different key stages. However, it abandoned the use of contextual value added measures in 2011 over concerns that it can mask true underachievement.

The Flemish Inspectorate of Education develops an individual profile of each school including contextual indicators over a six year period. The profiles are used to benchmark schools with others in comparable contexts.

Review processes for struggling schools

In line with many countries internationally, ETI monitors underperforming schools more frequently with follow-up inspections. It has been suggested that there can be “a firm hand within the velvet glove” where follow-up is required. Schools found to be less than satisfactory enter the Formal Intervention Process (FIP), and the Department has recently consulted on a range of proposed changes to the process, including:

- **A school rated ‘satisfactory’ and not improving to at least ‘good’ at a follow-up inspection will be placed in the FIP.** They will be given a further 12 months to improve or further action will be considered;
- **A FIP school improving to ‘satisfactory’ at the follow-up inspection will have a further 12 months to improve to at least ‘good’;**
- The managing authority must submit a plan for the **restructuring of provision** within an area **where a school entering the FIP has been identified as unsustainable** in an area plan.

These changes are likely to affect many schools, with 29% of post primaries and 17% of primaries inspected in 2010-12 judged to be ‘satisfactory’. Wider research suggests that schools serving disadvantaged communities are often slower to improve from a ‘satisfactory’ grade than those serving better-off families. GTCNI has described the proposed changes as *“a shift towards an increasingly deficit approach.”*

Factors influencing school improvement

The quality of teaching and learning and leadership are critical factors in school improvement. Where issues are identified within a school following inspection, the evidence also points to four key factors required to affect improvement:

- Governors and staff must be convinced that findings are valid;
- The school must have the resources required;
- Staff must be motivated to change their ways of working; and
- There must be effective systems of reward and sanctions.

In addition, the evidence suggests that the nature of inspection feedback has an important influence on school improvement. Research points to the benefits of longer and more detailed reports for struggling schools. However, ETI's style of reporting has recently been described as “reductive”.

Support for struggling schools

The crucial importance of support for schools identified as underperforming is highlighted in the literature. In addition, school improvement can be costly and requires appropriate resources. Actions can include professional development for teachers, personalised student interventions or hiring additional staff.

In NI support for underperforming schools is mainly provided by the Curriculum, Advisory and Support Service (CASS) of the ELB. Such support may include advice for governors; training for management teams; and support or training across a range of areas. However, in recent years CASS resources have been reduced “substantially.”

Conclusion

This research paper has highlighted a number of areas that could be given further consideration, including:

- The robustness and transparency of ETI’s approach to assessing value added;
- The Department’s plans to assess value-added using end of Key Stage assessments given stakeholders’ concerns around their reliability;
- The lack of proposals for assessing value-added at Key Stage 4 and post-16;
- The reporting of inspection findings to individual schools, including the format of inspection reports and oral briefings;
- The proposed changes to the FIP, for example the number of schools likely to be affected through their ‘satisfactory’ rating and the wider research suggesting that schools serving disadvantaged communities can be slower to improve;
- The availability and effectiveness of support for schools through CASS given the substantial reduction in services; and the capacity of CASS to provide support for the potentially increased numbers of schools entering the FIP.

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- 2 Factors influencing outcomes
- 3 Assessing value added
- 4 Review processes for struggling schools
- 5 Factors influencing school improvement
- 6 Support for struggling schools
- 7 Conclusion

1 Introduction

School inspections, together with examination results and mechanisms for parental choice, provide an accountability framework for schools. In light of this, there is increasing recognition of the need for robust school performance measures that accurately take account of the contribution schools make to student outcomes.¹

This paper considers the factors in schools that can influence student outcomes, and potential approaches to measuring the value schools add. It also examines processes for reviewing school performance and supporting improvement within schools.

2 Factors influencing outcomes

The literature highlights a broad range of factors that may influence the educational outcomes achieved by students and schools.

One of the strongest predictors of academic achievement is the socio-economic background of pupils.² Other factors relating to pupil background include parental education and the home learning environment, and the quality of early years education and care received prior to primary school.³

Nonetheless, a school's policies, practices and resources help to account for the likelihood of students succeeding at one school compared to another.⁴ Indeed, the evidence indicates that school success is possible for students from less well-off backgrounds.⁵

School-level factors

A number of factors that influence examination results and inspection findings are within the remit of the school. For example, research here has found that schools serving disadvantaged populations and performing better than might be expected recognise that encouraging parental involvement is a key factor in raising attainment.⁶ Other key factors include:

- **Classroom teaching** is widely thought to have the greatest influence on student outcomes;⁷ however in NI evidence from inspections suggests that half of lessons in primary schools and 60% of lessons in post-primary schools are not consistently 'very good' or better;⁸
- **School leadership**: found to be second only to teaching in influence,⁹ however ETI has found that management across all sectors requires improvement (it was inadequate in 30% of pre-schools, 22% of primaries and 39% of post-primaries inspected);¹⁰

1 OECD (2008) *Measuring improvements in learning outcomes: Best practices to assess the value-added of schools* Paris: OECD Publishing

2

3 Melhuish, E. et al. (2010) *Effective Pre-school Provision Northern Ireland (EPPNI)*. Pre-school experience and Key Stage 2 Performance in English and Mathematics Bangor: Department of Education

4 OECD (2010) *PISA 2009 Results: What makes a school successful? Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV)* Paris: OECD Publishing

5 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

6 PricewaterhouseCoopers (2008) *Literacy and Numeracy of Pupils in Northern Ireland* Bangor: Department of Education

7 McKinsey&Company (2007) *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top* McKinsey

8 Education and Training Inspectorate (2012) *Chief Inspector's Report 2010-12* Bangor: Department of Education

9 Leithwood et al. (2004) *How leadership influences student learning* New York: The Wallace Foundation

10 Education and Training Inspectorate (2012) *Chief Inspector's Report 2010-12* Bangor: Department of Education

- **The professional development of teachers** and how they are helped to become more effective throughout their careers;¹¹
- **School ethos and culture:** international evidence suggests that schools can foster ‘resilience’ by developing practices that support disadvantaged students’ motivation and confidence;¹²
- **Effective use of data:** data on pupil and school performance can play a key role in promoting better teaching and learning, however a 2008 report in NI identified “extensive” training requirements at all levels in education here.¹³

3 Assessing value added

The accuracy of school performance measures is thought to be particularly important where they are used in the evaluation of education. Internationally there have been concerns that where “raw” results are used without value added measures, school principals and teachers may perceive that their performance is being unfairly judged.¹⁴

The publication of “raw” examination results typically measures the school’s intake, rather than the school’s contribution to student outcomes. Using value added performance information is viewed as an “ideal complement” to external school evaluations, in that it provides an accurate measure of school performance. Approaches may include:¹⁵

- The use of statistical models that aim to measure the value the school has added;
- The inclusion of contextual information about the school’s intake alongside performance data (however this does not take into account a student’s prior attainment).

Overview of approaches

In its analysis of approaches to assessing value added OECD concludes that it is not possible to identify a value added model that is appropriate for all education systems. Instead, it suggests that a number of factors should be considered, including:¹⁶

- The suitability of particular models;
- The implications of including socio-economic information, including in terms of complexity and the effect on the actions taken in light of the results;
- Sample size (for example, for small schools the sample size may produce less reliable measures that tend to be less stable over time) and how reliability of results could be supported).

There are two main types of value added measures that can be used in schools, outlined in Table 1.¹⁷

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- | | |
|----|--|
| 11 | OECD (2013) <i>Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment</i> Paris: OECD Publishing |
| 12 | OECD (2011) <i>Against the Odds: Disadvantaged Students Who Succeed in Schools</i> OECD Publishing |
| 13 | Kirkup, C. et al. (2005) <i>Schools’ use of data in teaching and learning</i> DfES |
| 14 | OECD (2008) <i>Measuring improvements in learning outcomes: Best practices to assess the value-added of schools</i> Paris: OECD Publishing |
| 15 | OECD (2013) <i>Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment</i> Paris: OECD Publishing |
| 16 | OECD (2008) <i>Measuring improvements in learning outcomes: Best practices to assess the value-added of schools</i> Paris: OECD Publishing |
| 17 | PwC (2008) <i>School and pupil performance data</i> Bangor: DE |
-

Table 1: Two key approaches to value added

Approach	Measure	Advantages and disadvantages
Simple Value Added	Progress made by an individual pupil (or group of pupils) between different stages of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses prior attainment - does not account for other factors, such as socio-economic background; • However prior attainment has been found to have the greatest influence on pupil attainment¹⁸
Contextual Value Added (CVA)	Takes into account factors relating to the context of individual pupils when comparing progress (not usually prior achievement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proponents argue that it takes into account factors outside of schools' control and therefore provide a more accurate picture of the value added by schools¹⁹ • Others express concerns about the validity of such measures²⁰ and there may be a risk that over-reliance on CVA could mask true underachievement.²¹

Research has identified some concerns around the use of statistical models for adjusting performance data, including their accuracy and (in some models) a level of obscurity that makes interpreting the data challenging.²²

Depending on the model of value added used, a school's estimated contribution to student outcomes may differ. For example, schools that have a high proportion of disadvantaged students and low academic performance might achieve a relatively low value added score using the simple value added approach, but including socio-economic background within the CVA model may give a higher score.²³

These scores may in turn influence the actions taken by the school or wider stakeholders. For example, action may not be deemed necessary when reviewing the higher score provided through the CVA approach, which could disadvantage students in an underperforming school.²⁴

Northern Ireland

Value added assessment in inspection

ETI notes that when undertaking an inspection, the inspection team will take into account a range of contextual factors, including:²⁵

- The percentage of pupils with free school meal entitlement (FSME);
- Number of pupils on the special educational needs register;
- Pupil enrolment trends;
- School type;

18 Mayston, D. (2006) *Educational Value Added and Programme Evaluation* London: Department for Education and Skills

19 PricewaterhouseCoopers (2008) *School and pupil performance data* Bangor: DE

20 Tymms, P, Dean, C. (2004) *Value-Added in the Primary School League Tables* NAHT

21 OECD (2008) *Measuring improvements in learning outcomes: Best practices to assess the value-added of schools* Paris: OECD Publishing

22 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

23 OECD (2008) *Measuring improvements in learning outcomes: Best practices to assess the value-added of schools* Paris: OECD Publishing

24 As above

25 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

- The attendance, behaviour, motivation and work ethic of pupils;
- Parental and community support.

The team also discusses the school's work on monitoring and addressing underachievement, and will be informed by the district inspector in regard to the school's particular context (the district inspector will have visited the school on many occasions over an extended period of time).²⁶

In coming to its overall judgement, the inspection team draws on its experience of visiting schools working in a range of contexts, and combines this experience with the evidence presented by the school to come to its decision.²⁷

Value added performance data

Every School a Good School indicated that the Department would introduce a contextual value added measure to be used alongside other performance data.²⁸ However, the Department now states that CVA measures can entrench low expectations for disadvantaged pupils and may mask underachievement.²⁹

The Department intends to amend regulations so that from 2015/16, schools will have to publish the percentage of pupils making the expected progress between each Key Stage (there is an expectation that they will progress by at least one level between each). This aims to provide a measure of value added based on prior attainment.³⁰

However, this will only apply to Key Stages 1-3 and the Department states that there are “no immediate plans to assess value added at Key Stage 4 and above,” although it does not rule out doing this “at some point in the future.”³¹

In addition, a recent survey by GTCNI highlighted a lack of confidence among stakeholders regarding the reliability of end of Key Stage assessments, with 65% of those surveyed stating that the outcomes were of limited or no reliability for their school and 88% saying that this was the case for the NI system as a whole.³²

Other concerns around the current approach to assessing value added have been highlighted, including concerns around the robustness of FSME as a measure of deprivation and the reliance on measures such as five GCSEs at grades A*-C.³³

Indeed, the recent review of A levels and GCSEs included recommendations around broadening accountability measures so that they recognise the achievements of all learners. CCEA recommended that achievements such as five A*-C GCSEs should not be referred to as “good” as it can infer that other achievements are not.³⁴

26 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

27 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

28 Department of Education (2009) *Every School a Good School: a policy for school improvement* Bangor: DE

29 Information provided by the Department of Education, July 2012

30 Department of Education *Consultation on the provision of performance and other information about schools and pupils* Bangor: Department of Education

31 Information provided by the Department of Education, September 2013

32 GTCNI Professional Update, September 2013

33 Gallagher, C. (2013) *Striking the Right Balance* Belfast: GTCNI

34 Department of Education (2013) *Fundamental Review of GCSEs and A levels: Consultation on proposed recommendations*

Approaches in other jurisdictions

OECD notes that increasingly countries are collecting and using socio-economic data for value added modelling. This trend could be seen as part of an increasing drive worldwide for measuring performance within the public sector.³⁵

England

With regard to inspection, schools with low attainment are not precluded from being judged as 'good' by Ofsted. In the most recent Annual Report 20% of post-primaries judged to be 'outstanding' had average levels of attainment. The Chief Inspector has stated that pupils' progress, rather than raw exam results, is the key factor in determining a school's effectiveness.³⁶

In England performance data is reported online for each school, including information on the learning progress made by students between different key stages. The proportion of students making "expected progress" is reported to highlight the value added by the school.³⁷ CVA measures were previously used, using a multilevel model taking into account nine contextual factors such as prior attainment, deprivation, gender, ethnicity and age.³⁸ However, this approach was abandoned in 2011 over concerns that it entrenched low expectations of pupils from particular backgrounds.³⁹

Sweden: "Expected value" approach

In Sweden there are two databases providing data on schools. One includes basic statistical information and student test scores, and the other contains statistical measures of how a school performs against its "expected value."

A model is used to calculate a school's "expected value" by adjusting its actual performance in relation to the student characteristics including parental education; the proportion of boys; and the number of students born abroad. For example, a school with a large proportion of students with parents at a lower educational level would be expected to perform less well than a school with a small proportion of such students.

A comparison of the school's average student performance with the school's "expected value" represents a proxy of the value the school adds.

Source: OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning*

Australia

In Australia the school reporting website My School uses a measure of socio-economic background (based on parental education and occupation) to present "fair" comparisons of school performance on national assessments. It also uses a measure of "student gain" where students have taken national assessments at two year levels. This can be compared to the national average and averages in similar schools.⁴⁰

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- 35 OECD (2008) *Measuring improvements in learning outcomes: Best practices to assess the value-added of schools* Paris: OECD Publishing
- 36 House of Commons Education Committee (2011) *The role and performance of Ofsted* London: The Stationery Office Limited
- 37 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing
- 38 DfES (2006) *School Value Added Measures in England* Department for Education and Skills
- 39 TES (2013) *Where you come from matters after all, says Gove* [online] Available at: <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6314568>
- 40 As above
-

Flemish Community of Belgium

The Flemish Inspectorate of Education develops an individual profile of each school including indicators on input, output and context over a six year period. It draws on information from the Ministry of Education's Data Warehouse system and uses the profile to benchmark schools with others in comparable contexts.

This approach allows the Inspectorate to decide the focus of external evaluation. During the inspection contextual factors are also considered through analysis of documentation, interviews and observations.⁴¹

Prince Edward Island, Canada

Criteria for school evaluation in Prince Edward Island are presented within an analytical framework which takes into account the contextual background of the school.⁴²

Table 2: Analytical framework for school evaluation in Prince Edward Island

Indicator type	Details
Input indicators	Indicators within the control of the school, for example curriculum, class size and teaching experience
Context indicators	Indicators outside the control of the school relating to each student's background, for example socio-economic status and demographics
Process indicators	Indicators relating to what the school does to fulfil its responsibilities for example the number of classes taught
Results indicators	Indicators such as student achievement and outcomes

4 Review processes for struggling schools

Mechanisms for follow-up

The international evidence indicates that not all schools use feedback from inspection to drive improvement. External follow-up can ensure that schools use results to take action, although this places resource requirements onto the inspection body. Many countries tend to more closely monitor underperforming schools and review high-performing schools less frequently.⁴³

ETI approach

One author notes that within the ETI inspection process there can be “a firm hand within the velvet glove” where inspection findings indicate that improvement is necessary, and follow-up is required.⁴⁴

In Northern Ireland formal inspection follow-up is undertaken where a school is given particular ratings in a standard inspection at post-primary; a short or focused inspection at primary or an inspection of a pre-school setting.⁴⁵

41 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

42 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

43 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

44 Penzer, G. (2011) *School inspections: what happens next?* Reading: CfBT Education Trust

45 Information provided by the Department of Education, October 2012

Table 3: ETI follow-up activity

Rating	Follow-up
Good (with areas for improvement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ETI monitors progress through a more informal visit conducted by the district inspector
Satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ETI monitors and reports on progress in addressing areas for improvement over 12-24 months • Includes interim follow-up visits and follow-up inspection
Inadequate/ unsatisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ETI monitors and reports on progress in addressing areas for improvement over 12-18 months • Includes interim follow-up visits and up to two follow-up inspections

Schools found to be less than satisfactory enter the Formal Intervention Process. A school in Formal Intervention is required to submit a detailed action plan outlining the measures being taken to drive improvement.⁴⁶ Monitoring visits are undertaken in the period prior to the follow-up inspection, and a school is expected to have made “significant progress” in the areas identified as requiring improvement.⁴⁷

Where a school remains unsatisfactory throughout the follow-up inspections, the Department meets with the relevant ELB, sectoral body, ETI and the school’s Board of Governors to discuss alternative approaches and take action. Actions could include:⁴⁸

- **Restructuring** of the school's governance, leadership and management
- **Merging** the school with a neighbouring schools;
- **Closing the school and reopening it** with a new management team;
- **Closing the school.**

ETI reports that of 83 providers where follow-up inspections were carried out between April 2011 and March 2012, 81% had shown improvement. It states that this pattern is similar to that seen in the previous three years.⁴⁹ Figure 1 shows the extent to which these schools were found to have improved.⁵⁰

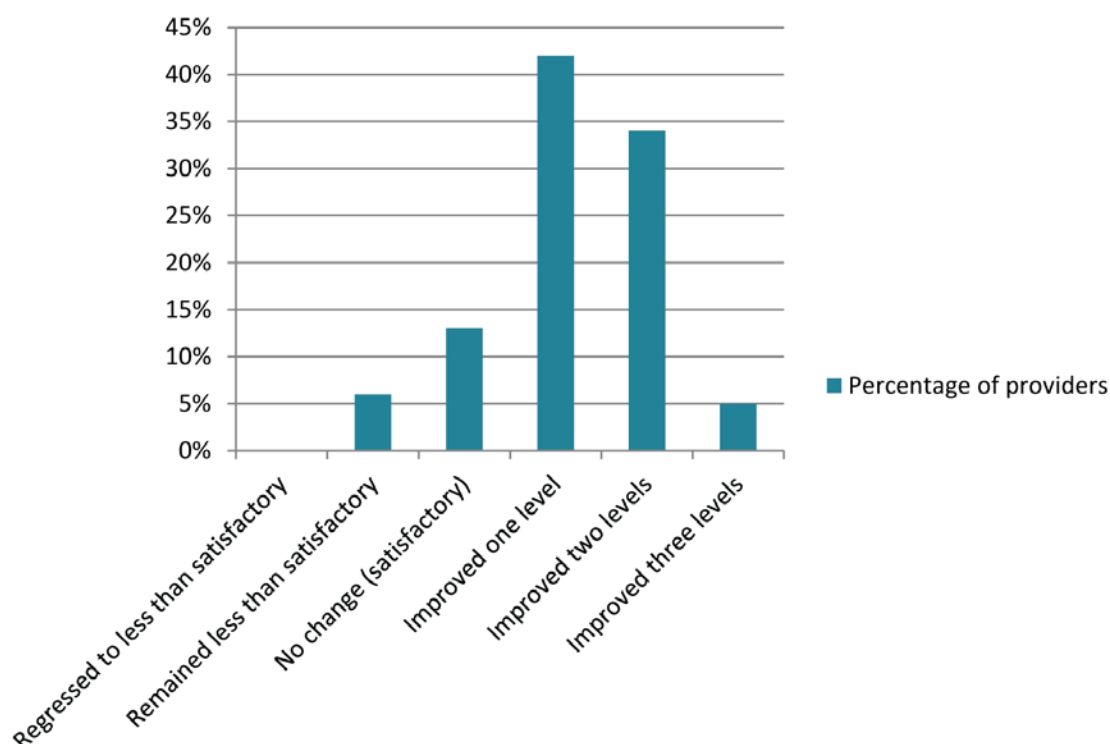
46 DE (2009) *Every School a Good School Bangor*: DE

47 ETI (2013) *Annual Business Report 2011-12* Bangor: DE

48 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

49 ETI (2013) *Annual Business Report 2011-12* Bangor: DE

50 ETI (2012) *Inspection Leading to Improvement: Business Year 2011-2012* Bangor: DE

Figure 1: Extent of improvement identified at follow-up inspections in 2011-12

The Department wishes to make a number of changes to the Formal Intervention Process, and a consultation on these was due to close on the 30th September 2013. It states that some schools in the process and some rated “satisfactory” do not improve sufficiently. In addition, the changes aim to take account of policy developments such as area planning. The proposed revisions are set out in Table 4.⁵¹

51

Correspondence from the Department of Education, June 2013

Table 4: Main proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process (FIP)

Aspect	Proposed revisions
Area planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where a school entering the FIP has been identified in an area plan as unsustainable, the managing authority must submit a plan for the restructuring of provision in the area
Schools remaining at satisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any schools rated 'satisfactory' and not improving to at least 'good' at the follow-up inspection will be placed in the FIP They will be provided with tailored support and given a further 12 months to improve to at least 'good' (or further action will be considered)
Exiting the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will be made more explicit that a school will not automatically leave the FIP on an evaluation of 'satisfactory'
Follow-up inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools in the FIP will receive one follow-up inspection (formerly two) Timing of the follow-up inspection to be extended to 18-24 months (during this time there will be two interim follow-up visits) A FIP school which improves to 'satisfactory' at the follow-up inspection will have a further follow-up within 12 months –it must have improved to at least 'good' or other action may be considered The timing of the follow-up inspection for a school with a 'satisfactory' evaluation will be shortened to 12-18 months

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) has recently highlighted concerns around the proposed changes, describing them as representing a “*shift towards an increasingly deficit approach*.”⁵² Any changes to the formal intervention process are expected to be implemented by 1st January 2014.⁵³

The proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process are likely to affect many schools. In 2010-12, 29% of post-primaries and 17% of primaries inspected were rated as 'satisfactory'.

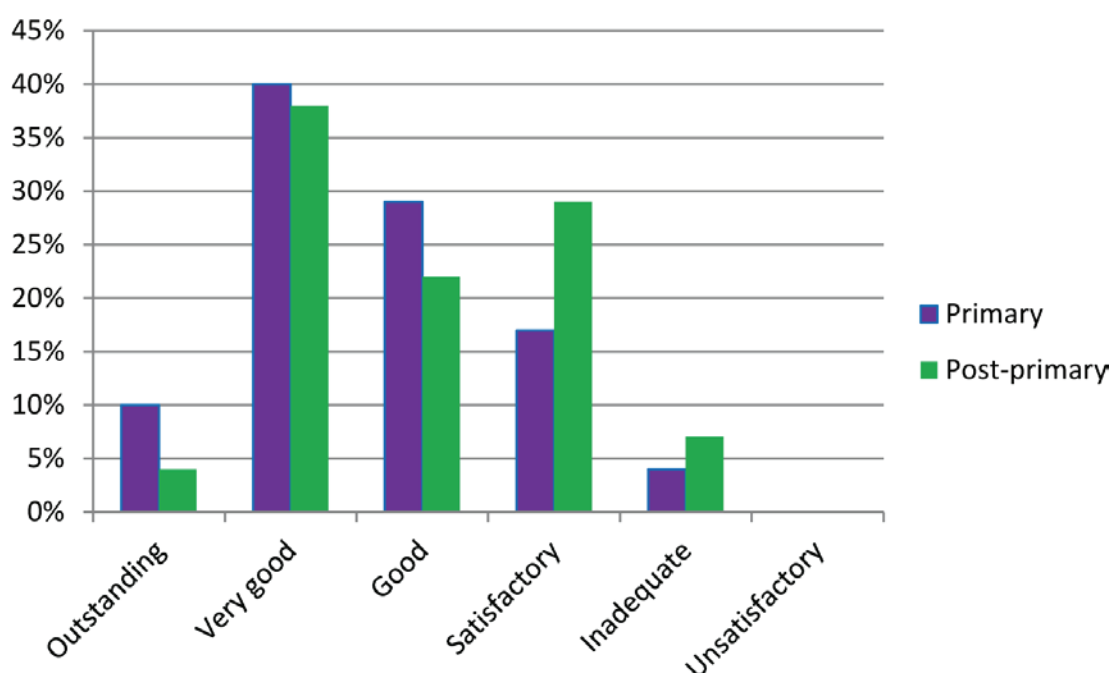
Wider research suggests that disadvantaged students tend to be over-represented in schools that are rated 'satisfactory'. In addition, schools serving disadvantaged communities are often slower to improve from a 'satisfactory' grade than those serving better-off families.⁵⁴ While this may be partly due to contextual factors, research suggests that such schools can improve through concerted efforts to improve teaching.⁵⁵ Figure 2 illustrates the ratings given to schools inspected from 2010-2012.

52 Gallagher, C. (2013) *Striking the Right Balance* Belfast: GTCNI

53 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

54 Ofsted (2011) *Schools that stay satisfactory* Manchester: Ofsted

55 Francis, B. (2011) *(Un)satisfactory? Enhancing life chances by improving 'satisfactory' schools* London: RSA

Figure 2: ETI judgements of schools inspected 2010-12⁵⁶

The following paragraphs consider approaches to following up with schools where areas for improvement have been identified in a number of other jurisdictions.

England: “Naming and shaming” and Special Measures

While the treatment of inadequate schools is neither strongly punitive nor strongly supportive, an important aspect is the “naming and shaming” of failing schools, which tends to be reported in local media. The stigma of failure for principals and governors can be a significant issue.⁵⁷ Where Ofsted deems a school to be ‘inadequate’, it places it into one of two categories:⁵⁸

- **Serious weaknesses:** one or more areas are inadequate but leaders and governors are judged to be capable of securing improvement;
- **Special measures:** school is failing to give pupils an acceptable standard of education, and the leaders or governors do not demonstrate the capacity to secure improvement in the school.

A school with serious weaknesses will undergo a monitoring inspection within six to eight months and a full inspection around a year after the initial inspection. The principal and chair of the governing body are invited to attend a seminar on school improvement, but are not required to attend.⁵⁹

A school placed into Special Measures will receive its first monitoring visit within four to six weeks, and may receive a total of up to five monitoring inspections over the 18 months following inspection.⁶⁰ Interventions that may be made include:⁶¹

- **Converting the school to an Academy** with a strong sponsor;

⁵⁶ Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

⁵⁷ Allen, R., Burgess, S. (2012) *How should we treat under-performing schools? A regression discontinuity analysis of school inspections in England* Bristol: Centre for Market and Public Organisation

⁵⁸ Ofsted (2013) *The framework for school inspection* Manchester: Ofsted

⁵⁹ Allen, R., Burgess, S. (2012) *How should we treat under-performing schools? A regression discontinuity analysis of school inspections in England* Bristol: Centre for Market and Public Organisation

⁶⁰ Ofsted (2013) *Monitoring inspections of schools that are subject to special measures* Manchester: Ofsted

⁶¹ Department for Education (2012) *Schools causing concern - guidance for local authorities*

- **Requiring the governing body to enter into specified arrangements** with a view to improving performance (for example, taking steps to create or join a federation, or to collaborate with governors from another school);
- **Suspending the delegated budget** of the school;
- **Appointing additional governors;**
- **Closing** the school.

Netherlands: Increased monitoring for failing schools

In the Netherlands, where a school is found to have serious weaknesses, the inspectorate implements a more intensive regime and may even report the school to the Minister of Education.⁶²

An ‘intervention’ phase follows school inspection in which the school is required to address the identified areas for improvement and the inspectorate monitors its progress. If a school fails to improve the inspectorate may more intensively monitor the school, and may even impose sanctions.⁶³

New Zealand: Proportionate approach

In New Zealand the nature of follow-up to a school inspection depends on the outcome of the inspection. This ranges from a subsequent review within 12 months where there are significant concerns, to a review in four to five years where a school has a track record of good performance and effective self-evaluation.⁶⁴

Republic of Ireland: Inspection follow up

In 2008 the Department for Education and Skills established a School Improvement Group (SIG) to ensure that improvement follows inspection in schools experiencing significant difficulty. The group coordinates actions tailored to the individual school, aiming to ensure that the school’s patron, management and staff work to improve provision. The interventions include:

- Meetings with patrons, board chairpersons and/ or school principals;
- Progress reports from the board of management;
- Support for the school from school support services or services provided by patron or management bodies;
- Further inspections; and
- Sanctioning school management, where appropriate.

SIG dealt with more than 50 underperforming schools between 2008 and 2011 and has helped many schools to improve. SIG has found that it can take some time to achieve significant improvement, in line with findings on poorly performing schools in other countries.

Source: OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning*

62 Penzer, G. (2011) *School inspections: what happens next?* Reading: CfBT Education Trust

63 Penzer, G. (2011) *School inspections: what happens next?* Reading: CfBT Education Trust

64 Penzer, G. (2011) *School inspections: what happens next?* Reading: CfBT Education Trust

5 Factors influencing school improvement

The evidence highlights the importance of turning around failing schools quickly, in order to limit the educational disadvantages for students, and to reduce the damage to the school's reputation (which may in turn make recovery more difficult).⁶⁵

The literature identifies four steps required to achieve improvement. These are discussed in Table 5.⁶⁶

Table 5: Four key steps required for improvement

Step	Examples
School governors and staff must be convinced that findings are valid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspectors must inspire confidence during the inspection Oral explanation of conclusions at the end of the inspection is useful The report should be clear in argument and persuasive in terms of the evidence used
The school must have the resources required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results must recognise the constraints on action the school faces, while encouraging it to overcome them as far as possible School governors have a key role in ensuring resources are available (e.g. professional advice)
Staff must be motivated to change their ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence suggests that internationally few inspection systems have the issue of enhancing staff morale built into their approach
There must be effective systems of reward and sanctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rewards elsewhere include increased freedoms, positive publicity for the school and enhanced professional standing Sanctions include increased oversight, disappointing publicity and reputational issues

The evidence suggests that improving the quality of teaching and learning is one of the strongest factors in terms of school improvement.⁶⁷ For example, schools in England that do not improve from a 'satisfactory' grade have been found to have too little good teaching.⁶⁸ Leadership and management are also known to have a strong influence on school improvement.⁶⁹

The international evidence indicates that the nature of feedback from external evaluation has an important influence on the impact on school improvement.⁷⁰ Research recommends longer and more detailed reports for struggling schools, highlighting what changes are required, how they might be implemented and the inclusion of milestones for achieving improvement.⁷¹ However, GTCNI suggests that there are concerns around ETI's 'reductive' style of reporting.⁷²

65 National Audit Office (2006) *Improving poorly performing schools in England* London: The Stationery Office

66 Penzer, G. (2011) *School inspections: what happens next?* Reading: CfBT Education Trust

67 For example Faubert, B. (2012) *A Literature Review of School Practices to Overcome School Failure* OECD Publishing and Francis, B. (2011) *(Un)satisfactory? Enhancing life chances by improving 'satisfactory' schools* London: RSA

68 Ofsted (2011) *Schools that stay satisfactory* Manchester: Ofsted

69 Faubert, B. (2012) *A Literature Review of School Practices to Overcome School Failure* OECD Publishing

70 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing and Ofsted (2008) *Sustaining improvement: the journey from special measures* London: Ofsted

71 Francis, B. (2011) *(Un)satisfactory? Enhancing life chances by improving 'satisfactory' schools* London: RSA

72 Gallagher, C. (2013) *Striking the Right Balance* Belfast: GTCNI

6 Support for struggling schools

The literature highlights the importance of a support system for schools seeking to improve provision and outcomes. It notes that teachers require support in order to build capacity, problem solve and innovate. Aspects of such a support system could include:⁷³

- Teacher professional learning;
- Planning time for teachers; and
- Personalised student interventions.

Overcoming significant challenges within a school after inspection can be costly. The National Audit Office suggests that while a simple case of weakness in a small primary school may be overcome at little cost; a large post-primary with complex problems and a track record of poor performance can cost around £500m to improve.⁷⁴ Actions to affect improvement may include:⁷⁵

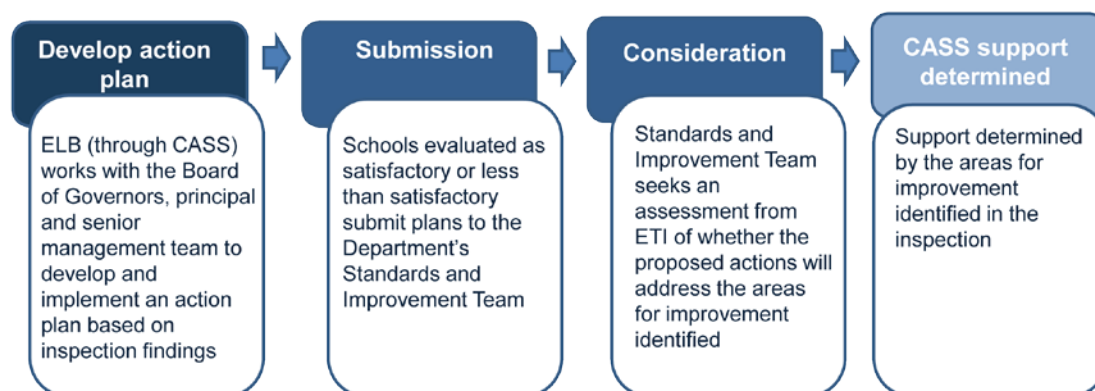
- Hiring additional staff;
- Improving professional learning;
- Securing new facilities or equipment.

Other more costly approaches include closing the school and replacing it with a new school. An example of this is the Academies programme in England.⁷⁶

NI approach

ETI states that it is not their responsibility to provide extended support for teachers and schools. Instead, support is provided mainly by the Curriculum, Advisory and Support Service (CASS) of the relevant Education and Library Board (ELB).⁷⁷

Figure 3: Process for identifying support for schools judged to be satisfactory or less than satisfactory



73 Faubert, B. (2012) *A Literature Review of School Practices to Overcome School Failure* OECD Publishing

74 National Audit Office (2006) *Improving poorly performing schools in England* London: The Stationery Office

75 Faubert, B. (2012) *A Literature Review of School Practices to Overcome School Failure* OECD Publishing

76 National Audit Office (2006) *Improving poorly performing schools in England* London: The Stationery Office

77 ETI FAQs [online] Available at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/faqs.htm>

Schools placed in formal intervention are provided with targeted support by the Board's CASS (working with CCMS as appropriate). CASS can provide a range of support to schools, including:⁷⁸

- Advice for Boards of Governors;
- Support, guidance or training for school development planning, target setting or the effective use of data;
- Training for senior or middle management teams;
- Support for English, maths or special educational needs;
- Liaison with other Board services and partner agencies.

While most support services for schools are available within the Boards, other bodies such as the Regional Training Unit and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment may also provide help. In addition, staff may visit other schools to observe good practice.⁷⁹

However, the CASS resources for schools following inspection have been reduced “substantially” over recent years. ETI notes that in light of this, follow-up inspections and visits are increasingly important.⁸⁰

School to school support

Some authors call for greater peer or school to school support for struggling schools. Francis suggests that the inspectorate could take on the role of facilitating advice, support and learning between schools, gathering and sharing best practice. This could also be achieved by encouraging federations of schools and facilitating shared systems.⁸¹

In England a number of high performing schools have formed federations with lower-performing counterparts. Research has found that such ‘performance federations’ have resulted in improvements in student outcomes after a period of two to four years – with the positive impact found in both the higher and lower performing schools.⁸²

7 Conclusion

Research points to the importance of using accurate and robust measures to assess the performance of schools, and in particular, the value they add to student outcomes. In addition, the need for schools identified as underperforming to be provided with adequate support is clear from the evidence. This research paper has highlighted a number of areas that could be given further consideration, including:

- The robustness and transparency of ETI's approach to assessing value added;
- The Department's plans to assess value-added using end of Key Stage assessments given stakeholders' concerns around their reliability;
- The lack of proposals for assessing value-added at Key Stage 4 and post-16;
- The reporting of inspection findings to individual schools, including the format of inspection reports and oral briefings;

78 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

79 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

80 ETI (2013) *Annual Business Report 2011-12* Bangor: DE

81 Francis, B. (2011) *(Un)satisfactory? Enhancing life chances by improving 'satisfactory' schools* London: RSA

82 Chapman, C., Muijs, D., MacAllister, J. (2011) *A study of the impact of school federation on student outcomes* Nottingham: National College for School Leadership

- The proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process, for example the number of schools likely to be affected through their rating as 'satisfactory' and the wider research suggesting that schools serving disadvantaged communities can be slower to improve from a satisfactory grade;
- The availability and effectiveness of support for schools identified as requiring improvement through CASS given the substantial reduction in services; in addition, whether CASS will be able to provide support for the potentially increased numbers of schools entering the Formal Intervention Process.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Research Paper

3rd October 2013

Caroline Perry

Approaches to school inspection

NIAR 521-13

This paper outlines the approach to inspection in place in NI and in a number of jurisdictions internationally. It also considers the governance arrangements for school inspection, including powers, legal frameworks, transparency and inspector qualifications and evaluation.

Key Points

- The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is responsible for inspecting the quality of provision across a range of providers in NI;
- In 2010 ETI introduced a risk-based approach to determining how often a school should be inspected;
- Internationally, over three quarters of countries reviewed by the OECD require school inspections, and most also require school self-evaluation;
- Examples of approaches elsewhere include the high stakes approach of Ofsted in England; this emphasises external inspection and includes the potential for the “naming and shaming” of underperforming schools;
- In Scotland a more collaborative approach is taken whereby inspectors are viewed more as coaches than examiners, while the Republic of Ireland focuses on self-evaluation and light touch external inspection;
- In Finland there is no external inspection; instead the system places great trust in teachers and principals and provides them with much autonomy;
- A range of governance models are in use internationally. The inspectorate is within the education ministry in some countries and outside it in others (for example, Ofsted is a non-ministerial government department reporting to parliament);
- The importance of credibility for external evaluators and the transparency of inspection processes is emphasised in the research – this can relate to the publication of clear standards, the levels of qualifications and experience required and performance management processes;
- In light of these findings, areas that could be given further consideration include:
 - The risk-based approach to determining the frequency of inspection, for example, whether value-added indicators are used to identify schools;
 - The approaches to inspection other jurisdictions, for example the high stakes approach in England and the centrality of self-evaluation in Singapore;
 - The situation of the ETI within the Department of Education;
 - The additional powers for the ETI set out within the Education Bill;
 - Other practices including school-to-school or peer evaluation;
 - Qualification requirements for inspectors here;
 - The performance management of inspectors in NI, and the extent to which they draw upon a broad and robust evidence base.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), part of the Department of Education (the Department), is responsible for inspecting the quality of provision across a range of providers. This paper explores the approach to school inspection in NI and in a number of jurisdictions internationally. It also discusses governance arrangements.

Inspection approach in Northern Ireland

Self-evaluation is not mandatory for schools in Northern Ireland, although school development planning requires them to use a range of data in considering their performance. Evidence from the most recent *Chief Inspector's Report* suggests that self-evaluation was a key aspect of organisations rated very good or outstanding.

ETI completed 360 external inspections in 2012. Typically, a team of inspectors visits the school and draws on a range of evidence to inform their judgements, including:

- **Classroom observations** (a key area of focus);
- **Interactions with pupils** during lessons to determine what pupils understand;
- **Quality of work in pupils' books** (to benchmark the work observed with previous learning experiences);
- **Discussions with teachers and senior managers;**
- **Documentation** produced by the school; and
- **Responses to an ETI questionnaire** by parents, teachers and support staff.

In 2010 ETI introduced a risk-based approach to determining the frequency of school inspection. This involves using information from performance indicators; risk factors such as the length of time since the last formal inspection; and ongoing monitoring of schools by inspectors at a local level, to assess how often a school should be inspected. Schools receive two weeks' notice of an inspection.

However, concerns around this approach have been raised recently, with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) suggesting that this may place too much emphasis on examination outcomes and could have a socio-economic bias.

International approaches

Three broad approaches to evaluating schools can be identified around the world – many countries combine these methods. The approaches comprise school self-evaluation; external evaluation; and comparison of schools using performance measures. Over three quarters (77%) of countries reviewed by the OECD require school inspections, and most also require schools to conduct self-evaluation.

Table 1: Examples of approaches to school evaluation in other jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Key features
England: High stakes approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection plays a key part in the accountability framework • High stakes approach with potential “naming and shaming” • Emphasis on external inspection and a short notice period • “Satisfactory” grade recently replaced with “requires improvement”

Jurisdiction	Key features
Scotland: Collaborative approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspectors viewed more as 'coaches' than 'external examiners' • A sampling approach to selection of schools is taken and there is a two to three week notice period • The school's capacity to improve is evaluated (confident, partially confident or not confident)
Republic of Ireland: Emphasis on self-evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on self-evaluation and light touch external inspection • Teachers have reported that the process can be positive and affirming, however criticisms include the avoidance of conflict with teachers
Singapore: Improvement driven by self-evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A self-assessment model is the primary driver of school improvement • Schools must provide evidence of continuous improvement in results • External experts visit the school to validate the self-evaluation • A comprehensive set of awards is linked to the model
Finland: No external inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School inspections abolished in the early 1990s • Education system relies on the effectiveness of teachers and leaders • Finland places significant trust in teachers and principals and they have significant autonomy

Governance

In a number of countries responsibility for educational evaluation is within the education ministry, while in others, it is situated beyond it. An example of this is Ofsted, a non-ministerial government department accountable directly to parliament. Most jurisdictions, including NI, have a highly structured legal framework for inspection.

The Education Bill currently before the NI Assembly would significantly enhance the powers of ETI. This would include widening the role to advise the Department on 'any aspect' of establishments as appropriate; and provide new powers to inspect or take away documents; and to obtain access to any computer and associated material. These powers mirror those of Ofsted as set out within the Education Act 2005.

Inspector qualifications

The research emphasises the importance of ensuring that external evaluators have credibility. In NI all inspectors must be qualified to at least degree level and have a qualification enabling them to teach. The Department notes that all inspectors have substantial teaching experience. In England the requirements include that inspectors must be able to demonstrate up-to-date professional knowledge.

Transparency

Research highlights the importance of transparency and objectivity in school inspection. The publication of clear standards can promote transparency, and ETI's *Together Towards Improvement* details the indicators and standards used.

A further method of promoting transparency relates to the evaluation of inspectors. In NI performance management includes discussing examples of reports the inspector has prepared, although this does not include a specific separate review of inspection evidence bases. Post-inspection questionnaires are completed anonymously and as such are not used in the performance management of individual inspectors, although any correspondence received directly by ETI is considered.

The Republic of Ireland and Sweden have recently subjected their school evaluation processes to national audits. Ofsted in England uses rigorous performance management

systems to hold inspectors to account. These draw on a range of information including quality assurance inspection visits, review of inspection evidence bases and school responses to post-inspection questionnaires.

Conclusion

Areas that could be given further consideration include:

- The risk-based approach to determining the frequency of inspection, for example, whether value-added indicators are used to identify schools for inspection;
- The approaches to inspection other jurisdictions, for example the high stakes approach in England and the centrality of self-evaluation in Singapore;
- The situation of the ETI within the Department of Education;
- The additional powers for the ETI set out within the Education Bill;
- Other practices including school-to-school or peer evaluation;
- Qualification requirements for inspectors here;
- The performance management of inspectors in NI, and the extent to which they draw upon a broad and robust evidence base.

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1 Introduction

A school inspection is a formal process of external evaluation which may aim to hold schools to account, and to drive school improvement. This paper outlines the approach to inspection in place in NI and in a number of jurisdictions internationally. It also considers the governance arrangements for school inspection, including powers, legal frameworks, transparency and inspector qualifications and evaluation.

2 Inspection approach in Northern Ireland

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is part of the Department of Education (the Department). It inspects a range of providers, including schools; pre-schools and the youth service.

Self-evaluation

Schools in Northern Ireland are not required to conduct self-evaluation; however school development planning involves an element of this. Schools must use performance and other data to evaluate the school's strategies for a range of areas, including teaching and learning and staff development.¹

ETI uses this to provide evidence on leadership, and in particular the actions taken to drive improvement. From this academic year, ETI will not ask schools for any self-evaluation information, other than that which they use for their own purposes.²

Together Towards Improvement contains the quality indicators used by ETI in its evaluations, and provides guidance to schools on self-evaluation.³ The resource sets out a series of quality indicators under three broad headings:⁴

- **Leadership and management:** indicators include strategic leadership, action to promote improvement and links and partnerships;
- **Quality of provision for learning:** indicators include planning, teaching and learning and assessment;
- **Quality of achievement and standards:** indicators include achievement and progression.

Evidence from inspections cited in the Chief Inspector's Report 2010-12 suggests that self-evaluation was a central feature of the work of organisations rated very good or outstanding, and drove improvement in schools where follow-up was required.⁵

External inspection

At the end of the 2012 business year there were 61 inspectors and 130 Associate Assessors at the ETI. Over the year it completed 360 inspections of organisations in addition to 20 surveys of provision across a range of settings.⁶

1 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

2 As above

3 As above

4 ETI (2010) *Together Towards Improvement: A Process for Self-Evaluation* Bangor: DE

5 Education and Training Inspectorate (2012) *Chief Inspector's Report 2010-12* Bangor: DE

6 ETI (2013) *Annual Business Report 2011-12* Bangor: DE

Table 2: Overview of inspection models for schools and pre-schools⁷

Inspection model	Phase	Overview
Focused inspection	Primary, post-primary, special	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on particular aspects of provision and leadership • Aspects include child protection and pastoral care
Standard inspection	Post-primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A core team (including an Associate Assessor) inspects leadership and management through a focus on aspects of the school development plan • Specialist inspectors (usually four) also report on provision within a specialist area (pastoral care/ child protection always included)
Inspection	Pre-school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assesses quality of provision across range of activities (such as development and learning; child protection; and leadership)
Short inspection	Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluates the quality of the school's ethos, pastoral care, teaching and learning, leadership and management
Unannounced inspection	All phases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on pastoral care and child protection as evidenced by arrangements and work observed
Area inspection	All phases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluates provision in a geographical area across phases

A team of inspectors visits the school, ranging from two inspectors for a small primary school to up to eight for a large post-primary undergoing standard inspection. A range of evidence is used to inform judgements, and there is a particular emphasis on classroom observation. Evidence also includes:⁸

- **Interactions with pupils** during lessons (to determine what pupils understand and the extent to which they are supported);
- **Quality of work in pupils' books** (to benchmark the work observed with previous learning experiences);
- **Conversations with teachers** and managers;
- **Documentation** produced by the school;
- **Responses to an ETI questionnaire** by parents, teachers and support staff (used to support identification of lines of enquiry); and
- **A discussion with senior management** on the school's performance data.

Frequency of inspections and notice given

A new approach to the frequency of school inspections was introduced in 2010 (prior to this schools were inspected at least once every seven years). This aims to be more proportionate and risk-based using a range of information to guide requirements:⁹

- Information from school performance indicators;

⁷ ETI: *An explanation of the types of Inspection* [online] Available at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-general-documents-non-phase-related/support-material-general-documents-about-inspection/an-explanation-of-the-types-of-inspection.htm>

⁸ Information provided by the Department of Education, October 2012

⁹ Information provided by the Department of Education, October 2012

- Risk factors such as the length of time since the last formal inspection;
- Ongoing monitoring of schools by inspectors at a local level.

The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) has recently highlighted concerns around this risk-based approach, suggesting that this may have a “potentially in-built socio-economic bias”, and noting an “*excessive reliance*” on quantitative data and examination outcomes.¹⁰

ETI has standardised the notice period for inspections from September 2013, with all organisations receiving two week’s notification of inspection (other than further education colleges which will receive four weeks’ notification).¹¹

Moderation and reporting

Inspection teams take part in a moderation conference immediately after the school’s inspection. This aims to ensure that the gathered evidence is challenged and moderated.¹² Managing Inspectors (MIs) join a sample of moderation meetings for quality assurance purposes and all reports are reviewed by MIs prior to issue.¹³

Principals receive a copy of the report to check factual detail around four weeks later. The final copy of the inspection report is generally published around three months after the inspection on the ETI website.¹⁴

Complaints procedure

ETI has a complaints procedure which is the only mechanism through which an individual or organisation can make a formal complaint. Complaints may be made at any stage during an inspection or up to 12 weeks from the visit.¹⁵

The Complaints Procedure states that ETI will admit to being mistaken where this is clearly supported by the facts. However, it states that the procedure cannot be used to contest the professional judgements of inspectors because findings are unwelcome; because change is promised by the organisation at some time in the future; or because changes are made after an inspection.¹⁶ ETI will investigate the following types of complaints:¹⁷

- An expression of dissatisfaction with an aspect of the work of ETI;
- Referring to action or lack of action by ETI affecting an individual, group or organisation;
- An allegation that ETI has failed to observe its published procedures; or
- An allegation that there has been unacceptable delay in dealing with a matter about how an individual has been treated by a member of staff.

The procedure involves an informal complaint stage followed by Stage 1 – a formal written complaint, and Stage 2 – an internal review of how the complaint was investigated (there was previously a third stage). The complainant may then refer it to the Assembly Ombudsman (requires MLA sponsorship) if still dissatisfied.¹⁸

10 Gallagher, C. (2013) *Striking the Right Balance* Belfast: GTCNI

11 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

12 Information provided by the Department of Education, October 2012

13 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, October 2013

14 ETI: FAQs [online] Available at: http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/faqs.htm#what_happens_after_the_inspection_and_what_is_the_timescale?

15 ETI (2012) *Complaints Procedure* Bangor: DE

16 As above

17 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

18 ETI (2012) *Complaints Procedure* Bangor: DE

Table 3: Formal ETI complaints relating to primary/ post-primary inspections¹⁹

Year	Complaints received	Stage reached
2008/09	1	Stage 1
2009/10	7	All Stage 1
2010/11	3	1 reached Stage 2, one Stage 3 and 1 referred to the Assembly Ombudsman
2011/12	3	All Stage 3
2012/2013	1	Stage 1

3 Overview of approaches to school evaluation worldwide

OECD identifies three main approaches to evaluating schools internationally. These are outlined in the following table.

Table 4: Three major approaches to school evaluation

Approach	Overview
School self-evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review conducted by members of the school • May draw on input from leadership, teachers, staff and parents
External school evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judged by an external body- may be an inspectorate, officials within a government department or by accredited individuals • Typically involves a strong focus on accountability; increasingly aims to provide feedback for development
Comparison of schools on performance measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves benchmarking schools in relation to others • Information may be reported to schools for their own use and/or to the wider public

Source: OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

OECD states that school inspections are required in 24 of 31 countries (77%). While school inspections typically involve all schools, in nine countries inspections were targeted at low-performing schools.²⁰

In countries where there are no requirements for school inspection, there is often a requirement for school self-evaluation. Very few countries do not require either school inspection or school self-evaluation (such countries include Greece, Italy and Mexico).

There is considerable variation in the use, frequency and scope of accountability mechanisms across and within countries. The areas most commonly covered by school inspections across the OECD countries were:²¹

- Compliance with rules and regulations;
- Quality of instruction; and
- Student performance.

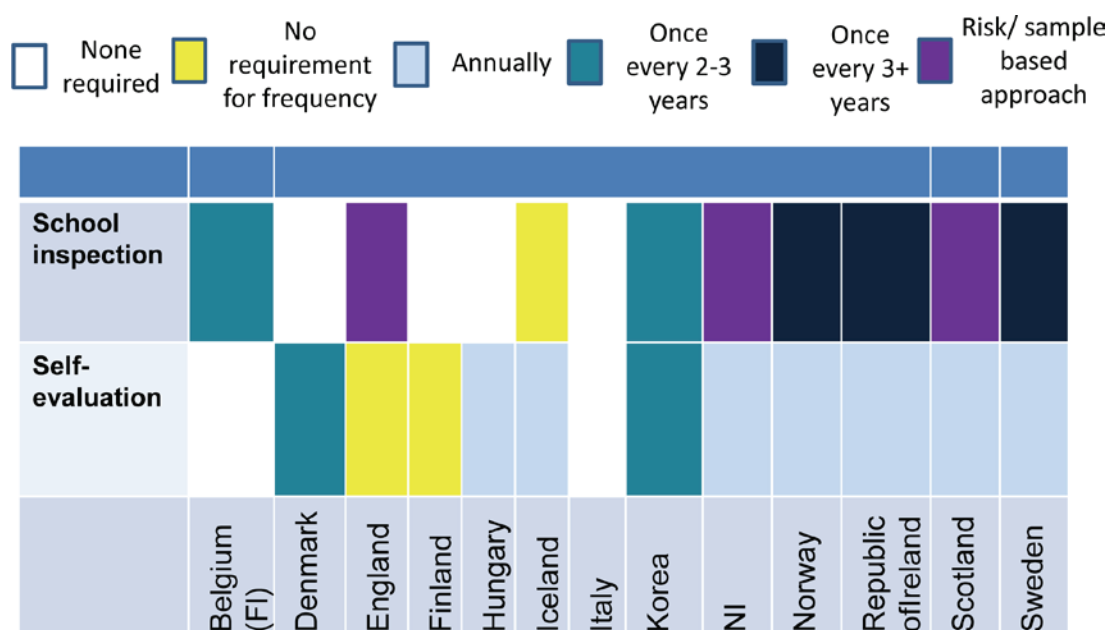
¹⁹ Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

²⁰ OECD (2011) *Education at a Glance 2011 OECD Indicators* Paris: OECD Publishing

²¹ As above

Figure 1 provides an overview of the requirements for school inspection across a number of jurisdictions.²²

Figure 1: Frequency of school inspections and self-evaluation internationally



Source: Adapted from OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning* and OECD (2011) *Education at a Glance 2011*

Self-evaluation

Most OECD countries have statutory requirements for schools to conduct self-evaluation. Northern Ireland has a highly structured approach, whereby schools must prepare a School Development Plan. Requirements in other jurisdictions include:²³

- **Australia:** a partially structured approach whereby all schools must publish an annual report including school performance information;
- **Republic of Ireland:** since 2012 schools have been required to produce an annual self-evaluation report and a school improvement plan;
- **New Zealand:** no standard reporting format for annual plans and reports;
- **Scotland:** legislation requires schools to develop an annual self-evaluation report, improvement plan and a report on a range of indicators.

Internationally many countries have concerns around the capacity of schools to conduct self-evaluation.²⁴ Other concerns include a perception that self-evaluation may matter less to schools than external inspection.²⁵

22 OECD (2011) *Education at a Glance 2011 OECD Indicators* Paris: OECD Publishing

23 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

24 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

25 Whitby, K. (2010) *School Inspection: recent experiences in high performing education systems* Berkshire: CfBT Education Trust

Self-evaluation and external inspection

The evidence suggests that school self-evaluation and external inspection can be complementary and many jurisdictions use both approaches in evaluating schools. Some studies have found a positive impact on outcomes where the two are combined.²⁶

School to school evaluation

OECD reports that in many countries schools are beginning to undertake peer evaluation, building on substantial evidence that partnerships and networks of schools can allow for sharing of effective leadership and practice. Such networks exist in countries such as England, Finland and Sweden. A key advantage to a principal from another school taking on the role of ‘critical friend’ is that they are viewed as an equal fellow professional.²⁷

4 Examples of school inspection approaches in other jurisdictions

England: High stakes approach

Ofsted is non-ministerial government department which is directly accountable to Parliament. Its approach to school inspection is high stakes in nature, playing a key role in the accountability framework for education.²⁸ The emphasis is on external inspection, and the process has been described as involving “punitive levels of stress and potential naming and shaming of weak teachers and schools.”²⁹

Schools are evaluated on criteria including exam results and the quality of teaching observed during inspection.³⁰ A risk-based approach is taken. For example, a school judged to be ‘outstanding’ will be inspected on the basis of a risk assessment of its subsequent performance; while ‘inadequate’ schools placed in special measures will be given a monitoring inspection within three months and may receive up to five monitoring inspections within 18 months. Other key aspects of the approach include:³¹

- Visits last for around two days;
- Inspections are **sharply focused** on the aspects of the school’s work known to have the greatest influence on outcomes;
- **Short notice period** - schools are notified of their inspection at or after midday on the working day before the start of the inspection;
- Ofsted has the **right to inspect any school without notice** where appropriate (for example, where academic performance has rapidly declined);
- **Inspectors engage principals, staff and governors and pupils**, and the views of parents are sought;
- **Principals may be invited to participate in lesson observations** and are typically invited to attend the formal inspection team meetings each day.

Ofsted no longer describes schools as ‘satisfactory’ where they are not providing a good level of education. Schools providing an acceptable standard of education are judged to be

26 As above

27 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

28 Allen, R., Burgess, S. (2012) *How should we treat under-performing schools? A regression discontinuity analysis of school inspections in England* Bristol: Centre for Market and Public Organisation

29 McNamara, G., O’Hara, J. (2008) “Trusting Schools and Teachers: Developing Educational Professionalism Through Self-Evaluation” *Irish Studies* 8, Dublin: Peter Lang Publishing

30 Allen, R., Burgess, S. (2012) *How should we treat under-performing schools? A regression discontinuity analysis of school inspections in England* Bristol: Centre for Market and Public Organisation

31 Ofsted (2013) *The framework for school inspection* Manchester: Ofsted

‘good’, while a school not yet deemed ‘good’ nor ‘inadequate’ are described as a school that ‘requires improvement’.³²

Scotland: Collaborative approach

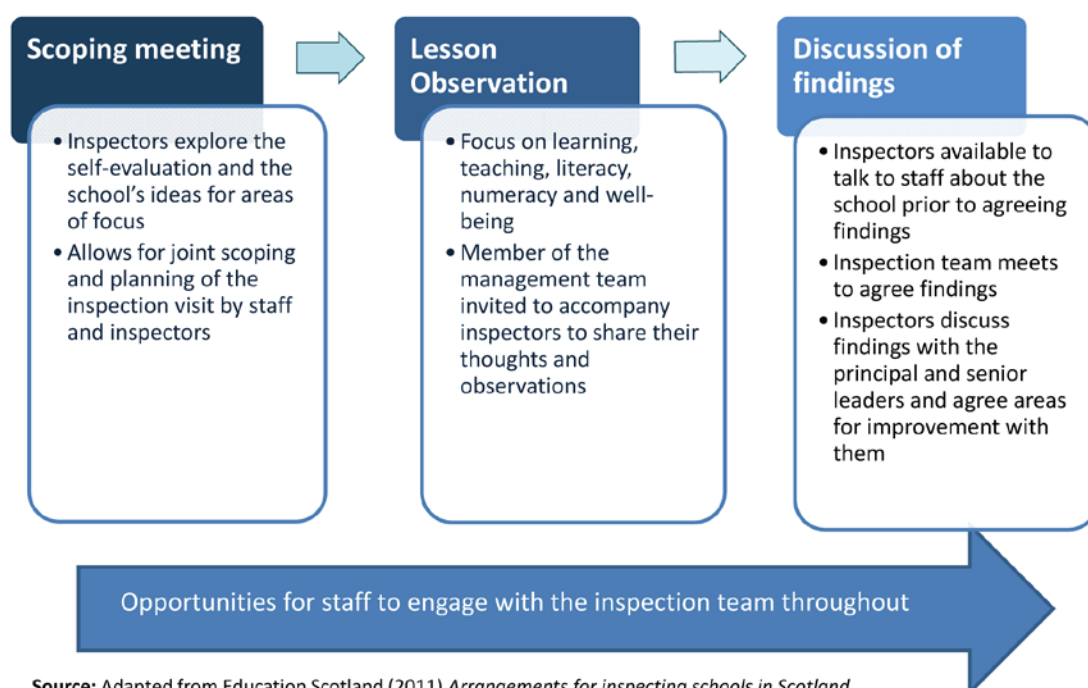
In Scotland the approach to inspection is collaborative in nature with inspectors and the school under inspection cooperating throughout the process. Self-evaluation is another key aspect of the approach;³³ however research suggests that while some schools are enthusiastic about self-evaluation, others “treat this with cynical compliance”.³⁴

Recent changes to the inspection process have included a move to a sampling approach; a reduction in the notice period to two or three weeks; and greater focus on users, including giving parents opportunities to meet a lay inspector.³⁵

Inspection process

Inspection is a ‘two-way process’, with inspectors viewed more as ‘professional coaches’ than ‘external examiners’.³⁶ It has been suggested that teachers are more likely to view external inspection in a developmental manner rather than a judgemental one.³⁷ The following figure illustrates the inspection process in Scotland.³⁸

Figure 2: Overview of the Scottish inspection process



Source: Adapted from Education Scotland (2011) *Arrangements for inspecting schools in Scotland*

32 As above

33 Education Scotland (2011) *Arrangements for inspecting schools in Scotland*

34 Croxford, L., Grek, S. and Shaik, F.J. (2009) “Quality assurance and evaluation in Scotland” *Journal of Education Policy*, Vol 24, No.2, pp. 179-193

35 Buie, E. (2011) “HMIE unveils new targeted approach to school inspection” *Times Educational Supplement* 25 February 2011

36 Buie, E. (2011) “HMIE unveils new targeted approach to school inspection” *Times Educational Supplement* 25 February 2011

37 Livingstone, K. and McCall (2005) “Evaluation: judgemental or developmental?” *The European Journal of Teacher Education* Vol. 28, No 2. Pp.165-178

38 Education Scotland (2011) *Arrangements for inspecting schools in Scotland*

The report of the inspection is published within eight weeks. The emphasis of school improvement in inspection is evident through an evaluation of a school's capacity to improve (confident, partially confident or not confident). Follow up is proportionate and dependent on the inspection findings.³⁹

OECD notes that this approach has had considerable influence, with Scottish inspectors often invited to participate in events across Europe, and the approach has been adapted by organisations including the New South Wales Catholic Education Authority.⁴⁰

Republic of Ireland: Emphasis on self-evaluation

The approach to school inspection in the Republic of Ireland emphasises self-evaluation, light touch external inspection and features little focus on data to support findings.⁴¹

Self-evaluation makes up an element of School Development Planning; however, the success of this in most schools has been limited. As a result, current policy emphasises improving self-evaluations so that schools make robust evaluations of their progress and share this information with parents.⁴²

Self-evaluation and external inspection are both underpinned by self-evaluation frameworks highlighting key areas for evaluation. They also outline contextual factors that should be considered when evaluating a school.⁴³

- Socio-economic circumstances of the pupils and community, including local employment availability and patterns;
- The size, location and catchment area of the school;
- Pupils' special needs;
- The physical, material and human resources available within the school.

The Inspectorate undertakes a range of inspections, including unannounced short inspections, subject-focussed inspections and whole-school evaluation. Their purpose is both to evaluate provision and provide advice and support to the school, and they include interviews with key personnel; scrutiny of planning and self-evaluation; classroom observation; and interactions with pupils. In some cases questionnaires are sent to parents and students.⁴⁴

It has been suggested that the inspection approach used has a number of weaknesses, for example the avoidance of conflict with teachers and the reluctance of schools and teachers to engage in systematic approaches to data collection. However, teachers have reported that the process can be positive and affirming.⁴⁵

Singapore: Rigorous self-evaluation model driving improvement

In Singapore a comprehensive School Excellence Model (SEM) underpins the entire process of improving educational quality. The SEM is a self-assessment model which aims to

39 Penzer, G. (2011) *School inspections: what happens next?* Reading: CfBT Education Trust

40 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

41 McNamara, G., O'Hara, J. (2008) "Trusting Schools and Teachers: Developing Educational Professionalism Through Self-Evaluation" *Irish Studies* 8, Dublin: Peter Lang Publishing.

42 Department of Education and Skills (2012) *OECD Review on evaluation and assessment frameworks for improving school outcomes: Country background report for Ireland* OECD

43 As above

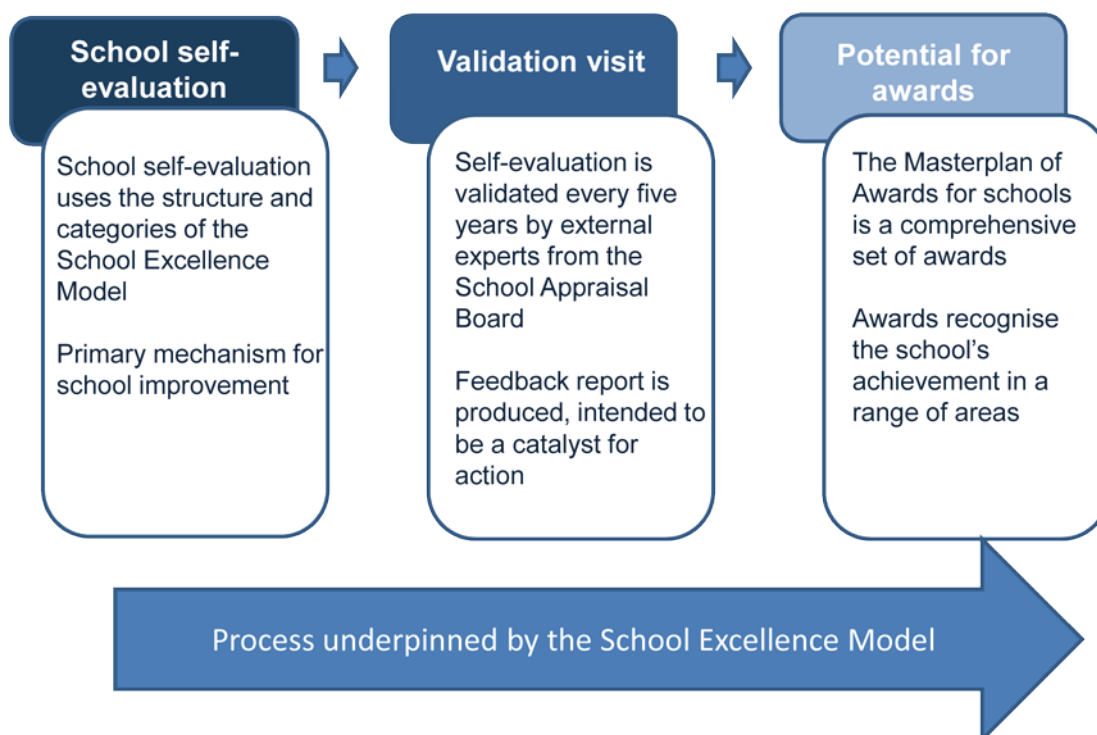
44 As above

45 McNamara, G., O'Hara, J. (2008) "Trusting Schools and Teachers: Developing Educational Professionalism Through Self-Evaluation" *Irish Studies* 8, Dublin: Peter Lang Publishing.

allow schools to objectively identify strengths and weaknesses, and to benchmark their performance against other schools.⁴⁶

The SEM is viewed as the primary mechanism for driving school improvement and requires schools to provide evidence of a range of areas including continuous improvement in results over three to five years and a set of appropriate and challenging performance targets.⁴⁷

Figure 3: Overview of the evaluation process in Singapore⁴⁸



Source: Adapted from Penzer, G. (2011) *School inspections: what happens next?* and Tee, N.P. (2003) *The Singapore School and the School Excellence Model*

As Figure 3 highlights, a comprehensive set of awards is linked to the SEM. This recognises a school's achievements across a range of areas, including value-added and character development.⁴⁹

Finland: No external evaluation

School inspections were abolished in Finland in the early 1990s, and instead the education system relies on the effectiveness of teachers and other personnel.⁵⁰ Finland places significant trust in classroom teachers and principals, and they are given considerable autonomy. This means that there is no call for formal regulation.⁵¹

There is a focus on self-evaluation within schools and national evaluations of learning outcomes through annual tests undertaken by samples of schools. The results of national

46 Tee, N.P. (2003) "The Singapore School and the School Excellence Model" *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* 2. pp. 27-39

47 As above

48 Penzer, G. (2011) *School inspections: what happens next?* Reading: CfBT Education Trust

49 As above

50 Ministry of Education and Culture Evaluation of education [online] Available at: http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/koulutuspolitiikka/koulutuksen_arviointi/?lang=en

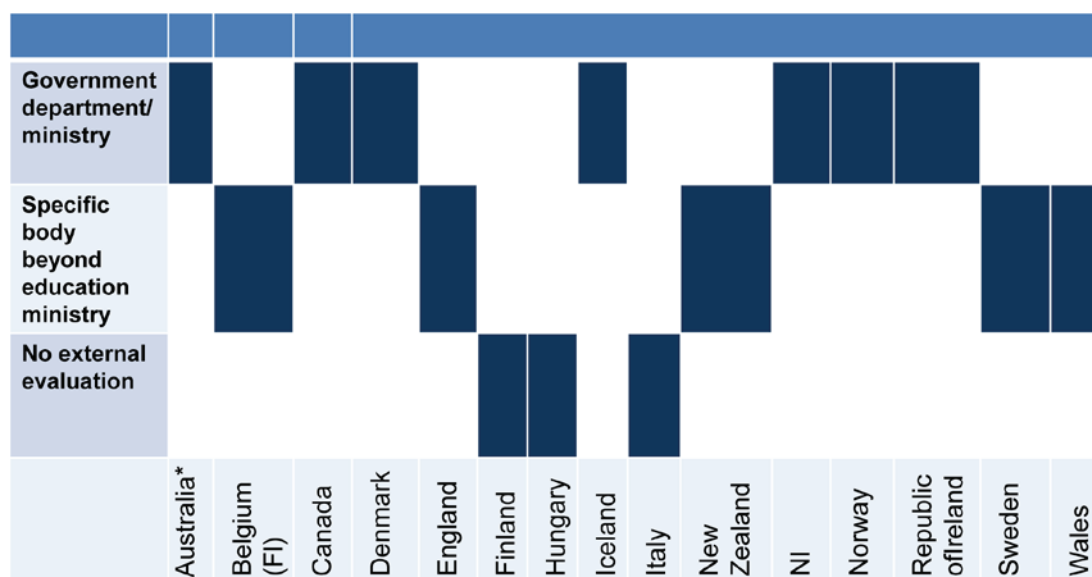
51 House of Commons Education Committee (2011) *The role and performance of Ofsted* London: The Stationery Office Limited

evaluations are not used to rank schools; rather to monitor progress at a national level.⁵² Requirements around self-evaluation vary by local authority. Research suggests that while criteria for self-evaluation have been defined, their use in practice is questionable.⁵³

5 Governance arrangements

Figure 4 highlights responsibility for external school evaluation in a number of countries internationally. In a number of countries it is situated within the education ministry, while in others it sits beyond it.

Figure 4: Responsibility for external school evaluation internationally



*In Australia arrangements vary between states and territories, but schools are generally evaluated by government departments

Source: Adapted from OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment*

The House of Commons Education Committee notes that in England, Ofsted's independence is valued and supports credibility.⁵⁴ Barber asserts that an inspection system independent of government is most effective as it allows government to be held to account, in addition to the education service itself.⁵⁵

Legal frameworks and powers

Most OECD countries have a legal framework for evaluating schools externally, but there is great variation in the extent and type of requirements set. Typically, OECD countries have highly structured legal frameworks for evaluation, prescribing similar evaluation activities for schools based on a specific set of data collection tools.⁵⁶

In Northern Ireland, Article 102 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 provides a 'highly structured' legal framework for school inspection. Similarly, England has a

52 Ministry of Education and Culture *Evaluation of education* [online] Available at: http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/koulutuspolitiikka/koulutuksen_arviointi/?lang=en

53 Faubert, V. (2009) *School Evaluation: Current Practices in OECD Countries and a Literature Review* Paris: OECD Publishing

54 House of Commons Education Committee (2011) *The role and performance of Ofsted* London: The Stationery Office Limited

55 Barber (2004) "The virtue of accountability: system redesign, inspection and incentives in the era of reformed professionalism" *Journal of Education* Vol. 185, No. 1, pp. 7-38

56 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

very structured framework (the Education Act 2005), as does Scotland, where the school's self-evaluation is based on a centrally devised framework.⁵⁷

In the Republic of Ireland inspection is underpinned by the Education Act 1998. It also gives boards of management and teachers the right to request that the Chief Inspector reviews the inspection.⁵⁸ Internationally, other countries with a highly structured approach include Japan, Korea and the US. Countries with a partially structured approach include Denmark, which has a system of local authority-based reporting.⁵⁹

Education Bill

The Education Bill would significantly enhance the powers of inspectors in NI. Table 5 provides an overview of the legislative powers outlined within the Bill and compares it to the powers available to inspectors elsewhere. (The table refers to legislation only).

Table 5: Examples of statutory powers of inspectorates

	Areas of inspection	Powers to inspect and take documents
Education Bill (NI)	'Any aspect' of establishments in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning; • Management; • Staffing, equipment, accommodation and other resources 	The inspector may inspect, take copies of, or take away any documents 'at reasonable times only' including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power to require production of documents and obtain access to any computer
England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil achievement; • Quality of teaching; • Leadership and management; and • Behaviour and safety 	The inspector may inspect, take copies of, or take away any documents 'at all reasonable times' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power to obtain access to any computer
Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation does not detail specific areas 	Does not specify particular powers, however anyone obstructing inspection subject to fine/imprisonment
Republic of Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less prescriptive – inspectors consult stakeholders and evaluate as appropriate • Duties include advising and supporting schools 	Inspector "shall have all such powers as are necessary or expedient... and shall be accorded every reasonable facility and cooperation by the board and staff"

For further information please refer to Paper 931-12: Education Bill: school inspection.

Qualifications of inspectors

OECD highlights the importance of ensuring that external evaluators are credible and legitimate. Internationally, inspectors tend to be recruited from the education sector, are recognised as having in-depth expertise and have previously been successful practitioners.⁶⁰

57 As above

58 Department of Education and Skills (2012) *OECD Review on evaluation and assessment frameworks for improving school outcomes: Country background report for Ireland* OECD

59 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

60 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

In Northern Ireland all inspectors must be qualified to at least degree level or equivalent, and must have a qualification enabling them to teach in a grant-aided school or further education college.

The Department states that all inspectors in NI have substantial teaching and/or training experience. The experience required depends on the specialism associated with the post and many inspectors are qualified and/ or experienced “well beyond the minimum” requirements.⁶¹

In addition, the ETI recruits a pool of “associate assessors” from among senior school staff, for example, principals, deputy principals or senior teachers. Associate assessors receive training and may be asked to join an inspection team not more than twice annually. The aims of this are to:⁶²

- Help the individual to monitor, evaluate and improve provision in their own school; and
- To help develop ETI's awareness of the current perspective of schools.

In Scotland and Hong Kong inspection teams also include lay members who have no qualifications or experience in education, but must attend training prior to conducting an inspection.⁶³

In the Republic of Ireland inspectors must have a relevant teaching qualification and at least five years' teaching experience. However in practice these requirements are typically exceeded, with most applicants holding more extensive experience and post-graduate qualifications.⁶⁴

England: Requirements for inspectors

Ofsted sets out clear requirements around the qualifications and experience required of inspectors. These include:

- A relevant degree and/or teaching qualification;
- A minimum of five years' successful teaching experience;
- Credibility and up-to-date professional knowledge, for example of the remit, curriculum, recent developments in the sector, and statutory requirements.

In addition, Ofsted states that inspectors will normally have a minimum of two years' successful and substantial management experience in the relevant area; and a wide range of experience within the relevant area, for example in more than one institution.

However, evidence suggests that many inspectors lack recent or relevant experience of the settings they investigate. The House of Commons Education Committee has recommended that professional development opportunities such as secondments to schools for inspectors should be extended.

Source: Ofsted (2012) *Qualifications, experience and standards required of additional inspectors undertaking inspections on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills* and House of Commons Education Committee (2011) *The role and performance of Ofsted* London: The Stationery Office Limited

61 Information provided by the Department of Education, October 2012

62 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

63 Whitby, K. (2010) *School Inspection: recent experiences in high performing education systems* Berkshire: CfBT Education Trust

64 Department of Education and Skills (2012) *OECD Review on evaluation and assessment frameworks for improving school outcomes: Country background report for Ireland* OECD

Recruitment, induction and development

New ETI inspectors are recruited through public advertisements in the press. They serve a two-year probationary period which includes a programme of induction and development, and development continues throughout their service.⁶⁵

The nine week induction process involves assessing the work and training needs of new inspectors. New inspectors undertake visits with an experienced colleague and their evaluations are compared, and they have opportunities to shadow reporting inspectors.⁶⁶

At least five professional development days are provided by ETI for inspectors, in addition to phase-specific professional development days. All inspectors have the opportunity to access up to five additional personal staff development days, with attendance at training courses and conferences facilitated according to business need.⁶⁷

Transparency

Research suggests that external evaluation of schools should involve setting clear expectations and standards in order to promote transparency and objectivity.⁶⁸ In Northern Ireland, ETI publishes Together Towards Improvement, a set of quality indicators for use in inspection and self-evaluation.

Another potential way of increasing transparency in school inspections is to evaluate inspectors, for example, by gathering feedback from schools and other stakeholders on their experiences of the inspection process, or through examination of inspection procedures through national audits.⁶⁹

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) carries out an annual survey with staff whose school has recently undergone inspection on the effectiveness of the inspection process. The findings of the 2011-12 survey were largely positive, as outlined in Table 6.⁷⁰

Table 6: Key findings from the 2011-12 post-inspection survey

Area	Example findings
Pre-inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 79% agreed or strongly agreed that the amount of documentation required was reasonable (8% disagreed or strongly disagreed)
During inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 81% agreed or strongly agreed that in all spoken reports during the inspection, the team identified the main strengths of the organisation (6% disagreed or strongly disagreed)
After the inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 82% agreed or strongly agreed that the process helped the school plan for and promote improvement in outcomes (7% disagreed/strongly disagreed)
Overall satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 82% agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated fairly by the inspection team throughout (9% disagreed or strongly disagreed)

65 ETI *Becoming an Inspector* [online] Available at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-general-documents-non-phase-related/support-material-general-documents-about-the-education-and-training-inspectorate/becoming-an-inspector.htm>

66 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, September 2013

67 As above

68 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

69 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

70 NISRA *Post-inspection evaluation 2011-12*

The performance of individual ETI inspectors is evaluated using the NI Civil Service Performance Management system which includes a mid and end of year review. At these reviews ETI reports that “all aspects” of an inspector’s work are discussed, and that this will include examples of reports the inspector has prepared.⁷¹

However, this does not include a specific separate review of inspection evidence bases. ETI notes that Managing Inspectors check these when they visit inspections. It states that all information relating to an inspector’s work that is brought to the attention of management is discussed with the individual as a matter of course.⁷²

Post-inspection questionnaires are completed anonymously and NISRA manages the process to ensure impartiality (as such they are not used in the performance management of individual inspectors). However ETI notes that if a school writes to them the matter raised is discussed with the inspector concerned.⁷³

With regard to other jurisdictions, New Zealand systematically collects feedback from school principals on the inspection process. Stakeholders may also feedback concerns or suggestions for future inspections through the Education Review Office or through the official complaints procedure. In recent years both the Republic of Ireland and Sweden have also subjected their school evaluation processes to national audits.⁷⁴

In England Ofsted holds inspectors to account for the quality of their work and reinforces this through rigorous performance management systems. These draw on information including:⁷⁵

- **Quality assurance visits** (on-site visits by inspectors to assure the quality of inspectors and inspections – around 5% of all inspections);
- **Review of inspection evidence bases** (in-depth reviews of a proportion of all inspections and all those judged ‘inadequate’ (around 6% of all inspections);
- **Any complaints or commendatory letters** received;
- **Visits to inspections for performance management purposes** undertaken by both Ofsted’s quality assurance team and by senior inspectors;
- **School responses** to post-inspection questionnaires.

6 Conclusion

This paper has highlighted a range of issues in regard to the approach to school inspection in place in NI. Areas that could be given further consideration include:

- The risk-based approach to determining the frequency with which schools are inspected, for example, whether value-added indicators are used to identify schools for inspection;
- The approaches to inspection other jurisdictions, for example the high stakes approach in England and its removal of the ‘satisfactory’ grade; and the centrality of self-evaluation to school improvement in Singapore;
- The situation of the ETI within the Department of Education;
- The additional powers for the ETI set out within the Education Bill;

71 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, October 2013

72 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, October 2013

73 Information provided by the Education and Training Inspectorate, October 2013

74 OECD (2013) *Synergies for Better Learning: An international perspective on evaluation and assessment* Paris: OECD Publishing

75 House of Commons Education Committee (2011) *Letter from Christine Gilbert, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector, Ofsted, dated 27 February 2011* [online] Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmeduc/570/570we12.htm>

- Other practices including school-to-school or peer evaluation;
- Qualification requirements for inspectors, for example Ofsted's requirement that inspectors demonstrate credibility and up-to-date professional knowledge;
- The performance management of inspectors in NI, and the extent to which they draw upon a broad and robust evidence base.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

Paper 000/00

19 December 2013

NIAR 899-2013

James Stewart

Language Immersion

Abstract

Language immersion is a technique of teaching a second language. In this system of education the learners' second language is the medium used for all classroom instruction. The main purpose of this technique is to promote bilingualism although general cognitive development has also been cited as an advantage of the immersion method.

This briefing note gives an overview of the immersion systems used in the Republic of Ireland, Wales and Scotland. It also makes reference the provisions made to inspect schools which adopt the immersion model.¹

1 McKendry, E. (2006) Immersion Education: An Introductory Guide for Teachers Belfast: Queen's University Belfast

1. The Republic of Ireland

The government has outlined its support for instruction through the medium of Irish. Indeed, the 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 (The Strategy) targets education as one of the key areas for action.²

The Strategy is designed to:

- enhance and extend ability in Irish more deeply and among larger numbers of people;
- reverse negative attitudes towards Irish language usage and foster positive attitudes in their place; and
- expand the available opportunities for use of Irish within the education system by extending Irish as a medium of instruction, as well as a subject

1.1. Partial Immersion

The Strategy proposes a move towards partial Irish language immersion being offered to all children. It is planned to implement this on a phased basis, in line with progress made in strengthening teachers' competences in this area. Ultimately the Strategy proposes that all students in mainstream schools undertaking the Irish language as a core subject will be offered the experience of partial immersion education in other subjects.

1.2. Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools

Irish-medium schools are being set up on a steady and continual basis, thus increasing the number of pupils who register with Irish-medium schools every year. In 2012-13, there were 378 primary schools which provided education through the medium of Irish, 132 of which are located in Gaeltacht areas. The post-primary sector comprises secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools and there are Irish-medium providers each of these categories. In 2012-13, there were 73 post-primary schools which provided education through the medium of Irish.³

There is a national policy of promoting immersion education in Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools (gaelscoileanna) and preschools (naíonraí). Schools are permitted to postpone formal English language instruction until the end of term 1 of Senior Infants (age 5). At primary level, a separate Irish curriculum for Gaeltacht schools and gaelscoileanna has been developed.

The Government acknowledges the specific difficulty of accommodating the needs of pupils with diverse linguistic abilities in Gaeltacht schools. This can be complicated further depending on the status of the Irish language within the community. It is acknowledged that teaching resources are a major issue for Gaeltacht schools, both at primary and secondary level.⁴

In 2010⁵ the Education Research Centre announced that the standard of English and mathematics in Irish-medium schools was above the national average. This was the first time that the majority of Irish-medium and Gaeltacht primary schools were assessed on their achievement levels in English and mathematics as an independent cohort.

In September 2013 the Department of Education and Skills published a document which outlines a proposal to review educational provision in the Gaeltacht.⁶ The resultant policy options for educational provision are due for completion during the 2nd quarter of 2014.

2 The Government of Ireland (2010) *The 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* Dublin

3 Information provided by the Inspectorate December 2013

4 The Government of Ireland (2010) *The 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* Dublin

5 Educational Research Centre (2010) *The 2010 National Assessments of English Reading and Mathematics in Irish-Medium Schools* Dublin: ERC

6 Department of Education and Skills (2013) *Review of Education in the Gaeltacht* Dublin :DES

1.3. Inspection

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills operates a programme of school evaluations across all schools (including Irish-medium schools) in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act (1998) section 13. The inspectorate deploys a range of models, from a one-day unannounced Incidental Inspection to a more intensive whole-school evaluation process. The former is focussed on the teaching and learning experiences on a given day and it does not result in a published report. The latter examines the quality of key aspects of a school's work; including, management, leadership, teaching and learning, including supports for pupils.

Proficiency in Irish is among the criteria used in the appointments of both primary and post-primary inspectors. Primary inspectors with a high standard of linguistic proficiency in the Irish language, both oral and written, are selected to conduct the whole-school evaluations of Irish-medium schools. These evaluations are conducted through Irish and the evaluation reports are written in Irish. An English translation is also provided to facilitate parents and other members of the school community who may not have sufficient fluency to read the report in Irish.⁷

Post-primary inspectors are specialists in specific aspects of the curriculum, for example Geography or Science inspectors. There are five Irish specialist inspectors at this level. They are responsible for inspecting the subject of Irish but they also participate in inspection teams for whole-school type evaluations.

There is an expectation that inspectors working in Irish-medium schools conduct their business through Irish and the Inspectorate has in place a professional development programme to enable inspectors to develop and maintain their proficiency in Irish. This includes attendance at Irish language courses and immersion experiences in Gaeltacht areas.⁸

2. Scotland

Gaelic medium education (GME) endorses the principles of Scottish curriculum while immersing pupils in the Gaelic language. GME spans pre-school, primary and secondary education. The philosophy underpinning GME involves total immersion until P3/4 with the purpose of giving children a strong foundation in Gaelic language skills at an early stage. This is followed by an immersion phase, during which the entire curriculum continues to be delivered through the medium of Gaelic but which also introduces reading and writing in English. The immersion phase continues into secondary.⁹

There are two central aims to GME immersion:

- feel equally confident in the use of Gaelic and English
- be able to use both Gaelic and English in a full range of contexts within and outside school.

Education Scotland states that children need not have any prior knowledge of the language to attend early years or primary school Gaelic provision. Indeed, parents also need not have any knowledge of Gaelic to enrol their child and they need not be committed to learning Gaelic themselves. A child with no Gaelic can enrol in GME at Primary 1.¹⁰

7 Information provided by the Inspectorate December 2013

8 Information provided by the Inspectorate December 2013

9 Education Scotland *Gaelic Medium Education*
available online www.educationscotland.gov.uk/earlyyearsmatters/f/genericcontent_tcm4674214.asp

10 As above

2.1. Inspections

As part of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, Education Scotland has made a commitment on how it will inspect and promote Gaelic. This is manifested in the document entitled Arrangements for inspecting schools in Scotland.¹¹ The document states that the inspection of Gaelic medium schools forms an integral part of inspection's core purpose; 'to improve outcomes for all Scottish learners'.

Education Scotland states that all educational centres that deliver Gaelic provision will, as far as possible, have a Gaelic-speaking HM Inspector or Associate Assessor on the inspection team.¹² The school principal is tasked with ensuring that information relating to Gaelic is incorporated into all inspection scoping activities.

Inspectors examine the quality of young people's experiences and outcomes. They also evaluate the success of the educational centre in improving the quality of Gaelic education. In the case of Gaelic Medium provision, this includes looking at the educational centre's implementation of the principles of immersion. The evidence gathered in relation to Gaelic provision contributes to the overall evaluations. The inspection also highlights what the educational centre does well and where it needs to improve its Gaelic provision.

Gaelic is the medium of communication during inspections of Gaelic Medium schools. This means, for example, using Gaelic while visiting classrooms, talking to young people and their teachers about learning, and when conducting meetings. All inspections use questionnaires to gather and analyse the views of children, parents, staff and other people who are involved with the young people. These questionnaires are available in Gaelic. Letters to parents are also translated into Gaelic.¹³

3. Wales

3.1. Welsh-medium education

Welsh-medium education provides opportunities for children and young people to achieve fluency in the Welsh language through studying a broad range of subjects and disciplines in Welsh. English skills are also developed in English lessons and through experiencing some aspects of the curriculum in English.

3.2. Bilingual education

In some areas of Wales, the provision of bilingual education is the norm. However, bilingual education varies across Wales. In some areas a large proportion of the curriculum is delivered through the medium of Welsh. In other places only a few subjects within the curriculum or a very a small number of lessons are taught through the medium of Welsh.

3.3. Welsh Medium Education Strategy

The Welsh Assembly published the Welsh Medium Education Strategy in 2010, setting five-year and ten-year targets. This Strategy sets the Welsh Assembly Government's national strategic direction. An accompanying Implementation Programme details the expectations.

Strategic Aims

The Welsh Medium Education Strategy has six strategic aims:

- Strategic aim 1: To improve the planning of Welsh-medium provision in the pre-statutory and statutory phases of education, on the basis of proactive response to informed parental demand

¹¹ Education Scotland (2011) Arrangements for inspecting schools in Scotland Edinburgh: ES

¹² Information provided by HMI Scotland December 2013

¹³ Education Scotland (2011) Arrangements for inspecting schools in Scotland Edinburgh: ES

- Strategic aim 2: To improve the planning of Welsh-medium provision in the post-14 phases of education and training, to take account of linguistic progression and continued development of skills
- Strategic aim 3: To ensure that all learners develop their Welsh-language skills to their full potential and encourage sound linguistic progression from one phase of education and training to the next
- Strategic aim 4: To ensure a planned Welsh-medium education workforce that provides sufficient numbers of practitioners for all phases of education and training, with high-quality Welsh language skills and competence in teaching methodologies
- Strategic aim 5: To improve the central support mechanisms for Welsh-medium education and training
- Strategic aim 6: To contribute to the acquisition and reinforcement of Welsh-language skills in families and in the community

3.4. **Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Annual report 2012–13**

Despite much activity, there has been little progress made against the strategy's targets. For example, it is unlikely that 25 per cent of seven-year-old children will be taught through the medium of Welsh by 2015. While there has been significant progress in the percentage of Year 9 learners assessed in Welsh first language, it has proved challenging to persuade older pupils to continue to speak Welsh. Indeed, the number of learners choosing Welsh at A-Level as a first language continues to cause concern to the Welsh-medium sector.¹⁴

3.5. **Inspections**

As a result of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy 2010, Welsh language provision has been incorporated within the Estyn Common Inspection Framework since 2010. Welsh-medium forms an integral part of the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF). The Quality and Effectiveness Framework for post-16 learning includes consideration of Welsh-medium and bilingual provision, with specific requirements integrated into self-assessment guidance to providers. Furthermore, Inspectors allocated to inspect Welsh-medium schools must be fluent in Welsh. This ensures that inspectors are able to conduct oral the in Welsh.¹⁵

¹⁴ Welsh Government (2013) *Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Annual report 2012–13* Cardiff: Welsh Government

¹⁵ Information provided by Estyn December 2013



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

15 January 2014

NIAR 862-2013

James Stewart

Parent Councils

1. Introduction

The Scottish Schools (Parent Involvement) Act 2006 established a new model of parent representation which came into effect on 1 August 2007. The Act replaced School Boards with Parent Councils, designed to be less formal and friendlier to encourage more parents to get involved school issues. The legislation means that all parents and carers of children at a school are automatically members of the Parent Forum for that school.

Each Parent Forum may then establish a Parent Council to represent the views of parents. The constitution of the Parent Council is determined by the Parent Forum and should reflect what it feels is best for the parents, the pupils and the school.

The Act placed responsibility on local authorities to improve parental involvement in three ways:

- learning at home;
- partnerships between school and home and;
- parental representation¹

2. Membership

Members of the Parent Council must be members of the school's Parent Forum: they must have a child attending the school. Only a member of the Parent Forum may chair a Parent Council for that school. Beyond this, the Act allows considerable flexibility for parents to decide the composition of the Parent Council for their school.

1 The Scottish Executive: Parents as partners in their children's learning toolkit Available at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/147410/0038822.pdf

Parents are encouraged to develop Parent Councils that reflect local circumstances. It is for members of a school's Parent Forum to decide what kind of Parent Council they want for their school, how it works and what it is called. However, parents can call on the support of education authority staff and the head teacher to help them decide on arrangements that will ensure an effective partnership with the school.

Some schools have decided to amalgamate their Parent Teacher Association with their Parent Council and some have decided to keep them separate.

Education Scotland reports that approximately 95% of schools have a Parent Council. The numbers of parents involved in Parent Councils varies between schools. Parent Councils in primary schools tend to be larger; sometimes 30+ depending on the size of the school. Where there is a large Parent Council, there is a tendency to establish sub-groups to progress specific themes.²

3. Functions

Parent Council can expect to influence decisions, to be listened to and be taken seriously. For example, Parent Councils have a role to play in the recruitment process for appointing the head and deputy head teacher of the school. Parent Council representatives can be involved in the shortlisting process and may sit on appointment panels.³

The function of Parent Councils falls broadly within the following four areas:

- supporting the school in its work with pupils;
- representing the views of parents;
- promoting contact between the school, parents, pupils, providers of nursery education and the community;
- reporting to the Parent Forum

3.1 Supporting the school

The Parent Council can support the work of the school in a variety of ways. It can:

- be involved in drawing up the school development plan and consider how parents might support its implementation;
- consider ways parents can be involved in children's learning to improve achievement;
- build positive relationships between parents and school staff;
- support the school in consulting with the wider parent forum on school policy decisions and other matters;
- use its own formal and informal channels for communicating about school events and how parents can become involved;
- fundraise to provide additional equipment and resources for the school;
- work with the head teacher and staff to devise events which are enjoyable, encourage parental participation and that suit the needs of parents

2 Information provided by Education Scotland

3 West Lothian Council Education Services (2013) Appointment of Head and Deputy Head Teachers

3.2 Representing the Views of Parents

A Parent Council can make representations to a school's head teacher, and the education authority, about the arrangements the school has to involve parents in the work of the school. The Parent Council should have arrangements in place for ascertaining the views of members of the forum on the standards and quality of education provided by the school.

The Parent Council can work with the school to see whether standards are improving or if there are areas where development might be needed. Councils are encouraged to consider how parents can be involved in supporting improvement in standards across a school.⁴

The Parent Council may be involved in consulting the Parent Forum about the full range of school policies. It can collate the views of parents and report them to the head teacher of the school and to the education authority. It can also make representations on such matters to other bodies, including the HM Inspectorate.

3.3 Promoting Contact with the Community

The Parent Council can play a key role in supporting the work of the school within the wider community. This includes parents of pupils at the school, parents of prospective pupils, the pupils themselves, providers of nursery education and community representatives.

Promoting contact can involve a variety of approaches, which include:

- fostering links with others whose work relates directly to children's education and learning e.g. local early years groups, childcare, nurseries, adult education and libraries;
- drawing on the experience and expertise of local elected councillors and other community representatives and promoting their involvement in its work and that of the school

The Parent Council should be open to ways of engaging with children and young people at the school. This may involve inviting representatives from the school's Pupil Council, or other representative pupil bodies, to meet with the Parent Council or to forward pupils' views on matters of interest to them.⁵

4. Accountability

The Parent Council is accountable to members of the Parent Forum. It should operate in an open manner and seek to ensure that all parents know how to communicate with members of the council if they need to do so. Discussions at Parent Council meetings should be open to the public, unless the matters to be discussed relate to issues which may impact upon the confidentiality of individuals or that of the school.

4.1 Financial arrangements

The education authority must allocate reasonable funding to enable the Parent Council to meet the administrative costs incurred in carrying out its functions. This includes training costs and the cost of appointing a clerk. The Parent Council and the education authority should discuss what support the authority can provide to assist it with its financial arrangements. In particular, the authority should seek to agree arrangements whereby they can minimize, as far as possible, the administrative burden on the Parent Council of appointing a clerk.

The Parent Council can raise funds by any means, other than by borrowing, and can receive gifts. In addition, it can also enter into contracts and agreements

4 The Scottish Government: Guidance on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 Available at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/08094112/5

5 The Scottish Government: Guidance on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 Available at www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/09/08094112/5

5. Combined Parent Council

The Act makes provision for the establishment of a Combined Parent Council, covering two or more schools, where this is the expressed wish of the majority of parents, in each school. It is the responsibility of the Combined Parent Council to agree a name by which it will be known and to let the head teachers of the represented schools, members of the Parent Forums and pupils know when it has been established.

6. Support and Resources

Education Scotland has worked on resources to support parents. This includes the development of a toolkit.⁶ This resource contains some practical tools, such as a sample letter to the parent forum, practical issues around the membership, frequency of meetings and a guide to finance.

6 Education Scotland Toolkit: http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/Toolkit_tcm4-373859.pdf

Appendix 1: Sample Parent Council Constitution

Caldervale High School Constitution

1. This is the constitution for Caldervale High School Parent Council.
 2. The objectives of the Parent Council are:
 - To work in partnership with the school to create a welcoming school which is inclusive for all parents
 - To promote partnership between the school, its pupils and all its parents
 - To develop and engage in activities which support the education and welfare of the pupils
 - To identify and represent the views of parents on the education provided by the school and other matters affecting the education and welfare of the pupils.
 3. The membership will be a minimum of three parents of children attending the school. The maximum size is 20
 4. The Parent Council will be selected for a period of 3 years, after which they may put themselves forward for re-selection if they wish. Any parents of a child at the school can volunteer to be a member of the Parent Council. In the event that the number of volunteers exceeds the number of places set out in the constitution, members will be selected by Ballot. Anyone not selected to be a member of the Parent Council may be offered the opportunity to be part of any sub-groups set up by the Council.
 5. The Parent Council may co-opt up to 10 people to assist it with carrying out its functions.
- Co-opted members will serve for a period of one year after which time the Parent Council will review and consider requirements for co-opted membership.
- The number of parent members on the Parent Council must always be greater than the number of co-opted members.
6. The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer of the Council will be agreed by the Parent Council members immediately following its formation.
 7. The Parent Council is accountable to the Parent Forum for Caldervale High School and will make a report to it at least once each year on its activities on behalf of all the parents.
If 20 members of the Parent Forum request a special general meeting to discuss issues falling within the Council's remit, the Parent Council shall arrange this. The Parent Council shall give all members of the Forum at least 2 weeks' notice of the meeting and, at the same time, circulate notice of the matter, or matters, to be discussed at the meeting.
 8. The Annual Meeting will be held in April of each year. A notice of the meeting including date, time, and place will be sent to all members of the Parent Forum at least 2 weeks in advance. The meeting will include:
 - A Report on the work of the Parent Council and its committee(s)

- Selection of New Parent Council Members if required.
- Discussion of issues that members of the Parent Forum may wish to raise
- Approval of the Accounts and appointment of the Auditor.

9. The Parent Council will meet at least eight times in every School Session.

The quorum for meetings will be a minimum of three parents in attendance.

Should a vote be necessary to make a decision, each parent member at the meeting will have one vote, with the Chair having a casting vote in the event of a tie. Any two members of the Parent Council can request that an additional meeting be held, and all members of the Parent Council will be given at least two week's notice of date, time and place of the meeting.

If a Parent Council member acts in a way that is considered by other members to undermine the objectives of the Parent Council, their membership of the Parent Council shall be terminated if the majority of parent members agree. Termination of membership would be confirmed in writing to the member.

10. Copies of the minutes of all meetings will be available to all parents of children at Caldervale High School and to all teachers at the school. Copies will be available from the Secretary of the Parent Council/Clerk to the Parent Council and from the school office.

11. Meetings of the Parent Council shall be open to the public, unless the Parent Council is discussing an issue which it considers should be dealt with on a confidential basis.

In such circumstances, only members of the Parent Council and the headteacher, or his or her representative, can attend.

12. The Treasurer will open a bank or building society account in the name of the Parent Council for all Parent Council funds. Withdrawals will require the signature of the Treasurer and one other Parent Council member.

The Treasurer will keep an accurate record of all income and expenditure, and will provide a summary of this for each Parent Council meeting and a full account for the Annual Meeting. The Parent Council accounts will be audited by the auditor appointed at the previous Annual Meeting.

The Parent Council shall be responsible for ensuring that all monies are used in accordance with the objectives of the Parent Council.

13. The Parent Council may change its constitution after obtaining consent from members of the Parent Forum. Members of the Parent Forum will be sent a copy of any proposed amendment and given two weeks to respond to the proposal.

14. Should the Parent Council cease to exist, any remaining funds will be passed to the education authority to be used for the benefit of the school (or schools), where this continues.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

31 January 2014

NIAR 002-14

James Stewart

Inspections: Notification and Information

1. Introduction

Inspections of schools and colleges are carried out by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) in England, HM Inspectorate of Education in Scotland (HMI), and Estyn in Wales. In the Republic of Ireland inspections are carried out by the Inspectorate. This briefing note outlines the **notice period** given to schools in advance of an inspections in the various jurisdictions. It also details the **information and documents** that the respective inspectorates request from schools.

2. Notification

In **England** a school is notified of its inspection at midday on the working day before the start of an inspection. However, Ofsted reserves the right to inspect any school without notice where this is judged to be appropriate by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector.

Inspection can take place at any point after five working school days in the autumn term. For example, if pupils return to school on a Wednesday, inspection can take place as early as the following Wednesday.¹

In **Scotland** primary schools and early years centres receive notification two weeks before the start of an inspection. Due to the need to arrange a wider range of meetings with

1

Ofsted (2014): *The Framework for School Inspection*; Available at: <http://nia1.me/1vl>

outside partners, post-primary schools receive notification three weeks before the start of an inspection.²

Welsh schools receive four working weeks' notice of an inspection.³ Schools receive two weeks' notice in the **Republic of Ireland**.

3. Information Requirements

England

Inspectors use a range of evidence for the initial identification of issues to be followed up in inspection, including performance data and the school's previous inspection report.

Inspectors are instructed to use evidence to develop an initial picture of the school's academic performance. The list of evidence outlined in the inspection handbook⁴ is not exhaustive. Inspectors may ask for any other documentation that will provide the evidence needed to make an accurate judgement. However, inspectors are instructed not to make unnecessary demands on schools or expect the documentation to be presented in a particular format.⁵

Inspection Documents

Ofsted requests that the following information is made available to inspectors:

- a summary of any school self-evaluation
- the current school improvement plan
- school timetable, staff list and times of the school day
- the single central record, which summarises the checks and vetting of all staff working with pupils
- all logs that record exclusions, pupils taken off roll, incidents of poor behaviour and incidents of bullying
- details of any off-site units run by the school or in partnership with other schools
- details about the school's use of alternative provision (Pupil Referral Units)
- up-to-date attendance information
- records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching
- information about the school's performance management arrangements
- documented evidence of the work of governors and their impact
- reports arising from any external evaluation of the school

Scotland

The school principal is sent a list of information requirements prior to inspection. Schools are asked to provide *only* the material on the list. The inspection team does not evaluate all aspects of a school's work. Inspectors discuss 'areas for focused attention' in order to prioritise their activities⁶.

2 Education Scotland (2011) *Arrangements for inspecting schools in Scotland*

3 Education Scotland (2013) *Guidance for the inspection of primary schools*

4 Ofsted *Inspection handbook*; Available at: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/school-inspection-handbook>

5 Information provided by Ofsted

6 Education Scotland (2011) *Arrangements for inspecting schools in Scotland*

The inspection priorities are influenced by a brief **self-evaluation summary form**, which a school completes and submits prior to the inspection. The self-evaluation summary is a concise, evaluative paper (**no more than** three sides of A4). Education Scotland places emphasis on the importance of self-evaluation stating:

“When self-evaluation evidence is robust and convincing, we use it as part of the inspection evidence. It can also help identify good practice and innovation that Education Scotland may wish to look at in more detail as part of our continuing engagement after the inspection has been completed⁷.”

Inspection Documents

Schools are advised to send *only* the following items in advance of an inspection⁸:

- the most recent and previous annual report
- the current and previous school improvement plan
- names of all teaching and other staff, and details of their responsibilities
- any job-sharing arrangements
- school and class timetables
- information about how children's achievements are gathered and tracked
- self-evaluation summary paper
- completed child protection pro forma
- evidence of completed meetings

A confidential questionnaire is also distributed to pupils, parents, and staff at the beginning of the notification period. Additionally, the documents outlined in Appendix 1 are to be made available on Monday of the inspection week.

HMI state that the volume of documentation provided varies widely from school to school. The inspectorate suggests that the extent and quality of the documentation provided reflects the effectiveness of the school's systems for self-evaluation and quality improvement.⁹

In the course of an inspection, inspectors may ask for additional documentation to help them evaluate the school's work. It is suggested that this means evaluations are grounded in as full an evidence base as possible. Although, the main emphasis is on professional discussion and requests for documentation are kept to a minimum, legislation allows inspectors to look at any aspect of a school's documentation.¹⁰

Wales

The inspectorate contacts the school by telephone to set up the arrangements for the inspection. During this discussion, the inspectorate discusses the specific information required before the inspection. Inspectors make arrangements for receiving documents in electronic form through a **Virtual Inspection Room (VIR)**.¹¹

The VIR is a central location for collating and storing the evidence required by the inspection team. Information templates and supporting documentation is also available in the VIR.

7 Education Scotland Website *Being ready for inspection*: Available here <http://nia1.me/1v7>

8 Education Scotland *Briefing note for head teachers of secondary schools* Available at: <http://nia1.me/1vm>

9 Information provided by Education Scotland

10 As above

11 Estyn *Important supporting information about the inspection process*; Available at: <http://www.estyn.gov.uk/download/publications/8490.3/guidance-for-the-inspection-of-secondary-schools-from-september-2010/>

When schools are notified of inspection, they receive information on how to conduct a **survey** of pupils and parents. The surveys form part of the pre-inspection evidence. The inspectorate collects, collates and analyses the learner and parent questionnaire responses and presents the outcomes in the inspection report.¹²

Estyn maintains that inspectors do not wish to overburden schools with information requests. Therefore, as far as possible, they refrain from asking for information that is **not** on the following list of documents.

Inspection Documents

Inspectors may ask for the following documentary evidence¹³:

- self-evaluation report
- assessment data standardised reading and numeracy test scores, and any value added analyses
- evidence of pupils' abilities at intake
- pupils' and parents/carers' views as expressed in questionnaires
- pupils' induction, transfer and integration arrangements
- statements, individual education plans, individual behaviour plans, personal education plans, annual reviews and transition plans, screening and assessment information and procedures
- curriculum documentation, plans, policies, option schemes and schemes of work
- records of pupils' progress and achievement
- the school improvement plan
- details of any complaints or appeals
- information on staffing and job descriptions for staff
- minutes of meetings
- documents related to the work of the school council
- the latest budget statement and auditor's report
- data on attendance, behavioural incidents, and permanent and fixed-term exclusions

Republic of Ireland

Schools are required to engage in self-evaluation of teaching and learning. The inspection model enables schools to report on the progress they have made in their self-evaluation and allows inspectors to take account of this.¹⁴

Inspection Documents

Schools are asked to provide the documents listed below for inspection:

- a completed school information form, which will include the school's reflection on and description of its work in relation to key aspects of education provision
- child protection policy
- code of behaviour, including its anti-bullying policy
- self-evaluation reports

¹² Estyn (2013) *Guidance for the inspection of secondary schools*

¹³ As above

¹⁴ Department of Education and Skills (2013) *A guide to whole school evaluation, management leadership and learning*

- school improvement plans or action plans
- individual teachers' written plans
- individual teachers' timetables
- assessment records
- roll books and registers
- minutes of board meetings

The list above is not exhaustive; additional information may be requested by inspectors. For example, he/she may request curriculum planning documents, to be made available.

Questionnaires for parents are sent to the school for distribution in advance of the inspection. The school is asked to have the completed questionnaires ready for collection on the first day of the in-school phase of the inspection. The principal is asked to make school staff aware of an on-line questionnaire in advance of the in-school phase.¹⁵

Appendix 1

Schools inspected by HMI Scotland are advised to provide the following information on **Monday of the inspection week**.¹⁶

- Achievement Information used by the school to monitor and evaluate school and young people's performance
- Access to pupils' progress records
- Brief details of any out-of-school activities, after-school care and supported study initiatives
- List of young people with additional support needs and brief details of support provided. Details of young people with regular/long-term absence
- List of young people who are looked-after at home and away from home
- Access to records of complaints, bullying and racial incidents, accidents, administration of medicine and fire log
- Brief details of any established/regular contacts with individuals or organisations in the local community
- Any guidance for teachers and/or staff handbook (if available)
- List of CPD carried out during the last session and planned for this session
- Sample of agendas and minutes of Parent Council meetings, pupil council meetings and staff meetings
- A sample from different year groups of reports for parents regarding children's progress/learning
- Examples of school communications with parents and the wider community e.g. newsletters, prospectus, parent handbook
- Copies of school timetables

¹⁵ Department of Education and Skills (2013) *A guide to whole school evaluation, management leadership and learning*

¹⁶ Education Scotland *Briefing note for head teachers of secondary schools*; Available at: <http://nia1.me/1vn>



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

31 January 2014

NIAR 033-14

James Stewart

Inspectorate Governance and Budget: England, Scotland and Finland

1. Introduction

This paper summarises who has the power to make decisions and how account is rendered with respect to the school inspectorates in England, Scotland and Finland. It also makes reference to the budgetary arrangements for the inspectorates in England and Scotland.

2. England: Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)

Ofsted is an independent body which reports directly to Parliament. It inspects and regulates services which provide education and skills for learners of all ages. **Her Majesty's Chief Inspector** (HMCI), as Accounting Officer for Ofsted, is ultimately responsible for the management and control of resources.

2.1. Ofsted Board

The Ofsted Board is responsible for setting the strategic priorities, targets and objectives for Ofsted. It is responsible overseeing Ofsted's corporate governance and ensuring that the Chief Inspector's functions are performed efficiently and effectively.¹

1 Ofsted Website *The Ofsted Board* Available at: <http://nia1.me/1vh>

Board Membership

The Ofsted Board comprises of the Chair, HMCI and between five and ten other Board Members. The Chair works closely with HMCI and his/her responsibilities include leading the Ofsted Board to determine Ofsted's strategic priorities and targets.

On 1 February 2014 the Education Secretary (Michael Gove) announced that the Chair of Ofsted is to be replaced. Baroness Sally Morgan will not be given a second three-year term.²

In order to carry out its functions, the Ofsted Board will:

- provide oversight and approval of Ofsted's Strategic Plan, which sets out the strategic priorities against which Ofsted's priorities are to be judged
- monitor information about Ofsted's performance

Sub-committees

The Ofsted Board has two formal sub-committees:

The **Chair's Committee** is responsible for the annual assessment of HMCI and the framework for evaluating Board performance.

The **Audit Committee** is responsible for providing advice and assurance to the Ofsted Board on the effectiveness of internal controls, risk management and governance arrangements. It also oversees internal and external audit arrangements.

Ofsted's internal auditors reviewed the Corporate Governance Framework in July 2011 and provided assurance that the arrangements in place are effective.

2.2. Operations Executive Board

The Operations Executive Board, chaired by Ofsted's Chief Operating Officer, is responsible for scrutinising monthly finance, performance and risk reports.

The Chief Operating Officer is responsible for briefing HMCI on significant issues raised by the Operations Executive Board.

3. Funding

Ofsted is a non-ministerial government department and its funding is provided by HM Treasury through the Estimates process.

The Estimates process is explained at the following link: <http://nia1.me/1ve>

Ofsted 2013-14 Main Estimate can be accessed at: <http://nia1.me/1vf> (the URL must be copied and pasted into an internet browser)

Ofsted's budget is reducing over five years from:

£193m in 2010–11 to £142m in 2014–15

This follows substantial savings of 19% since the creation of Ofsted in 2007.

Ofsted is required to develop plans to deliver against its statutory requirements, while operating within the funding boundaries set out in the spending review.³

² TES Connect Article; Available at: <http://nia1.me/1vg>

³ Ofsted *Annual Report and Accounts 2011-12*

4. Scotland: HM Inspectorate Education (HMIE)

Education Scotland was established in 2011 and is charged with supporting quality and improvement in Scottish Education.

It brought the work of two bodies together: **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Learning**; and **Teaching Scotland**.

As the Inspectorate now sits within Education Scotland it operates under the governance arrangements laid out by the unified body.

The status of Education Scotland as an Executive Agency means that it operates independently, whilst remaining directly **accountable to Scottish Ministers** for the standards of its work. Education Scotland is headed by a **Chief Executive**.

4.1. Roles and Responsibilities

Scottish Ministers

Scottish Ministers set the strategic objectives for the education system in Scotland.⁴ They are responsible for:

- approving the agency's corporate and business plans
- holding the Chief Executive to account for Education Scotland's performance
- setting budgets for Education Scotland
- receiving the annual report and audited financial accounts from the Chief Executive

The Scottish Government Directorates

Scottish Government **directorates** are responsible for progressing governmental strategic objectives. The **Director-General Learning and Justice (DLG)** is responsible for providing Ministers with external advice on the strategic role and direction of Education Scotland.

The DLG is also tasked with providing **support and constructive challenge** to the Chief Executive at a strategic level.

Education Scotland's Chief Executive

The **Chief Executive** is answerable to the Scottish Ministers for the performance of Education Scotland and for planning its future development. Responsibility for all operational matters is delegated to the Chief Executive by the Director-General Learning and Justice. The Chief Executive's principal duties include:

- responsibility for the achievement of the Education Scotland's strategic priorities
- the operations and financial management of Education Scotland
- providing regular briefings to Ministers on progress
- determining the scale and priorities of the agency's inspection/review
- acting as Accountable Officer for Education Scotland's resource management
- preparing and publishing annual reports, accounts, corporate and business plans

The **Chief Executive** reports to the **Director of Learning** on all expenditure and income administered by Education Scotland. He/she is liable to be called to appear before the Public Audit Committee of the Scottish Parliament.

Director of Inspection

The Director of Inspection is responsible for maintaining stakeholder confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the Scottish inspection model.⁵ The Director of Inspection is a member of the senior management of Education Scotland, and his/her duties include:

- governing the conduct of inspections
- ensuring that inspection activities comply with the code of practice
- ensuring the provision of an appropriate complaints procedure
- reporting to Education Scotland's Audit and Risk Committee on compliance
- taking responsibility for the integrity of the inspection analysis

Audit and Risk Committee

The remit of the Audit and Risk Committee includes supporting the Chief Executive with regard to the efficient and effective use of resources. The Committee also supports the Chief Executive in reviewing risk and governance arrangements and evaluates the effectiveness of the financial and management controls within Education Scotland.

External audit

Education Scotland is subject to external audit by the Auditor General for Scotland (AGS).

Education Scotland's Corporate Plan

Education Scotland's Corporate Management Group develops and publishes a corporate plan which sets out the strategic management priorities for the agency over a three-year period. It is submitted to Scottish Government ministers for approval.

The corporate plan is the basis for **evaluating the performance** of Education Scotland. At the end of the three-year period, Education Scotland produces a report about its impact and effectiveness. Education Scotland state that they work closely with Scottish Ministers and their policy advisors. Therefore, it is suggested that the evidence and analysis provided feeds directly into the policy-making process.⁶

5. Funding

The Education Scotland budget is allocated as a discrete element within the overall budgetary provision for the **Learning and Justice portfolios**.

The creation of Education Scotland in 2011 combined the resources and functions of Learning and Teaching Scotland, HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), the National Continuing Professional Development Team and the Scottish Government's Positive Behaviour Team.

The operating budget for Education Scotland during 2012/13 was £32.5 million.

Education Scotland is planning for a gradual reduction in its core funding over the period during 2013 -2016. The agency states that the creation of Education Scotland has led to over £10 million in efficiencies.⁷

During 2011/12 the HMIE annual budget was £8.6 million.⁸

5 Education Scotland *Framework Document* Available at:<http://nia1.me/1vi>

6 Education Scotland (2013) *Transforming lives through learning: Corporate Plan 2013-2016*

7 Education Scotland (2013) *Transforming lives through learning: Corporate Plan 2013-2016*

8 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education response to Freedom of Information Request: Reference Number 12/01656

6. Finland

Finnish education policy is geared towards flexibility of administration. The governance of education is grounded on delegation and support. There is not an Ofsted style inspection system in Finland; these activities were discontinued in the early 1990s.⁹

However, schools have a statutory duty to self-evaluate and participate in external evaluations. Evaluation is used to collect data which informs education policy decisions. The Ministry of Education and Culture conducts school evaluations through the following independent bodies:

- National Board of Education
- Education Evaluation Council

These institutions will be merged into a single body known as the Education Evaluation Centre during 2014.¹⁰

6.1. National Board of Education

The National Board of Education is responsible for the national assessments of learning outcomes. The main purpose is to evaluate to what degree national core curricula objectives have been achieved. Evaluations are **sample-based** and carried out, adhering to the Ministry of Education and Culture's evaluation plan.¹¹ Results are sent to schools for development purposes but are *not* used to rank schools.¹²

6.2. Education Evaluation Council

Schools conduct **self-evaluations** and participate in external evaluations conducted by the Education Evaluation Council (EEC). The EEC is an **independent** specialist organisation for educational evaluation and development.¹³ The operations of the EEC are organised by the Evaluation Council Secretariat, which runs as a separate institute, based at the University of Jyväskylä.

The responsibilities of the EEC are:

- to assist the Ministry of Education and Culture and to support education providers in matters concerning educational evaluation
- to organise external evaluations of education as well as evaluations of the activities of education providers
- to develop external evaluation of education
- to co-operate with international stakeholders

The aims of the EEC are:

- to gather and analyse information in order to provide a basis for national education policymaking and educational development
- to gather and analyse information so as to provide a basis for local efforts and decision making on educational development
- to support students' learning, educators' work and school development

9 The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education Descriptions of the legal system for assessment - Finland Available at <http://nia1.me/1w>

10 Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland (2013) *Education evaluation plan for 2012–2015*

11 As above

12 OECD (2103) *Education Policy Outlook Finland*

13 The Finnish Education Evaluation Council Website: Available at <http://nia1.me/1vw>

6.3. Teacher Evaluation

There is no national evaluation system for teachers. Instead, guidelines for teacher appraisals are outlined in contracts between the local government employer and the teachers' trade union. Most schools have an **annual performance review system** where the principal works with a teacher to agree how they can develop and identify areas for in-service training.¹⁴

Appendix 1: Education Scotland Accountability Diagram





Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

Paper 000/00

04/12/13

NIAR 863-2013

James Stewart

Complaints Procedures for School Inspections

1. Introduction

Inspections of schools and colleges are carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland (ETI), Ofsted in England, HM Inspectorate of Education in Scotland, and Estyn in Wales. In the Republic of Ireland inspections are carried out by the Inspectorate.

Each of the jurisdictions has established respective complaints procedures. This paper summarises these processes with respect to school inspections. For each jurisdiction, it indicates the extent to which the complaints process is independent of the inspectorate and outlines whether complaints or appeals can lead to a revised inspection outcome.

2. Northern Ireland

Key Points

- All inspection findings are subject to internal moderation;
- Informal resolution of complaints is the ETI's preferred outcome. If informal proceedings are unsuccessful they are followed by two formal stages;
- Formal Complaint Stage 1: A **written complaint** which is investigated by an inspector with no previous involvement in the school inspection;
- Formal Complaint Stage 2: The Chief Inspector assigns an investigating officer to carry out an **internal review** of the handling of the initial investigation;

- If a school is not satisfied after completing the ETI's complaints procedure, it can refer the complaint to The Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland for an independent investigation into maladministration;
- None of the complaints received by the ETI have resulted in inspection findings being overturned.

2.1 Internal Moderation

During an inspection, the provisional evaluation outcomes are agreed by the inspection team at a moderation meeting. This usually happens on the Thursday of the inspection week (for a 5 day inspection) and on the final day of a short inspection (2 day inspection). The inspection outcomes are then communicated to the Managing Inspector who has a key role in ensuring consistency of inspection outcomes. The ETI states that the Managing Inspector will challenge inspection outcomes, where necessary.¹

The inspection team leaves a written summary of the key findings with the school Board of Governors at the end of the verbal report which is held on the Friday of the week of the inspection (or on day 2 of short inspections).

This summary includes a statement which reads:

This document is confidential to the staff and Board of Governors. Inspection performance levels are provisional, subject to moderation through ETI's quality assurance process and are not final until the report is published. The Reporting Inspector will mediate any changes, as a result of moderation, to the Principal.

Where a Managing Inspector has concerns about the accuracy of the overall inspection evaluation it is brought to the attention of the Assistant Chief Inspector (ACI). If the matter remains unresolved, the ACI will bring the matter to the attention of the Chief Inspector. Discussions are held with the Reporting Inspector throughout this process. The Chief Inspector has overall accountability for inspection outcomes.²

2.2 Complaints Procedure

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) updated its complaints procedure in September 2012. The complaints procedure is the ETI's only mechanism for an individual or organisation to make a formal complaint about any aspect of its work.

The ETI advises that the complaints procedure cannot be used to contest the professional judgements/evaluations of inspectors because their findings are unwelcome or because change is promised or implemented after the inspection. However, the ETI complaints procedure states that it will admit to being mistaken where this is clearly supported by the facts, or where it agrees that there have been serious factual errors in its work.³

The ETI states that the number of complaints it receives is very low given the large number of inspections that take place. An independent survey of professionals in a school leadership role was conducted by NISRA in 2012-13. The results indicated that 93% of the 120 respondents reported that they felt that they had been treated fairly during an inspection.⁴

However, the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) maintains that there is no appeals procedure in relation to school inspections. INTO points out that all complaints are dealt

1 Information provided by the Department of Education (December 2013)

2 Information provided by the Department of Education (December 2013)

3 ETI (2012) Complaints Procedure Bangor: DE

4 As above

within internally with no independent appeal mechanism⁵. None of the complaints received by the ETI have resulted in inspection findings being overturned.⁶

Informal Resolution

The ETI's complaints procedure states that, in most circumstances, an issue should be resolved at an informal level. The ETI recommends that concerns should be raised with the Reporting Inspector (RI) at the earliest convenience. The RI is then tasked with resolving the matter during, or immediately following the inspection.⁷

Formal Written Complaint

If it has not been possible to resolve concerns informally, a formal complaint can be made. This can be made in writing at any stage during an inspection or up to 12 weeks after the visit. ETI will not normally delay publishing an inspection report while it investigates a complaint.

Complaints are investigated by an investigating officer who has no previous involvement with the case. Along with the consideration of evidence provided by the school, the investigation involves contact with the individual inspector or inspection team whose work or report is being complained about. A written response should be received within 20 working days of the complaint being received.⁸

The response includes:

- the outcome of the investigation indicating whether ETI has upheld, partially upheld or not upheld the complaint;
- where ETI have upheld or partially upheld the complaint, what action they are taking to address the issue and to make sure it does not happen again; and
- what a school can do if it disagrees with ETI's decision.

Internal Review

If the complainant is unhappy with the way in which ETI has investigated the written complaint an Internal Review can be requested. The Chief Inspector then assigns an investigating officer, normally a managing inspector, to consider the request and carry out a review of the handling of the Stage 1. This officer will have had no previous involvement in the case. The Chief Inspector will normally respond to the school within 20 working days and will advise:

- whether the previous investigation was thorough, fair and objective;
- whether the Internal Review upholds the outcomes of the previous investigation, or amends or rejects them;
- what actions, if any, will be taken as a result of the Internal Review; and
- what a school can do if it is not satisfied with the outcome of the Internal Review.

The Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

If a complainant is not satisfied after completing ETI's complaints procedure, it can refer the complaint to The Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. Complaints referred to the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland pertain to maladministration rather than appeals relating to inspection results.

5 INTO (2013) Response to the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Education Inquiry into ETI and the School Improvement Process Belfast: INTO

6 Information provided by the Department of Education (December 2013)

7 ETI (2012) Complaints Procedure Bangor: DE

8 As above

3. England

Key Points

- Informal resolution of complaints is the Ofsted's preferred outcome. This is known as Step 1;
- There is an opportunity to raise concerns about the accuracy of an inspection report as part of a response to the factual accuracy check of the draft;
- Step 2 is a formal complaints process whereby the actions of inspectors are investigated. Step 2 cannot alter the grading of an inspection;
- Step 3 is an internal review carried out by a Senior Manager and **can** result in the moderation of an inspection grade;
- There is a provision for an external review which can be requested from the Independent Complaints Adjudication Service for Ofsted (ICASO) as an independent body. The Adjudicator **cannot** overturn the inspection judgements or decisions made by Ofsted.⁹

3.1 Overview of Procedure

Ofsted published a document entitled 'Complaints about Ofsted' in April 2013. The document states that Ofsted will act swiftly to correct any factual errors in inspection reports. However, Ofsted states that it will not change its inspection judgements simply because they are disappointing to a school, or because improvements in provision have happened since the inspection or are promised in the future. Ofsted's complaints procedure follows three steps.

Step 1: Informal Complaint

Ofsted encourages that, in the first instance, all complaints about its work are raised directly with the individuals concerned as soon as these arise. If a concern is about an Ofsted inspection or inspector, this should be raised with the lead inspector as soon as possible during the inspection visit. This includes concerns about the inspection process, how the inspection is being conducted, or the inspector's judgements.

There is a further opportunity to raise concerns about the accuracy of an inspection report as part of a response to the factual accuracy check of the draft report. Concerns are considered as part of a quality assurance process, prior to the finalised report being published. This process allows an opportunity to resolve concerns prior to the preparation and publication of the final inspection report.¹⁰

Step 2: Formal Complaint

If concerns about an inspection have not been resolved at Step 1, a formal complaint can be raised with Ofsted. When a school is judged to have 'serious weaknesses' or to 'require special measures', **these judgements are not reconsidered under Step 2** of the complaints policy. Ofsted advises that all such judgements are always subject to thorough and robust moderation procedures prior to authorisation of the judgement by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector.

Furthermore, it is stated that the school contributes to this moderation process and may comment on the inspection findings prior to publication of the report. Although the inspection grade cannot be challenged at Step 2, complaints about inspector conduct and the inspection process can be considered at this stage.

Written responses are provided within 30 days for all complaints investigated at Step 2. Responses provide a conclusion as to whether or not the complaint has been upheld. The response will include an explanation of any steps that Ofsted will take as a result of the investigation.¹¹

9 Ofsted (2013) Complaints about Ofsted Manchester: Ofsted

10 Ofsted (2013) Complaints about Ofsted Manchester: Ofsted

11 As above

Step 3: Internal Review

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled, a review of the complaint process can be requested. This should be submitted within 15 working days of the date of the response to the original complaint.

When an inspection has judged a school to require 'special measures' or to have 'serious weaknesses', requests for a review of the **moderation of judgements** process will be carried out under Step 3 of this policy.

The internal review is carried out by a senior manager in Ofsted with no previous involvement in the investigation of the complaint. The reviewing officer decides whether or not the original complaint was investigated fairly and properly in line with published policy. Ofsted provides a written response within 30 working days. This is the final step within Ofsted's internal complaints handling procedure.

Independent and external review of Ofsted's complaint handling

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the responses there is a provision for an external review, which can be requested from the Independent Complaints Adjudication Service for Ofsted (ICASO). This must be done within three months from the date of the response letter following an internal review by Ofsted.

The role of the Adjudicator is to investigate the manner in which Ofsted has dealt with a complaint and to provide advice to improve Ofsted's complaints handling. **The Adjudicator cannot overturn the inspection judgements or decisions made by Ofsted.** If complainants are not satisfied with the outcome of the adjudication service review, they can contact the Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman.

4. Scotland

Key Points

- Schools are advised to speak to the Managing Inspector or a member of the inspection team whilst the inspection is on-going if they have a concern.
- HM Inspectorate of Education in Scotland does not accept challenges to evaluations as part of inspection or review.
- If a service user feels that HM Inspectorate has not followed **due process** during the course of an inspection or review, HM Inspectorate will accept and investigate that complaint, adhering to the complaints handling procedure.¹²

4.1 Overview or Procedure

In Scotland inspectors are viewed more as coaches than external examiners. The process is collaborative, with inspectors and the school cooperating throughout the process. Self-evaluation is a key aspect of the approach. It has been suggested that teachers are more likely to view external inspection in a developmental manner rather than a judgemental one.¹³

HM Inspectorate of Education in Scotland has a complaints handling procedure. However, this procedure **cannot** be used to challenge evaluations as part of an inspection. The complaints handling policy states that a school has the opportunity to provide all of the evidence needed for the inspection team to reach its evaluations.

If there is a problem during an inspection, schools are advised to speak to the Managing Inspector or a member of the inspection team. HM Inspectorate suggests that it is easier to resolve issues whilst the inspection is on-going.

12 Education Scotland (2012) Complaints Handling Procedure Livingstone: Education Scotland

13 Perry (2013) Approaches to school inspection Belfast: The Northern Ireland Assembly

However, if a service user feels that HM Inspectorate has not followed **due process** during the course of an inspection or review, HM Inspectorate accept and investigate that complaint, adhering to the complaints handling procedure outlined below.

Stage 1: Front Line Resolution

This could involve giving an on the spot apology and offering an explanation where something has gone wrong, taking immediate action to resolve the issue.

Stage 2: Investigation

- This could involve a detailed internal investigation. When looking into complaints at Stage 2 HM Inspectorate will:
- discuss a complaint to confirm why a complainant remains unhappy and what outcome they are looking for; and
- give a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If a complainant remains unhappy after HM Inspectorate has fully investigated a complaint the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) can be asked to consider the complaint.

5. Wales

Key Points

- Estyn's complaints-handling procedure does not deal with challenges to inspection judgements;
- The procedure applies to issues including the standard and quality of services or products; the content of resources or websites; the conduct of a staff member; and specific inaccuracies;
- Complaints about an inspection must be made in the period between the start of the on-site part of an inspection through to the date of publication of the inspection report. Estyn does not accept complaints about an inspection once the report is published unless there are exceptional circumstances.

5.1 Overview of Procedure

Estyn reviewed its complaints handling procedure in April 2012. However, the procedure does not deal with challenges to inspection judgements. Indeed, once an Estyn inspection report has been submitted, the school has no right of appeal or challenge against the outcome of the inspection and judgements.¹⁴

There is an emphasis on dialogue and communication throughout the inspection process, which includes a formal feedback meeting, prior to the report, between the inspection team and the head teacher, in which the findings are shared and discussed. There is an opportunity for a school to raise concerns and counter arguments against the inspection team's provisional findings. However, even at this point, the Estyn guidance says that 'judgements may be clarified, although they are not negotiable'.¹⁵

Estyn will, nevertheless, accept complaints about the inspection **process**. Normally, these must be made in the period between the start of the on-site part of an inspection through to the date of publication of the inspection report. Estyn does not normally accept complaints

14 Estyn (2012) Complaints Handling Procedure Cardiff: Estyn

15 Estyn (2013) Guidance for the inspection of Primary Schools Cardiff : Estyn

about an inspection process once the report is published. It will not delay the publication of an inspection report while a complaint is being investigated.¹⁶

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

If Estyn does not succeed in resolving the complaint, it may be referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales about limited aspects of Estyn's work. The Ombudsman will not consider complaints relating to the professional judgements made by an inspection team, unless there were shortcomings of an administrative nature or where Estyn did not adhere to policy/procedure.

6. Republic of Ireland

Key Points

- resolving complaints at school level are preferable;
- the Assistant Chief Inspector can be called upon to resolve the concerns raised through contact with the teacher involved and the inspector;
- a Formal Review, undertaken by the Chief Inspector and external reviewer can result in an amended or rescinded inspection report

Overview of Procedure

The procedure for review may be used when a concern occurs regarding the work of the Inspectorate. A teacher or board of management affected by an inspection may seek a review where he/she or the board believes that one or more of the following circumstances can be shown to apply:

- that an inspector did not make reasonable efforts to carry out his/her duties in accordance with the Inspectorate's Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting;
- that an inspector, when conducting an evaluation, did not make reasonable efforts to comply with the published procedures for conducting the type of evaluation involved;
- that the written report arising from an inspection did not comply with the principles regarding reporting outlined in the Inspectorate's Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting;
- that the Inspectorate did not make reasonable efforts to comply with the published procedures concerning the publication of school inspection reports

Resolving a concern at the school level

If a teacher or a board of management of a school has a concern about the work of an inspector, the teacher or the chairperson (acting on behalf of the board) should bring the matter to the attention of the inspector. This should happen during the time that the inspection work is in progress in the school. The inspector and the teacher (or chairperson) should seek to resolve the matter informally.¹⁷

Formal Review

If a concern is not resolved informally, the teacher or chairperson of the board should contact the Assistant Chief Inspector of the Inspectorate region in which the school is situated. If the Chief Inspector considers that the issues fall within the scope of the Procedure for Review, he/she will initiate a formal review and appoint an external reviewer.

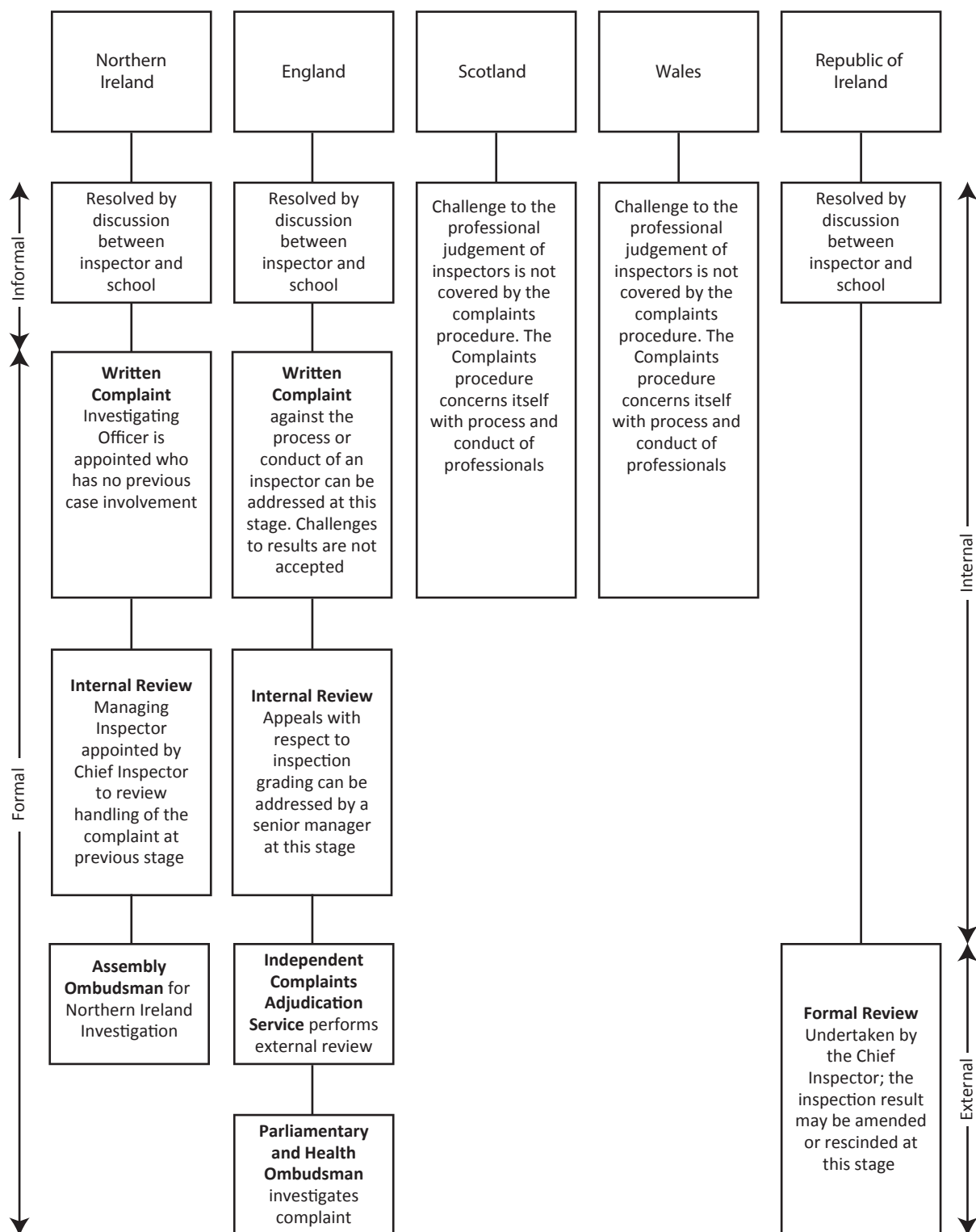
16 Estyn (2012) Complaints Handling Procedure Cardiff: Estyn

17 The Inspectorate (2006) Procedure for the Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13 (9) of the Education Act (1998) Dublin: Department of Education and Science

The Chief Inspector will propose a course of action after a formal review. This may include one or more of the following:

- that the inspection activity will be upheld and the report arising from it, if any, will be processed as normal in the Inspectorate and the Department;
- that the Inspectorate will acknowledge that an aspect (or aspects) of the inspection activity was not in keeping with the Inspectorate's Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting and, if appropriate, that an apology will be offered by the Inspectorate to those affected;
- that the Inspectorate will acknowledge the occurrence of an error or failing in the implementation of the Inspectorate's published procedures regarding inspection or reporting or publication of inspection reports, and, if appropriate, an apology will be offered by the Inspectorate to those affected;
- that the inspection report will be amended and reissued;
- that the inspection and/or the inspection report will be rescinded, in whole or in part, and a further inspection or part inspection, as appropriate, will be carried out by an inspector (or inspectors) unconnected with the original inspection and review;
- that the Inspectorate will undertake any other action considered appropriate by the Chief Inspector.

Figure 1: Summary of Complaints Procedures





Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

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James Stewart

Inspectorate Funding and Staffing Levels

1. Introduction

Inspections of schools and colleges are carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in Northern Ireland, The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) in England, HM Inspectorate, of Education (HMIE) in Scotland and Estyn in Wales. In the Republic of Ireland inspections are carried out by the Inspectorate.

It is difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the funding and resourcing of the inspectorates in the various jurisdictions as demographics, government structures and inspection approaches vary significantly. The inspectorates in question also have differing responsibilities. This makes comparison particularly challenging.

This paper outlines overall inspectorate resources and, by way of comparison, also provides information (where available) with respect to the funding allocated exclusively to **school inspections**.

2. Budgets

2.1 Northern Ireland: The Education and Training Inspectorate¹

The Department of Education (DE) states that the average estimated cost associated with the running of Education and Training Inspectorate is **approximately £5,600,000**. This does not take into account other back office support services provided by DE and the Northern Ireland

¹ Information provided by the Department of Education

Civil Service (NICS). For example Human Resources and Finance costs are supported by DE and NICS.

ETI is described as a 'unitary' inspectorate. It provides independent inspection services and policy advice for a number of departments. Much of ETI's work is for three Departments within the Northern Ireland Civil Service: the Department of Education; the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

In addition, all inspectors work across phases and some inspections can involve two or more phases. Therefore the Department of Education states that it is **not possible to provide an exact figure** for the exclusive costs allocated to **school inspections** because funding is not ring fenced for specific inspection activities.

However, by way of estimate, DE states that the approximate proportion of ETI's costs used to support Early Years (including nursery schools), Primary, Post-Primary, Special and Alternative Education Provision inspection activity, evaluation work, policy and advice work, district/specialist work, etc. is **71%**, which equates to **£3,976,000** (71% of the total budget of £5.6 million).

If Early Years services are excluded the approximate proportion of ETI costs used to support schools (Primary, Post-Primary, Special and Alternative Education Provision) is **64.5%** which equates to £3,612,000.

A target of a 20% budget reduction over the period of 2011-2015 has been set for the organisation.²

2.2 England: Ofsted

Ofsted's Annual Report and Accounts for 2012-13 show that the annual budget for this period was **£157,903,000**. This budget is not used exclusively to inspect schools. In addition to school inspections Ofsted's remit also includes the inspection of:

- early years and childcare
- children's centres and children's homes
- family centres
- adoption and fostering services and agencies
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
- children's services in local authorities
- initial teacher training
- further education colleges and 14 to 19 provision
- work-based learning and skills training
- adult and community learning
- probation services and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments

Ofsted also acts as a regulator for early years and children's social care services.

The *Framework for School Inspection*³ document sets out the statutory requirements for **school** inspections conducted under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. This includes all maintained schools and state-funded independent schools, and certain non-maintained independent schools.

2 ETI (2013) Evidence for NI Assembly Education Committee Inquiry into ETI

3 Ofsted (2014) The framework for school inspection: Available at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-school-inspection>

Ofsted states that the 2014-15 direct cost of section 5 school inspections is **£29,000,000**.

2.3 Wales: Estyn

The Estyn Annual Plan for 2013/14 indicates a total budget of **£12,627,000**. This budget is not used exclusively to inspect schools.

In addition to school inspections Estyn also inspects:

- pupil referral units
- further education
- independent specialist colleges
- adult community learning
- local authority education services for children and young people
- teacher education and training
- Welsh for adults
- work-based learning
- learning in the justice sector

Estyn does not allocate a budget exclusively to school inspections. However, the organisation is able to provide a breakdown of its work programme. This reveals the following indicative school inspection costs:

- Direct staffing costs (including Inspectors, Additional Inspectors, Peer Inspectors and Lay Inspectors): **£3,100,000**
- Allocation of general overheads, which includes corporate support, management, accommodation, ICT, etc. (50% of Estyn total): **£2,500,000**

Therefore, the total equivalent **school inspection** budget is **£5,600,000**

2.4 Republic of Ireland: The Inspectorate⁴

In 2013 the total gross expenditure of the Inspectorate was €11,530,000. This is equivalent to **£9,500,000** based on the current currency exchange rate.

In addition to school inspections, the responsibilities of the Inspectorate include:

- Inspection of centres for education
- Conducting national evaluations
- Promoting best practice and school improvement
- Reporting on curriculum provision
- Promoting the Irish language
- Providing advice to policy makers in the Department of Education and Skills and to the wider educational system

4 Information provided by the Inspectorate

Table 1: School Inspection Expenditure

	2008 € million	2009 € million	2010 € million	2011 € million	2012 € million	2013 € million
Pay	14.34	14.53	11.48	11.28	10.64	10.70
Non-Pay	1.56	1.01	0.80	0.79	0.84	0.83
Total Gross Programme Expenditure	15.90	15.54	12.28	12.07	11.48	11.53

The cost of inspecting schools exclusively was unavailable at the time of writing.

2.5 Scotland: HMIE

The annual budget of the Scottish inspectorate is approximately **£8,600,000**. At the time of writing Education Scotland had not provided information with respect to the budget associated exclusively to school inspections.

3. Summary

Table 2: Budget Summary

Jurisdiction	Total Inspectorate Budget	School Inspection Estimated Budget	Pupil Population	Total Number of Schools
Northern Ireland ⁵	£5,747,792	*£3,976,000	322,825	1,200
Scotland ⁶	£8,646,944	Not Available	681,573	2,722
England ⁷	£157,903,000	£29,000,000	8,200,000	24,328
Wales ⁸	£12,627,000	£5,600,000	464,868	1,704
Republic of Ireland ⁹	€11,530,000 (£9,500,000)	Not Available	889,270	4014

* This figure includes early years inspection, evaluation work, policy and advice work and district/specialist work.

The table above is a crude indication of comparative costs. It does not take into account the number or type of inspections carried out. Whilst the figures have limited comparative value, it is worth noting that the estimated school inspection budget per pupil equates to £12.32 in Northern Ireland (including early years) and £12.05 per pupil in Wales.

5 Information provided by the Department of Education

6 Education Scotland Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland, No.4 2013 Edition; Education Scotland FOI response REF: FOI/12/01656

7 OFSTED Annual Report and Accounts 2012-13 ; Information provided by Ofsted

8 Wales School Census Results, 2013; Estyn Annual Plan 2013-14; Information provided by Estyn

9 Education Department and Skills Key Statistics 2012/2013; Information provided by the Inspectorate

4. Staffing Levels

4.1 Northern Ireland: Education and Training Inspectorate¹⁰

The ETI currently employs:

- 3 Assistant Chief Inspectors and the Chief Inspector
- 8 Managing Inspectors
- 47 Inspectors

From an administrative perspective, ETI employs the following grades of civil servants:

- 1 Deputy Principal
- 2 Staff Officers
- 3 Executive Officers (FTE 2.41)
- 3 Administrative Officers (FTE 2.71)
- 3 Administrative Assistants (FTE 2.80)
- 1 Typist.

A total of **72** members of staff are employed by the ETI.

4.2 England: Ofsted¹¹

In March 2013, Ofsted directly employed **1,275** staff. Ofsted has continued to reduce its overall workforce numbers to help meet with spending review targets through a combination of voluntary exits and not recruiting to vacant posts. Accordingly, this figure is a reduction of 176 individuals compared with 31 March 2012.

4.3 Wales: Estyn¹²

In November 2013 Estyn employed:

- 46 permanent staff in Corporate Services
- 10 temporary staff in Corporate Services
- 3 permanent Senior Management Team (2 * Strategic Director and 1 * Her Majesty's Chief Inspector)
- 5 permanent Assistant Directors (Inspection)
- 58 permanent Inspectors
- 12 Additional Inspector Seconded

Estyn has a total of **134 employees**.

Estyn estimates that the staffing level associated with **school** inspections is equivalent of **34** (Full-time Equivalent) inspectors (75% HMI and 25% contracted-in Additional Inspectors) to deliver the inspection programme.

4.4 Republic of Ireland: The Inspectorate¹³

By the end of 2012, the number of serving inspectors was **124** (see Table 3). The Inspectors are supported by 10 members of the secretariat bringing the total number of employees to **134**.

10 Information provided by the Department of Education

11 Information provided by Ofsted

12 Information provided by Estyn

13 Information provided by the Inspectorate

Table 3: Inspectorate Staffing

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Inspectors	166	254	133	132	127	124
Secretariat	10	12	13	11	10	10

4.5 Scotland: HM Inspectorate

HMI Inspectorate Scotland had not provided staffing information at the time of writing.

Inspectorate Staffing Summary

Whilst by no means equivalent, Wales and Northern Ireland are the most comparable jurisdictions in terms of the school population and the number of schools.

ETI (Northern Ireland) employs 8 Managing Inspectors and 47 Inspectors. These Inspectors have responsibility for the inspection of other institutions in addition to their role inspecting schools.

Estyn (Wales) employs 58 permanent Inspectors and 12 Inspector Seconddees. Estyn estimates that the staffing level associated with **school inspections** is equivalent of 34 (Full-time Equivalent) inspectors.



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