Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
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Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

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The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement

Education and Training Inspectorate

An Evaluation of the Implementation of the
Revised Curriculum in Primary, Special and Post-Primary Schools 2008

April 2009

CONTENTS

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The revision of the Northern Ireland Curriculum is a major development in the schools' sector. The implementation strategy extends over a number of years and affects all levels of schooling. The Curriculum Advisory and Support Services (CASS) of the Education and Library Boards (ELBs), and in due course, the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) face a significant professional challenge in supporting implementation over the next period.

1.2   The successful implementation of the revisions is a key priority for the Department of Education (DE); evaluation is being conducted by the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) over the implementation period.

1.3   The Partnership Management Board (PMB), a strategic planning group representing the ELBs, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and their key partners, has drawn up and monitors the implementation strategy.

1.4   The professional development of teachers is an important element of the strategy. Much of the work is being carried out within schools. In addition, CASS and CCEA will provide training for principals and groups of teachers during the period of implementation.

1.5   The Inspectorate published an initial evaluation of the arrangements for the implementation of the revised curriculum in Primary, Special and Post-Primary Schools in December 2007, covering the period 2006-2007 and containing 21 recommendations for the attention of PMB, DE and schools themselves. This is the second ETI evaluation report and it covers 2008.

2.   EVIDENCE BASE

2.1   Since then, the Inspectorate has continued to scrutinise the PMB implementation programme through: visits by district inspectors to a range of 28 courses, conferences and implementation training days, mainly in the spring and summer terms 2008; attendance of inspectors as Assessors at PMB and its various sub-groups; scrutiny of PMB course evaluations and discussions with relevant officers; detailed interviews with primary and post-primary link officers in each Board and with CCEA officers involved centrally in the programme; focused visits by district inspectors to schools to observe practice, discuss implementation and identify examples of effective practice in 32 primary and 29 post-primary and four special schools in the autumn term 2008 (Annex 1) and discussions with the Principals' Forum and the Higher Education Institutions' Liaison Forum. Furthermore, the ongoing inspection programme in 37 schools in the autumn term 2008 and additional evidence from visits to 22 schools for the inspection survey on School Development Days, inform the findings reported here.

A number of quantitative terms are used in this report. These terms 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 for the curriculum, inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

3.   CONTEXT

3.1   In response to concerns raised by school principals and teacher unions, DE designated 2007/08 as a *Transitional Year* and the Inspectorate neither inspected nor reported on the beneficial impact in the classroom of the revisions to the curriculum.

3.2   From September 2008, the Inspectorate resumed reporting on educational impact through its inspection programme and district work.   Observation and reporting was approached in light of the letter of the 30th September 2008 to schools from the Chief Inspector and the Deputy Secretary of DE.

> *Over the implementation period, and consistent with the maintenance of high standards in learning and teaching, the approach of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) will focus on the identification of best practice in schools. Inspectors will encourage teachers and report good or excellent practice in relation to the implementation of the revised curriculum. In these ways, ETI will work to support schools and to draw effective practice to the attention of a wider audience. Over the same period, ETI will monitor and report on the quality of support provided for schools as they work to implement successfully the revised curriculum.*
>
> Dr Robson Davison, Deputy Secretary and Stanley Goudie, Chief Inspector

The findings reported here reflect fully that commitment and the report contains some illustrations of good practice seen.

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING

4.1 Prior to the survey visits in November 2008, the sample of primary, post-primary and special schools to be visited were asked to identify year 1, 5, and 8 lessons which exemplify good practice in relation to the implementation of the revised curriculum.

4.2 The overall quality of the teaching in the 217 lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; in nearly all of the lessons observed the quality of the teaching was good or better. Analysis of lessons by phase is shown in Annex 2.

EVALUATION OF LESSONS OBSERVED
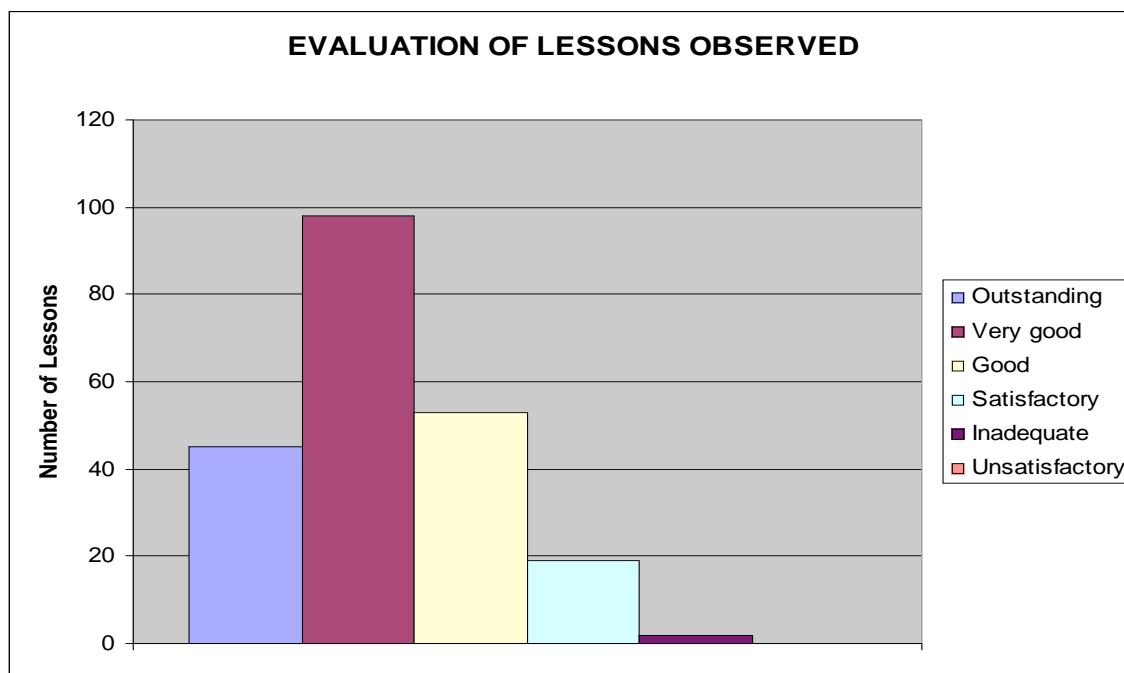
4.3 In the most effective lessons, the main enabling factors in teaching and learning across all phases are as follows.

In the planning:

- the teachers' appropriate use of themes promotes the connectivity of the learning areas and contextualises them within the children's and young people's experiences;

- good opportunities are provided to cater for individual learning requirements;

Planning adopts the 'Plan, Do, Review' cycle. The teachers discuss aspects of implementation and make progress within each key stage at their own pace, depending on the context, class dynamics and competing priorities. This year, emphasis is placed on "Doing" by discussing "how we do things around here". Planners have been revised to place greater emphasis on connected learning and topic webs, collapsing timetables to provide more flexibility to promote skills-based learning.

- children and young people are actively involved in the planning; and

- appropriate challenge is provided for those whose ability and understanding are in advance of their peer group and for those who are under-performing.

In the teaching:

- the teachers demonstrate a professional understanding of how to facilitate a curriculum which places skills alongside knowledge and learning;

- the teachers have high expectations of what the children and young people can achieve;

- differentiated teaching strategies are deployed to support the children and young people who have different learning styles;

- learning intentions are clearly defined and used effectively to support the learning and are reflected on during and/or at the end of the lessons, through well-focused plenary sessions;

- the children's and young people's specific learning needs are supported by a range of sensory experiences;

- play-based learning is well-planned, closely related to the children's experiences and extends their understanding and skills through appropriate themes and topics; and

- the skilled intervention of the classroom assistants supports the individual and collective needs of the children and young people.

In the learning:

For a lesson on comparing and contrasting two different types of poems about cats the Year 5 children agreed the success criteria at the beginning of the lesson. After good quality questioning and discussion, the children, in small groups, evaluated two pieces of work on the topic and marked them according to set criteria. They then marked their own group's piece of work and reported back to the rest of the class. The children were actively learning throughout, the groups were mixed ability and all six groups completed the tasks successfully.

- children and young people are enthused and engaged in their learning and enjoy good opportunities to display their creativity, independence and perseverance;

- appropriate use is made of assessment for learning strategies including self assessment and peer assessment to reinforce, evaluate and consolidate the learning;

- effective and imaginative use is made of educational technologies by the teachers and by the children and young people to support and consolidate the learning;

- good opportunities are provided for the children and young people to talk about their learning and how they can transfer the skills to a variety of contexts; and

- the successful embedding of thinking skills and personal capabilities and assessment for learning empowers the children and young people to become collaborative and independent learners.

In the evaluation:

- the teachers evaluate regularly the effectiveness of their teaching and the learning outcomes and use the information as a basis for subsequent planning, particularly in respect of children and young people who have special educational needs.

> *The principal feels that peer and self assessment and evaluation are important aspect of the revised curriculum because they enable the children to recognise success in their own and others' work and to focus on how they are learning, as well as on what they are learning. The Year 5 teacher begins the practice in PE. The children design physical games with several pieces of equipment – the children in other groups then participate and provide feedback.*
>
> *The Year 7 teacher models self-assessment for the children and teaches them how to provide meaningful feedback to peers and for themselves. His aim is for children to be aware of their own learning in term of style, strengths, problem areas and interests. The children are well prepared to make a meaningful assessment.*

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

4.4   In approximately one-third of the schools surveyed, the opportunities for assessing the children's knowledge, understanding and skills are not appropriately nor consistently integrated into the teachers' planning; as a consequence, it is difficult for the teachers to monitor, assess and evaluate the children's work on a systematic basis.

4.5   The characteristics in the less effective practice are:

- the lack of a whole-school strategy for assessment, both formative and summative, aligned with the requirements of the revised curriculum; and

- the absence of evaluative information and evidence to chart the progress and development of the children and young people's skills, knowledge and understanding and to inform future direction or action planning.

4.6   While the visits to schools indicate that the learning experiences of the children and young people have improved, it is too early, for example because appropriate assessment arrangements are not yet in place, for substantive evidence which would demonstrate that the standards in literacy and numeracy have improved concurrently with changes to the curriculum and pedagogy.

Foundation Stage children register themselves and are allowed free choice of activity during play-based learning sessions. The staff keep track of the activities. Opportunities are provided to explore a range of writing materials in various areas of play: there is evidence of emergent writing. Captions and labels round the room are used by the children to 'copy' write; one child used a picture dictionary.

The well balanced activities provide opportunity for counting, matching, sorting, construction, imaginative role play. The plenary session is well organised using circle time to review the learning intentions, identify the next steps, and the skills developed through play, for example, taking turns, sharing, working with others. There is a smooth transition to a guided reading session. The children are all purposefully engaged in the play activities and clearly enjoy the activities

The pace has slowed, there is more time for songs, rhymes, auditory processing games; children love the planning sessions, they are more involved in their learning, see it as purposeful and evaluate how they performed.

Children are independent, confident and willing to explore, love task time and don't see tasks as work; they are involved in the planning process; they have more ownership of the classroom; the curriculum is better suited to a variety of learning styles, building on children's experiences and previous learning; practical activities are more suited especially to boys. Teachers have a more holistic view of each child's development. Parental opinions are favourable.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS
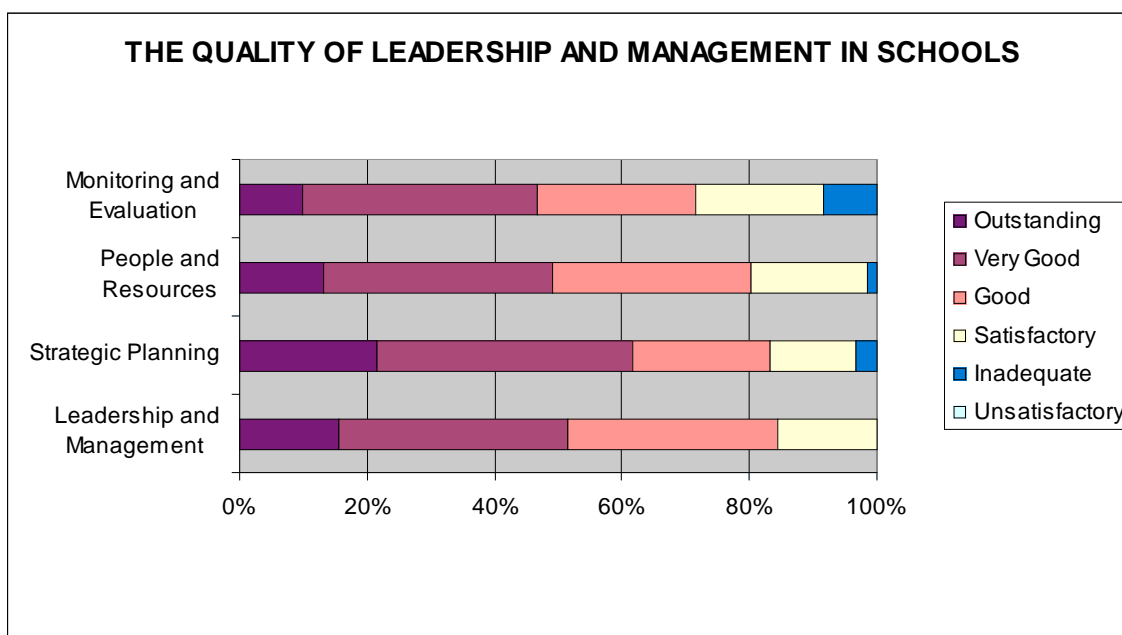
5.1 In most schools the quality of leadership and management and the strategic planning ranges from good to outstanding. While in almost half of the schools, the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process is very good to outstanding, there are weaknesses in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the revised curriculum in almost a third of the schools inspected.

5.2   The characteristics of effective leadership and management, at all levels, in the implementation process are as follows:

The school was aware in the early days of the Revised Curriculum that the management structure needed revised. The SMT and Governors approved the appointment of: a Foundation Stage coordinator; an Assessment for learning coordinator and a World around Us coordinator. This was an evolving process and not something that the school wished to rush into until all areas of the curriculum were integrated and staff could identify where the strengths and weaknesses lie. The coordinators work closely together and each heads up a team of five teachers, including classroom assistants, from across the key stages and the LSC. They examine collectively the planning and the children's work, draw up actions plans and team-teach on a monthly rota.

- the principal and staff have a clear vision for the strategic implementation of the revised curriculum which is identified as a key priority on the school development plan (SDP);

- the SDP identifies appropriate areas for improvement and development, underpinned by well-focused actions plans;

- the effective use of school development days to disseminate and review classroom practice;

- the use of Professional Review and Staff Development (PRSD) to help teachers focus effectively on the implementation of aspects of the curriculum;

- the capacity-building of staff and the appropriate use of staff development provided by the support bodies, and more especially by personnel within the schools;

- other educational initiatives are well linked to complement aspects of the revised curriculum;

- the effective use by schools of cluster arrangements to share and disseminate good practice;

- appropriate linkages between developing the children's and young people's learning experiences, teachers' pedagogical knowledge and understanding, and raising attainment;

- the principal, leadership team and teachers work collaboratively to monitor and evaluate the children's learning and as a result the teachers have a clear picture of where progress is being made; and

- the appropriate use and allocation of resources to support the implementation process.

5.3   The characteristics of the less effective practice in the leadership and management of the implementation of the revised curriculum within the schools include:

- inadequate strategic planning to support the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process;

- unclear roles and responsibilities of the curriculum leaders which are not underpinned by the allocation of adequate time and resources; and

- a lack of adequate leadership and capacity to undertake effectively the complex management, co-ordination and monitoring and evaluative functions.

> *The governors have been actively involved in the implementation of the NIC. Regular awareness-raising sessions are organised by the teachers and updates are provided at governor meetings. They are proactive in reviewing the management structure and resolving staffing issues to meet better the requirements of the curriculum.*

6.   PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT BOARD

6.1   PMB was set up to bring together the stakeholders, jointly to devise, plan and deliver an implementation support programme for curriculum and pedagogic change.

6.2   PMB, particularly through the work of several of its sub-groups, proved largely effective in brokering a collaborative approach across the CASS of the five Education and Library Boards.

6.3   PMB also provides a forum and an information exchange to enable some further coordination to be effected between the plans of the CASS service and those of CCEA, and where relevant, those of C2k.   While this role has ensured a reasonably good degree of consistency and single purpose, PMB has not been successful in eliminating messages which schools describe as confusing and, at times, conflicting. At times the agencies act, in pursuit of their specific duties and responsibilities, without adequate communication. PMB was originally chaired jointly by both a senior CCEA and a senior CASS officer, however, since June 2008 PMB has been chaired by CASS alone.   CCEA reports that it is reviewing its representative co-chair. Since the time of the first ETI report, PMB has diminished in its coordination role.   While members mainly report on tasks for which their organisation or sub-group is responsible, and while PMB receives reports from the Inspectorate and commissions research, it does not work effectively as a forum for the strategic evaluation of the outcomes of change in curriculum and practice as a whole.

6.4   Until recently, PMB suffered from the lack of a consistent 'executive' resource which hindered its work on important tasks, including drawing up a collective action plan to respond to evaluation and inspection findings in a timely way.

6.5   While officers from the Boards and CCEA express appreciation for the good working relationships that exist between individuals, particularly in the PMB sub-groups, they express disappointment that this has not been sufficiently capitalised to create a collaborative approach to strategic planning across all of the relevant agencies.   Opportunities are missed for CASS and CCEA officers to participate collaboratively in designing and implementing solutions.

6.6   PMB stakeholders need to review the roles and responsibilities of PMB and reconsider how best they will address collectively, promptly and effectively the recommendations in this report, most of which require urgent action planning.

7.   TRAINING AND SUPPORT

7.1   Inspectors visited 22 training days for teachers, 2 Leading Learning conferences and four stakeholder seminars: 28 sessions in all. Most (over 90%) of the centre-based training and conference days were evaluated as being good or very good.

7.2   Among the strengths of the courses observed by the Inspectorate were:

- the planned opportunities for sharing good classroom practice;

- the level of challenge and opportunities for reflection provided for the teachers; and

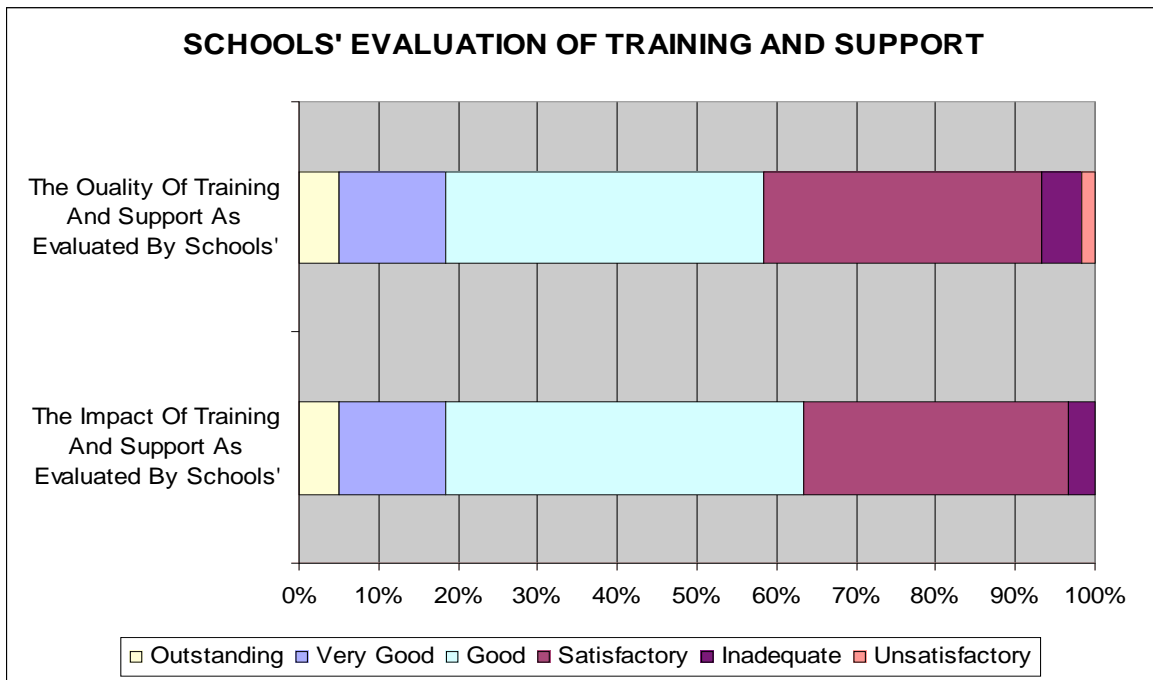- the effective use of ICT to support learning and teaching.

7.3   In the very few courses rated less effective, the undifferentiated approaches and the lack of rigorous evaluation by course presenters were identified as areas for improvement.

In a 2-day staff residential each member of a Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities sub-group and an Assessment for learning sub-group exemplified the development of TSPC and AfL in their subjects, which examples were then used for whole school development. A third group on Learning for Life and Work ensured that all of the teachers are members of one group.

In a staff development day, three members of the NIC curriculum team in the school each prepared and shared a lesson from their subject specialism illustrating a different aspect of the NIC.

7.4 The schools reported to the Inspectorate their views that the overall quality and impact of the training and support provided by the support bodies ranged from outstanding to unsatisfactory.

7.5 In almost one-fifth (18%) of the schools, the training and support are reported to be very good or better. And, whilst the schools report that just under two-thirds (62%) of the training and support is good or better, it is a concern that almost two fifths (38%) of the schools report deficiencies in aspects of the training and its impact in supporting them in their implementation process.

SCHOOLS' EVALUATION OF TRAINING AND SUPPORT

The Quality Of Training And Support As Evaluated By Schools'

The Impact Of Training And Support As Evaluated By Schools'

Legend: Outstanding | Very Good | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate | Unsatisfactory

Axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

7.6	Where the training and support is reported as good or better, the key contributing factors include:

- the effective use of collaborative and clustering arrangements with other schools to share good practice and enhance the teachers' professional development and understanding;

- the good quality and range of subject related resources provided by the support bodies to assist the teachers in their classroom practice;

- the effective, well-focused and contextualised support provided by the CASS link officers which is welcomed in individual schools; and

- the opportunities provided in some of the courses for classroom practitioners to share good practice particularly in relation to the infusion of the cross curricular skills and thinking skills and personal capabilities across the areas of learning.

7.7	Where schools report deficiencies in the training and support, the key contributing factors include:

- insufficiently differentiated training which did not take account of the relative stage of development of individual schools;

- dissemination of key messages limited, in the post-primary training sessions, to the schools' curriculum leaders only;

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- the perceived lack of strategic and operational planning and coordination between the support agencies responsible for supporting the schools through the implementation process and the inconsistencies in some of the messages delivered in relation to assessment and reporting arrangements;

- the absence of an apparently joined up and coherent communication strategy by PMB and, in particular, inadequate engagement with the principals;

- the failure to capitalise on the investment in the pilot schools by providing other schools with examples of practical guidance, advice and good practice;

- the missed opportunities to follow-through and address queries and concerns on the few occasions when the trainers were unable to answer all of the questions raised by the schools at that stage in the implementation plan;

- the lack of CASS resources to respond to individual schools when invited.

> *The school development day programme offered a series of rotating workshops from which staff chose to meet their individual needs. The curriculum leaders ran a progress audit to test the results - the staff were positive about having tangible practical outcomes and well differentiated staff development that met their needs.*
>
> *To supplement the 5 staff development days, the principal protected, 'Friday Professional Hour' for a range of professional development activities linked to the NIC. All staff work together on common themes and say it is very valuable.*

It should be noted that the non-statutory role of link officers restricts their engagement with schools to 'invitation only', limiting their potential to contribute significantly to school improvement in a systematic way.

8. COMMENT ON CHANGES SINCE THE FIRST REPORT

8.1 In the first Inspectorate report, twenty-one recommendations were reported for the attention of DE, PMB, its stakeholders, and schools.

8.2 The evidence reported here indicates that five of these issues, namely the release of key documentation, leadership, developing an understanding of the curriculum and pedagogy and addressing issues in small schools, are no longer significant, having been largely resolved. Two of the original recommendations, concerning assessment and collaboration across the PMB stakeholders, remain issues for concern for schools and appear again in the recommendations of this report.

8.3 While progress has been made on the remaining fourteen recommendations they continue to be areas for improvement which relate directly to the PMB implementation plan for 2008-2010. Due to the progressive nature of implementation planning and the change process these areas for improvement are

best considered as 'work in progress' for schools and those who support them While sections 4 to 7 describe and evaluate the progress which relates to most of these areas for improvement, specific report is made in section 8.6 on four which are not covered earlier: clarity about government policies for school improvement; the place of online learning; the dissemination of case studies of good practice, and the need to pace staff development in primary schools specifically. In section 9 of this report, it has been possible to consolidate these fourteen remaining areas for continuing improvement into a lesser number of recommendations to be taken forward by PMB and its stakeholders.

8.4   A number of new issues emerge from the inspection evidence and are reported here for the first time.

IMPROVEMENT

8.5   Improvement since 2006-07 includes:

- the amount of published communication (DE Circulars, letters, leaflets, online) now available. While communication suffered from the loss of the first communications officer the appointment of a replacement from October 2008 is making a significant difference;

- the greater sense of engagement by the school principals, supported by the Leading Learning conferences, especially where organised on a local area learning community basis and with support from ELB link officers; and

> *"There is a greater professional debate amongst teachers about what they are doing (in class) and why. There is more self-evaluation and reflection – this is helped by teachers being more confident with the language of the NIC – the fear factor is dissipating".* Principal.

- a more settled response and a more stable, positive attitude evident from many of the teachers than hitherto; the teachers often express appreciation for the advice offered and the chance to share experiences.

WORK IN PROGRESS

8.6   Examples of work in progress, not already reported here, include:

- there is a mixed response to the question of whether or not teachers perceive better clarity in the articulation of government policies for school improvement. Some principals call for a single strategic vision to be communicated with even greater clarity. For example, a number of other programmes, such as Extended Schools and Specialist Schools are not as well integrated with the roll-out of the revised curriculum as they might be; scope remains for DE to promote a greater strategic view;

- a pilot online course on Thinking Skills run by SELB on LearningNI (LNI) in spring 2008 for ten P6 teachers resulted in a positive internal evaluation. Subsequently, the Boards jointly created an online course, using a blended model, on

> *Another driver for embedding the NIC is the creative and innovative us e of ICT in teaching and learning. Staff ICT development is high quality. A cross-curricular Mediascapes project involves history, music, media, drama and ICT for 50 Year 8 pupils. They make use of a range of multi -media software, researching, video edi ting, and presenting in the context of developing knowledge of local history, enhanced with drama and music.*

'Questioning for Learning' for 3,000 Year 3, 4 and 7 teachers through LNI. At the same time, CCEA also devised a blended approach to training in Assessment of Skills, with an online component, making use of Moodle[1], for all primary teachers. CCEA's original ambitious timescale (the course was due to start in February 2009) did not allow for piloting. However, a delayed timescale (flowing from DE's consultation on reporting) now allows for an essential pilot phase to be conducted. These two unrelated e-learning developments point to the need for better collaboration and evaluation on e-learning across all of the stakeholders than is currently the case. Furthermore, as this will be a first online learning experience for many teachers, it is essential that their experience is rewarding and worthwhile; careful preparation and induction for them in this way of working will be essential;

- teachers report that they would welcome further dissemination of case studies. More attention to this need is planned in the new PMB communications strategy; and

- while it is an improvement that schools generally are making the revised curriculum a priority, primary schools in particular report pressure on time for teachers' planning and sharing of experience. Primary school principals need to plan progressive change, taking a longer perspective on the embedding of curriculum practice. This finding reveals a strategic need which is reported as a "new issue" below.

REMAINING CONCERNS

8.7   Two major issues, originally expressed by schools in 2006-2007, remain areas of concern.

i) Assessment arrangements remain a concern. Concern has been heightened by apparent complexity in the phasing of changes to the assessment of cross-curricular skills and by the perception of mixed messages and inadequate information about training intentions. Elements which require better clarity and coherence include:

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[1] Moodle is an open-source online learning environment.

Action plans for Pastoral Care, Literacy, Numeracy and ICT all make reference to aspects of the NIC; the main targets are incorporated into the SDP. The teachers address themes which permeate all action plans such as assessment for learning (AfL) and the extent to which ICT facilitates learning. Action Plans are now more focused and achievable rather than inspirational. It is possible to track plans and outcomes to see how they have progressed over the past 7-8 years.

- the development of skills through a whole-school strategy rather than in a piece-meal way by teachers;

- the extent of preparedness by teachers to report on skills (while many schools said they felt ill-prepared to report on skills in June 2009, somewhat more comfort was expressed about reporting on using ICT, especially where the schools had prior experience of the CCEA ICT Accreditation scheme);

- how the development of assessment of skills sits with Every School a Good School's draft requirement for assessment targets in literacy and numeracy;

- how the setting of targets in communication and using mathematics relates to target-setting in English and Maths;

- the assessment of cross-curricular skills in the Foundation Stage; and

ii)   The apparent lack of coordination between the stakeholders (and particularly between CASS and CCEA) remains a concern. Schools report that each agency appears to operate autonomously with no real integration of purpose, as evidenced in the reported concerns about contradictory messages.

NEW ISSUES

8.8   Some new issues are emerging:

- The perception by the conscientious teacher that all changes have to be in place by 2010 (and could then be assessed, evaluated, and even inspected, in terms of improved standards) is debilitating.   Primary principals need to manage better the prioritisation of step-wise improvements for their teachers, especially given the additional training days provided by DE for this important reform.   To do this, with assurance, the principals and the teachers need to take a longer-term view.   The perceived pressure highlights a need for PMB and DE to communicate more effectively their view that change is expected to take place over a longer timescale. This is not to recommend a slowing down of implementation, nor to provide a reason for advocating delay, rather it is a proper recognition that it takes longer for progress in planning and classroom practice to be fully embedded and seen in terms of outcomes.

- While a good start has been made to the use of thematic approaches to teaching at key stage 3 (KS3), there is more work to be done to promote

an understanding at KS3 of "areas of learning" especially to ensure progression of standards through a good balance between thematic learning and subject teaching.

- A growth in the use of commercial and non-commercial 'curriculum mapping' tools in post-primary schools has helped teachers to audit their planning and the pupils' experiences and identify opportunities for collaborative teaching and active learning. An evaluation of the benefits of using such tools needs to be conducted and advice provided to schools.

- The provision of Learning for Life and Work as a timetabled subject, rather than as integrated into the existing curriculum, can cause pressure on curriculum time, with varying outcomes for citizenship, employability and personal development and, sometimes, a loss of curriculum time for other subjects. Schools need to explore alternative ways of providing this entitlement.

- There is a significant concern emerging about a lack of alignment between a more skills-based curriculum at KS3 and the knowledge content specifications and assessment approaches at GCSE level.

The English teacher prepared a peer assessment record, with clear criteria by which the pupils could assess their presentations. The pupils were very well briefed. In pairs, the pupils discussed each presentation and identified a strength and an improvement, recorded using ICT. The pupils making the presentation also assessed themselves. Feedback was very constructive and an action point agreed. The pupils enjoyed the process and said that their presentation and communication skills had improved.

Year 8 classes have 2 periods on Wednesday afternoons in workshop classes on ICT (podcasting), Arts & Crafts, and Library Skills (in the local library). The classes are organised in mixed ability groups supported by the form teachers and the year head. While these days represent a considerable commitment, the feedback is very positive regarding their effectiveness.

- There is a need to review the schools' schedule of accommodation in the Buildings Handbook in light of the impact of curricular and pedagogical change.

9. TABLE OF INSPECTORATE RECOMMENDATIONS - JANUARY 2009

DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGY	
9.1 Review the roles and responsibilities of PMB and consider how best to address collectively, promptly and effectively the recommendations in this report.	PMB and Stakeholders
9.2 In the context of the convergence path to ESA, create a *unified* plan for differentiated implementation support across the relevant agencies for schools for 2009-10.	DE PMB

9.3 Plan a strategy to support the embedding of curriculum practice in the context of continued improvement in schools from 2010 - 2012	PMB (ESA: CASS & CCEA) DE
COMMUNICATION OF STRATEGY	
9.4 Clarify the current complexities about the arrangements for assessment, especially in light of Circular 2008/27.	DE
9.5 (i) Promote better understanding of the connections between DE policy priorities and (ii) create manageable implementation plans to support school improvement.	DE (i) PMB (ii)
9.6 Implement the new PMB communication strategy so as to secure clearer, more coherent messages for those working in schools.	PMB DE
DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTICE	
9.7 Focus on the assessment of learning outcomes for children and young people and the standards achieved for the purpose of evaluating the benefits which arise from improvement through curriculum change.	Schools
9.8 Manage more efficiently the deployment of teacher time in schools over a longer timescale to 2012 in order to continue to develop and share effective classroom practice and raise standards.	Schools PMB Department
9.9 Increase collaboration within the area learning communities (i) to ensure effective progression at transition points (ii) to harness the role of Specialist Schools to support the implementation of the revised curriculum.	Schools
9.10 Evaluate, and provide guidance for, the effective use of curriculum mapping tools.	PMB Schools
DISSEMINATION OF PRACTICE	
9.11 Continue to disseminate models of good practice, including in curriculum planning and balance, make greater use of good practitioners in development training and disseminate further the lesson learned in pilot schools. (PMB)	PMB
9.12 Ensure that teachers are well-prepared and supported for the judicious (and evaluated) introduction of e-learning to support professional development.	PMB (CCEA, CASS & C2K)
CURRICULUM	
9.13 Address the emerging concern about a mismatch between the KS3 skills-infused curriculum and the content-based GCSE specifications.	CCEA DE
SCHOOLS	
9.14 Review the schools' schedule of accommodation, in the Building Handbook, arising from the impact of curricular and pedagogical change.	DE

10.   CONCLUSION

10.1   Since the time of the 2006-2007 inspection report there has been progress on a number of important fronts by DE, by PMB and its stakeholders, and by schools, as evaluated in this report. A minority of the original issues have been overtaken; the majority remain work in progress for the next period and several new issues have been identified.

10.2   The principles underlying the 14 recommendations which arise from the findings of this inspection survey need to be reflected in a <u>shift of emphasis</u> for the final phase of implementation to:

- **simpler communication** to schools about the purpose of and the main elements of curricular change;

- a **differentiated** approach to **support** for schools, based on audit of need, to enable them to continue to improve practice in the context of whole school improvement;

- improved **collaboration** between CCEA, CASS and, where appropriate, C2k during 2009-10, on their path of convergence to ESA; and

- **forward planning** for the continued development of pedagogy, learning and assessment, arising from curriculum reform, beyond 2010.

10.3   The Inspectorate will continue to monitor and report on progress. In addition, in its next report, the Inspectorate will investigate and report on the briefing, training for and engagement of schools' Boards of Governors.

SCHOOLS VISITED BY DISTRICT INSPECTORS IN THE AUTUMN TERM 2008

Primary Schools

Antrim Primary School
Botanic Primary School
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste
Carntall Primary School
Clough Primary School
Cookstown Primary School
Cranmore Integrated Primary School
Creggan Primary School
Faughanvale Primary School
Killyleagh Primary School
Larne and Inver Primary School
Lowwood Primary School
Maralin Primary School
Maguiresbridge Primary School
Meadow Bridge Primary School
Mount St Catherine's Primary School
Moyle Primary School
Oakwood Primary School
Rasharkin Primary School
St Columbkille's Primary School
St Joseph's Convent Primary School, Newry
St Joseph's Primary School, Slate Street, Belfast
St Joseph's Primary School, Newry
St Malachy's Primary School, Newry
St Mary's Boys' Primary School, Strabane
St Mary's Primary School, Maguiresbridge
St Mary's Primary School, Kirkubbin
St Patrick's Primary School, Carrickmore
St Patrick's Primary School, Magheralin
St Patrick's Primary School, Newry
Tonagh Primary School
Wallace Primary School

Post Primary Schools

Ballyclare Secondary School
Ballymena Academy
Bloomfield Collegiate, Belfast
Brownlow Integrated College, Craigavon
Carrickfergus Grammar School
Castlederg High School
Corpus Christi College, Belfast
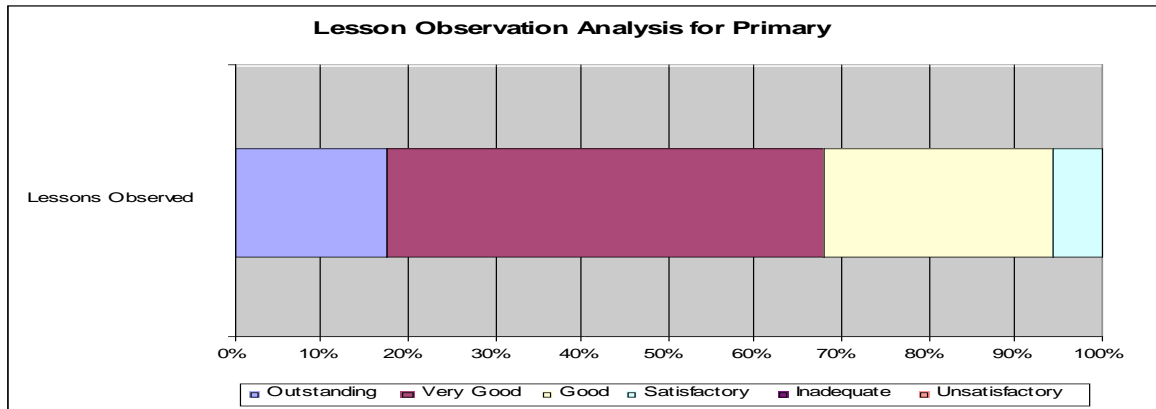Crumlin Integrated College
Cullybackey High School

Down High School, Downpatrick
Dungannon Integrated College
Dunmurray High School
Glastry College
Killicomaine Junior High School, Craigavon
Larne Grammar
Little Flower Girls' School, Belfast
Newry High School
Priory College
Rathmore Grammar School
Saintfield High School
St Ciaran's Ballygawley
St Colm's High School Twinbrook
St Colmcille's High School
St Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen
St Malachy's College, Belfast
St Mary's High School Limavady
St Patrick's College, Dungannon
St Patrick's Grammar School Armagh
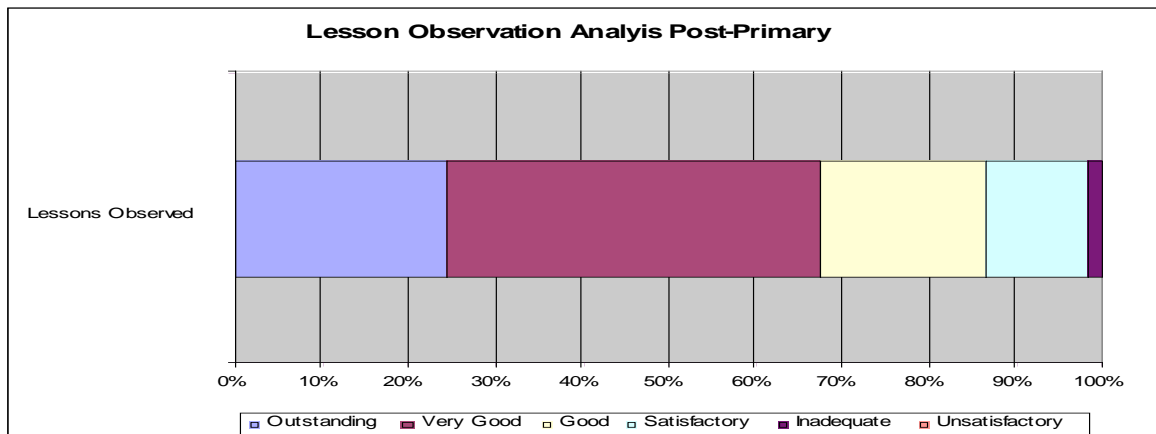Victoria College, Belfast

Special Schools

Foyleview Special School
Kilronan Special School
Parkview Special School
Sperrinview Special School
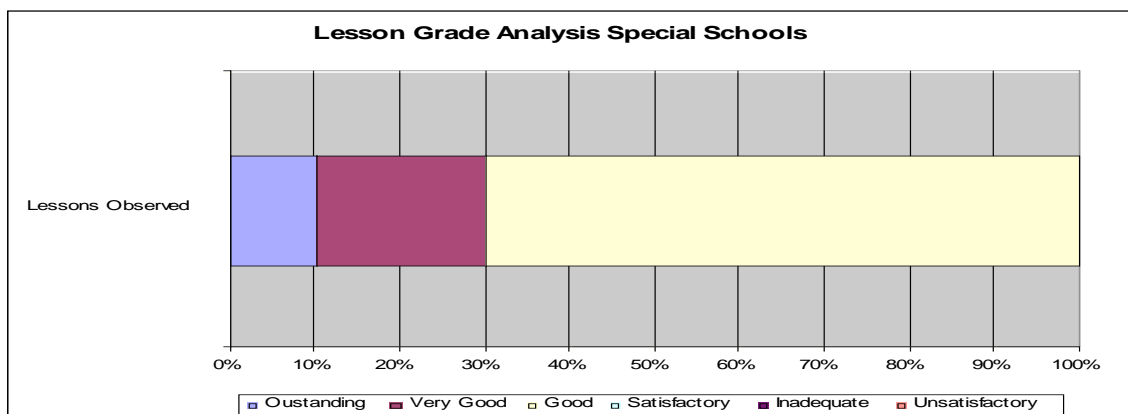
ANALYSIS OF LESSON PERFORMANCE LEVELS BY PHASE

PRIMARY: almost all of the lessons were evaluated as good to outstanding.

Lesson Observation Analysis for Primary

Legend: ▫ Outstanding ▪ Very Good ▫ Good ▫ Satisfactory ▪ Inadequate ▫ Unsatisfactory

POST-PRIMARY: most of the lessons were evaluated as good to outstanding.

Lesson Observation Analyis Post-Primary

Legend: ▫ Outstanding ▪ Very Good ▫ Good ▫ Satisfactory ▪ Inadequate ▫ Unsatisfactory

SPECIAL: all of the lessons were evaluated as good to outstanding.

Lesson Grade Analysis Special Schools

Legend: ▫ Oustanding ▪ Very Good ▫ Good ▫ Satisfactory ▪ Inadequate ▫ Unsatisfactory