

The Chief Inspector's Report

2004-2006

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Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



Part 1:

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Inspection Evaluations

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 provision, the Inspectorate relates its evaluations to four performance levels which may be interpreted as follows:

1.	Significant strengths	good (ranging to outstanding)
2.	Strengths outweigh weaknesses/ areas for improvement	satisfactory (ranging to good)
3.	Weaknesses/areas for improvement outweigh strengths	fair (ranging to satisfactory)
4.	Significant weaknesses	poor

Note that figures in graphs may not add to 100% due to rounding.

PREFACE

This report provides an evaluation of the full range of the Education and Training Inspectorate's (the Inspectorate) work for the Department of Education (DE), the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). It draws on evidence collected from some 1,490 inspections and survey visits[#] carried out between September 2004 and June 2006 in pre-school education, primary and post-primary schools, further education, professional and technical training, special education, alternative education provision, the youth service and teacher education. These inspections involved some 5,000 teachers, trainers and other workers¹. The report also contains comment on some key policy decisions and reports which have issued in the period June 2006-February 2007.

A major concern emerging during the period 2004-2006 relates to the need for more joined-up thinking and action on the part of all those with responsibilities for education, training, youth work, and key related services, including health and social services. In the current climate of rapid and sweeping change, co-ordinated policy, planning and delivery are vital. This report, therefore, seeks to make clearer the connections across the range of the Inspectorate's work, and among the various phases inspected, in order to inform effective strategic action at all levels.

In the period between the writing of this report and its publication, Departments have put in place a number of major initiatives to address issues

raised. The findings of inspection have been influential in informing these initiatives and future reports will evaluate their effectiveness in bringing about improvement.

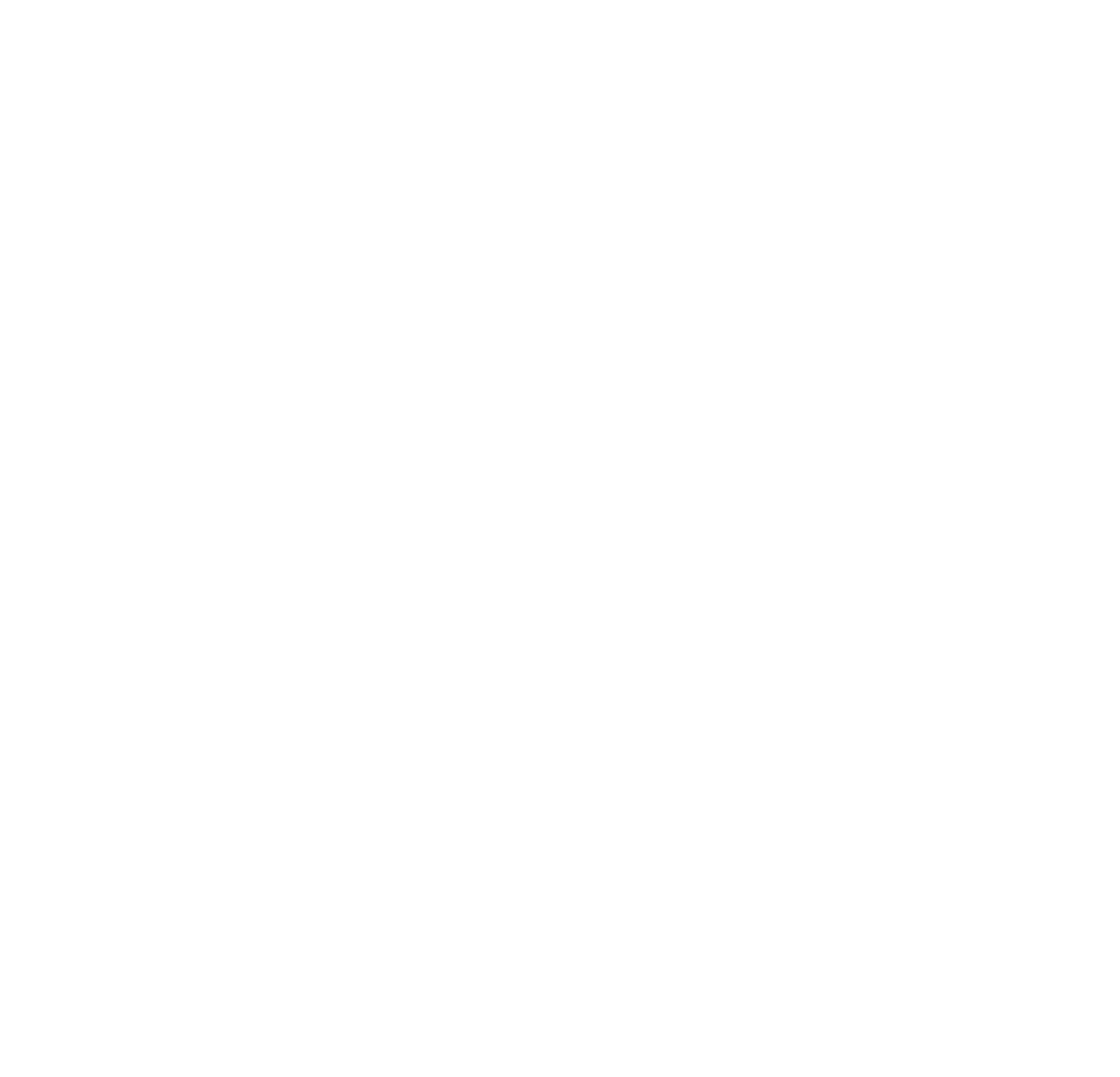
In Part 1, the report focuses on progress in the key recurring themes identified in previous reports by the Chief Inspector and on a number of additional challenges for the education, training and youth sectors. It also provides summaries of the quality of provision in each phase and an overview of the Inspectorate's specific work related to improvement. Part 2 of the report is provided on CD-ROM and contains detailed phase reports.

As this report goes to press, the education, training and youth sectors in Northern Ireland are facing greatly altered administration arrangements, support structures, and curriculum and assessment requirements, in addition to a rapidly changing population and economic climate. Success relies on those at the frontline who deliver the service and will be measured ultimately against the benefits to individual learners and against the economic health of Northern Ireland. Expectations are rightly high. Achieving improved outcomes and quality will need concerted effort, well-informed decisions, and a large measure of goodwill and trust.

All, including the Inspectorate, will need to play their full part in ensuring that the changes result in a better future and better outcomes for all young people.

1 Figures calculated from the evaluation questionnaires sent by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP to all organisations following inspection.

[#] Details of Inspections and Surveys are given in the Annex.



COMMENTARY

Marion Matchett CBE, Chief Inspector

Learners of today

Promoting improvement in the experiences and achievements of children and young people is our core business. Inspection seeks to answer the question, 'What is it like to be a learner in this organisation?' We want to know if the organisation is a place where learners are valued, happy and safe, and can learn and grow as unique individuals. We want to know if, and how, their experiences and achievements could be improved. We want to know how well they are being prepared for life and work in the 21st century. So, in all our interactions with organisations, support agencies and Government Departments, we stress the key need to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and actions by the direct, positive influence they have on young people's development, learning and experiences.



Marion Matchett

It is our view that the leaders and managers could learn much about the quality of their provision by listening more often and more carefully to what young people have to say.

The Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland²

sets a vision for everyone concerned with the well-being and achievements of our next generation. The Inspectorate shares fully the strategy's goals and we will direct our efforts even more clearly towards contributing to an education, training and youth system that ensures the aims are energetically pursued.

Interviews with children and young people feature strongly in our inspection methodology, giving them a voice in the inspection process. We take seriously what they say to us. It is our view that the leaders and managers

could learn much about the quality of their provision by listening more often and more carefully to what young people have to say.

² Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy For Children And Young People in Northern Ireland 2006 – 2016. Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister. 2006. The strategy aims to ensure that all children and young people in Northern Ireland fulfil their potential by helping them to get the best possible start in life and to do as well as they can.

Inspection evidence over the period 2004-2006 continues to show that **most learners in Northern Ireland are achieving well**. Examination results at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and Advanced level (A level) are better than ever before and remain ahead of England and Wales. The results of key stage assessments are also encouraging with further improvements in mathematics at key stage (KS) 2 and science at KS3. Where students in further education colleges complete their course of study, the majority achieve satisfactory or better standards in accredited courses.

Inspection evidence over the period 2004-2006 continues to show that most learners in Northern Ireland are achieving well.

It is clear to me that most of our young people are working hard, and often with notable success.

There is, though, evidence of **a more worrying side to some young people's lives**. Growing up in our increasingly complex world brings difficulties and pressures unrecognised by, or unknown to, previous generations. Mental health problems and increasing obesity are emerging as major concerns. Tragically too, a number of young people in Northern Ireland end their own lives or deliberately self-harm. The Bamford Review³ includes statistics showing that an estimated 20% of young people suffer "significant mental health problems" by their eighteenth birthday. The education, training and youth sectors in Northern Ireland, with appropriate assistance from other professionals, now need to do more to recognise and address the often complex and hidden difficulties that young people face.

evidence of a more worrying side to some young people's lives

The Secretary of State launched the Children and Young People's Funding Package (CYPFP) in March 2006 focusing on **improving the life chances of the next generation**, with specific themes directed towards counselling, mental health services and marginalised young people. A key aspect of the funding package is the clear intention that it will be delivered in an integrated way through co-operation among Departments and their agencies. The Inspectorate has provided evidence to support policy makers and will develop new inspection methods, in collaboration with others, to evaluate the overall influence of the initiative on young people's lives.

In response to concerns about the rising levels of obesity in children and young people, the Fit Futures Taskforce⁴ has made far-reaching recommendations for immediate action aimed particularly at improving policies on food and the promotion of physical activity. The Department of Education is committed to the objective that **all schools should be healthy schools within ten years**. From September 2006, all inspections monitor and report on progress towards the achievement of this objective.

all schools should be healthy schools within ten years

We rightly celebrate the achievements of our young people in public examinations. **Lying behind the good results are less positive trends**. Too many young people still leave school after 12 years with inadequate

3 The Bamford Review of Mental Health And Learning Disability (Northern Ireland), 2006

4 Fit Futures: Focus on Food, Activity and Young People, January 2006

literacy and numeracy skills. They often find difficulty in getting work or succeeding in training. In some parts of Northern Ireland, particularly in Belfast, the achievements of many young people are unacceptably low. Boys continue to be out-performed by girls, and too many young people drop out of formal education and training too early.

Lying behind the good results are less positive trends.

In previous reports, I asked the question, **'does our system of education, training and youth work prepare young people adequately for life and work in a changing world?'**

In the last two years, the competition for jobs has increased. So the need is even greater for our young people to develop entrepreneurial and innovative capabilities in addition to higher levels of basic skills. The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland⁵ sets out a vision for a highly competitive economy and

skilled workforce, with all young people having opportunities to follow a wide range of vocational subjects. The strategy aims to increase the recognition given to vocational training as a valuable alternative to the traditional academic pathway. The findings from a range of inspection activities show clearly that to achieve this, improvements are needed in the provision for 14-19 year olds including greater co-operation among schools, colleges and training providers and a more joined-up approach to Government policy, strategy and delivery.

'does our system of education, training and youth work prepare young people adequately for life and work in a changing world?'

Our young people need to learn to look outwards and to value difference. A Shared Future⁶ sets a formidable goal to equip every child to meet the challenges

of diversity and tolerance as an adult in a shared society. Achieving this goal will demand much from all of us, but particularly from teachers⁷, in the face of continuing sectarian and racial tensions and resistant community attitudes. The Inspectorate's survey of history teaching⁸ illustrates the difficulties and reminds us that schools need to work with, and be supported by, their communities to address these deep-seated problems. The Independent Strategic Review of Education (The Bain Report)⁹ consulted on ways to provide greater opportunities for young people to share part of their educational experiences with others from different communities. The Inspectorate contributed its professional views on the issues and will work with DE and DEL to ensure that inspection evidence informs the developing policies.

Our young people need to learn to look outwards and to value difference.

Workers from other countries bring new ideas and skills and also new requirements for understanding

Diversity in Northern Ireland is increasingly related to cultures outside of our traditional divisions. Workers from other countries in the expanding European Union (EU) bring **new ideas and skills and also new requirements for understanding** among communities and in schools. Northern Ireland has limited experience of providing for young people whose first language is not English. Schools and colleges are learning fast, as our surveys¹⁰ in primary, post-primary and further education illustrate. They need a better support structure to help them meet unexpected demands, to

5 Success through Skills: The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, DEL 2006.

6 A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland, OFMDFM, March 2005

7 The term 'teacher' includes teachers, lecturers, trainers and early years and youth workers.

8 A Survey on the extent to which the teaching of history in post-primary schools helps prepare young people to live in Northern Ireland's divided and increasingly pluralist society, May 2006.

9 Schools for the Future: Funding, Strategy, Sharing. The Report of the Independent Strategic Review of Education, December 2006

10 Surveys of the Provision for English as an Additional Language (EAL), and of the Provision for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Modern Languages in Further Education

success in examinations and tests, while important, is not everything

communicate with parents and carers, and to make the best possible provision for the young people.

‘Driving up standards’ has to a large extent become the doctrine of our times. The Inspectorate has always placed priority on learners attaining the highest standards possible. However, I have said in my previous reports that **success in examinations and tests, while important, is not everything**. I stand by that view. In Northern Ireland we have avoided some of the unhelpful focus on results that dominates other

parts of the United Kingdom (UK) and the media, and which can only increase competition between schools. We need to value and celebrate those aspects of education and training provision that are less easily measured, but which enable young people to be healthy, to enjoy and achieve, to live in safety, to experience economic well-being, to contribute positively to a shared society, and to have their rights respected.

Arguing for these indicators of success for children and young people does not mean a lowering of expectations for academic standards, but does call for a much wider view of what we mean by achievement and places much greater demands on all of us to fulfil them. Most of all they call for **much higher levels of collaboration, joined-up thinking and action, and integrated working**. These approaches are needed at all levels from policy-makers to those at the ‘front-line’.

much higher levels of collaboration, joined-up thinking and action, and integrated working are required

Making Connections

Developing **ways of collaborating across traditional professional and territorial boundaries** is time-consuming and demands patience, sensitivity and mutual respect for the expertise of others. Many of the developments planned for, or already affecting, the education, training and youth sectors require much better connections to be established and maintained across sectoral and professional boundaries, and within and among Government Departments, if their aims are to be fulfilled. Examples of such developments include the transfer of early years responsibilities from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) to DE; the Entitlement Framework and the 14-19 agenda in schools, further education and training; DE’s reviews of special educational needs and inclusion and of alternative education provision (AEP); and the review of teacher education by DE and DEL.

The Inspectorate recognises the need to make further connections in its own work with others. **We already work jointly with other Inspectorates**. We have, for example, collaborated in multi-disciplinary inspections of child protection services, of provision for children in hospital settings and of juvenile justice institutions. Since the beginning of the pre-school expansion programme, we have developed close liaison

There has never been a time when coherent and joined-up thinking and action are more urgently needed.

with the registration and inspection officers of the health and social services trusts (HSSTs) who regulate the voluntary/private pre-school sector.

There has never been a time when coherent and joined-up thinking and action are more urgently needed. The number and far-reaching nature of Government initiatives and new policies present very major challenges to those who have to implement them. In addition to those I have already mentioned in this commentary, there is the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC); the review and restructuring of further education; the review of teacher

education; the specialist schools and extended schools initiatives; the review of DE's policy for school improvement and of the Northern Ireland Literacy and Numeracy Strategy; the review of what is now known as professional and technical training; and DEL's Quality Improvement Strategy, Success Through Excellence.

Although these reforms will affect all areas of education, training and youth work, the greatest pressure will arguably be on post-primary schools. The introduction of the revised curriculum is a very significant undertaking in its own right. In order to deliver the Entitlement Framework, a great number of schools will have to reorganise the curriculum, for example, through collaborative arrangements with other institutions. This major change needs to be managed at a time of significantly falling enrolments and increasing competition for pupils. The continued uncertainty about the future of selection is a matter of great concern for all schools, parents and children. **At a time when schools need to be reassured that Government policies are coherent and have clear direction, a question mark hangs over one of the biggest organisational changes facing them.**

At a time when schools need to be reassured that Government policies are coherent and have clear direction, a question mark hangs over one of the biggest organisational changes facing them.

At the same time as schools and other organisations are working to implement these changes, the structures for supporting, advising and administering them are also changing radically. **The Review of Public Administration (RPA)** undoubtedly provides a major opportunity to streamline public services and to develop systems that are better able to meet the demands of the 21st century. It also presents very significant challenges in ensuring that the new arrangements deliver improved outcomes, especially for children and young people. During the present period of transition, when the future administration of health and social

services and of local government is also changing, it will be very important to maintain and strengthen the connections and relationships across professional disciplines in the best interests of all learners.

The number and far-reaching nature of Government initiatives and new policies present very major challenges to those who have to implement them.

As part of the RPA, **the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) will come into formal operation in due course**, and transitional arrangements are already underway. There is great potential in this development for increased coherence and consistency, challenge and support, and the adoption of best practice.

Inspectors frequently meet and talk with teachers, leaders and other education, youth and training providers. They are aware of a willingness among these individuals to make the necessary changes and to face the challenges coming their way. They are also aware that teachers, leaders and others need to feel more confident that changes will be well managed, that there is a clear vision from Government about the direction of travel and a coherent understanding of how all the changes will combine to create a better service for learners. If the changes are to be successful, the trust and goodwill of the teaching force¹¹ need to be maintained and strengthened. We need to show that we value our front-line services and provide them with the support they need to do the job.

Standards, quality and accountability lead to excellence

I am pleased to report again the generally sound standards of achievement across the education, training and youth sectors, particularly in pre-school education and in special schools, and to note the further improvements made. In primary schools, 38% of lessons are now judged to be overall good to excellent. Similar standards are evident in 27% of lessons in post-primary schools and in 25% of lessons in the further education sector. The proportion of Jobskills provision with significant strengths or strengths outweighing areas for improvement has increased to 80%. The outreach work of the youth service provides a high standard of support for vulnerable young people and the achievements in AEP show what can be realised with young people considered at risk of failure. These improvements are brought about through the hard work of skilful teachers, trainers and youth workers.

I am pleased to report again the generally sound standards of achievement across the education, training and youth sectors

I have to report that the Service still does not do well enough for those young people who find learning more difficult or who see little of value in education

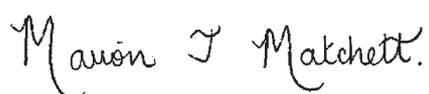
However, once again, **I have to report that the Service still does not do well enough for those young people who find learning more difficult or who see little of value in education**. Standards remain too variable among and within schools and other institutions. Regardless of the abilities of the young people attending, clearly some organisations and teachers are much more successful than others in helping the learners to make good progress. Both DE and DEL have reviewed their approaches to improvement to take account of the findings from inspection and both have put quality at the heart of the changes. In January 2007, DEL launched its Quality Improvement Strategy, Success Through Excellence.

¹¹ Including lecturers, trainers and youth and early years workers.

All organisations are accountable for their own performance and must accept responsibility for bringing about improvements in standards and quality. It is particularly important that the large number of initiatives facing them do not detract from the core business of improving learning and teaching. We need to recognise and celebrate high performance but must not accept continued underachievement or tolerate organisations that do a poor job for children and young people.

While the observation of teaching and learning remains at the core of every inspection, the new models developed and implemented during 2004-2006 place a much greater emphasis than before on the capacity of organisations for self-improvement and look much more closely at the quality of leadership and management. The achievements of those organisations whose work displays excellence illustrate that these standards, however exacting, can and should be achieved by many more.

This report seeks to highlight the improvements that have taken place and to make clear what more needs to be done. All of us who are concerned with the quality of education, training and youth work need to join forces more effectively to meet the challenges of the future, to build a better society, and to raise expectations and aspirations. We must all strive for excellence and work to ensure that all learners, however faltering, experience the success of which they are capable.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marion J Matchett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

MARION J MATCHETT
Chief Inspector



A. KEY RECURRING THEMES: Progress since the previous Chief Inspector's Report

INTRODUCTION

The previous Chief Inspector's Report identified the need for more attention to be given to certain key recurring themes. This section evaluates the progress that has been made during 2004-2006 in addressing these important issues and highlights the further improvements needed.

- Diversity and Mutual Understanding
- Special Educational Needs
- Improving Achievement - Closing the Gap
- Improving Teaching - Improving Learning
- Improving Leadership and Management
- Information and Communication Technology

KEY RECURRING THEME

Diversity and Mutual Understanding

OVERVIEW ■■■

1. The Government's policy and strategic framework for promoting good relations in Northern Ireland, A Shared Future, aims to develop a shared community where people wish to learn, live, work and play together. The policy calls for curricular and organisational arrangements that provide every learner with direct and sustained engagement with diversity and that prepare them better to meet the challenges of being an adult in a shared society. In response, DE and DEL have stated their commitment to implementing the framework, and to promoting and prioritising sharing at all levels of education.
2. There is no doubt that teachers* and their organisations, take seriously their responsibilities to promote diversity and tolerance. They need the reassurance of a consistent and joined-up approach from Departments and their agencies. The central direction provided by A Shared Future will be a key element in its successful implementation. The Inspectorate will play its part fully in working towards the identified aims.
3. In 2006, the need to help young people contribute positively to a divided and increasingly multi-cultural society is even greater than before as political progress remains uncertain and workers migrating to Northern Ireland from other parts of
4. the EU reshape the traditional composition of communities and workplaces. These changes create new challenges for communities to accept and respect difference and to share what they have in common rather than concentrate on what divides them. Inspection evidence highlights the strong contribution that committed individuals in the various sectors make to supporting young people to meet these challenges. The rising number of racist attacks, and the continuing sectarian divisions, suggest that there is still a great deal more to be done to counteract prejudice and fear in parts of Northern Ireland.
4. The recent changes in society are underlined by the findings of two recent Inspectorate surveys¹², which provide evidence of the significant growth in the numbers of learners who speak languages

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* The term 'teacher' is used to include lecturers, trainers, and early years and youth workers.

¹² The quality of learning and teaching and the standards and outcomes achieved by the learners in relation to the provision for English as an Additional Language, October-November 2005. The Provision for English for Speakers of Other Languages and Modern Languages in Further Education, April 2005-June 2005. The reports on the surveys are available on the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Diversity and Mutual Understanding

OVERVIEW ■■■

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other than English. The survey in further education colleges, for example, found that learners from 45 different countries were enrolled. Their levels of English language skills and achievements in vocational or academic education and training vary widely. The further education colleges and the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have responded positively to the rapid growth in demand for support and have refocused their approaches to improve the teachers' confidence and capacity to work effectively with those who need additional support. Proposals for better collaboration among the ELBs, and for a more strategic approach from central government, are timely and need to be implemented.

5. The Schools Community Relations Programme (SCRCP) continues to provide funding and guidance to schools for the promotion of cross-community school links.

The over-arching aim is that individual school programmes, with clear community relations objectives, will contribute to the development of a society where equality is valued and diversity respected, and where interdependence is both recognised and built upon. The Inter-Board SCRCP Support Panel launched a website in May 2005, designed to provide teachers and schools with up-to-date information and resources on the development of community relations practice in schools. The Support Panel has also developed a guide to effective practice to help schools involved in the Programme. It is a matter of concern that participation of post-primary pupils in the SCRCP remains extremely low and there is a significant decrease from 23% to just 18% in the proportion of primary schools participating.

6. Local and Global Citizenship (Citizenship) will become a statutory part of the post-primary curriculum from September 2007 and plays a key role in DE's commitment to ensure that all schools prepare pupils for life in a diverse and inter-cultural society and world. The subject, which includes the contributory themes of Diversity and Inclusion, Equality and Social Justice, Democracy and Active Participation, and Human Rights and Social Responsibilities, is being piloted in the majority of post-primary schools in Northern Ireland in advance of statutory implementation. Inspection shows that most of the schools

KEY RECURRING THEME

Diversity and Mutual Understanding

OVERVIEW ■■■

visited have established a worthwhile tradition of engaging their pupils and the staff in activities that are supportive of Citizenship.

7. Evidence from inspection visits focusing on the extent to which the teaching of history in post-primary schools addresses community differences¹³ reveals that schools are increasingly aware of the need to provide young people with better opportunities to consider the nature of Northern Ireland's political, cultural and other divisions. The pupils' understanding of division and difference in Northern Ireland varies considerably. They have mixed views about whether education can influence positively their attitudes on controversial issues. History teachers have done much over the years to help young people understand key events in their country's past. Through exploring topics such as migration, more should be done to help them understand how the past has influenced, and continues to influence, the present.
8. Partnerships among schools, further education colleges and training providers within the key stage 4 (KS4) Flexibility¹⁴ and subsequent Vocational Enhancement Programme (VEP)¹⁵ initiative have provided some opportunities for 14-19 year olds to learn and socialise together. Inspection has highlighted examples of successful co-operation but the current environment of competition is not helpful. These

partnerships need to be supported and promoted further and greater encouragement given to pupils to extend their understanding of diversity by working more frequently in integrated groups with pupils from other schools.

Further details of the quality of provision for 14-19 year-olds are given in the section Additional Challenges in Education, Training and Youth Work: 14-19 Provision.

9. The range of different school types within Northern Ireland reflects parental choice and Government policy on diversity. Inspection findings show that the sustainability of schools has become a more prominent issue during 2004-2006 due to a number of factors including falling enrolments and budget deficits. The Strategic Review of Education (The Bain Report) has considered how a more integrated approach to education, in its widest sense, can be encouraged, with new models of schooling and the sharing of resources. The outcomes of the Review, which have been accepted by the Secretary of State, will be of major importance in meeting the aims of A Shared Future.

Further details of The Strategic Review of Education are given in the section, Additional Challenges in Education, Training and Youth Work: Demographics and Sustainability.

¹³ A Survey on the extent to which the teaching of history in post-primary schools helps prepare young people to live in Northern Ireland's divided and increasingly pluralist society, May 2006.

The report is available on the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk

¹⁴ The KS4 Flexibility Initiative enabled schools to discontinue elements of the statutory curriculum in order to explore more imaginative approaches.

¹⁵ VEP is a short-term initiative funded by DE and DEL to develop models of collaborative working and to disseminate good practice. The term 'VEP' is now used to cover both KS4 Flexibility and Enhancement courses for 16-19 year-olds.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Diversity and Mutual Understanding

OVERVIEW ■■■

10. The number of integrated schools has continued to increase gradually and this sector now caters for some 5% of the school-age population. Seventeen schools have gone through the process of transformation to become integrated. Although part of the motivation for certain individual schools to ‘transform’ may be linked to their long-term viability, inspection evidence continues to show an overall clear commitment to the aims of integrated education. Most of the schools are taking much longer than anticipated to reach a reasonable religious balance among the staff and pupils, particularly in areas dominated by a single religious group. There are also schools, mostly, but not exclusively, in the post-primary sector, which although not ‘integrated’ in the more formal sense, have mixed intakes in terms of community background. Such schools are contributing in their own way to the promotion of mutual understanding and shared lives.

11. The rapid expansion of the Irish-medium education (IME) sector has steadied and has been replaced by a phase of more measured development. There is now a positive opportunity for the schools to focus more closely on the achievements of individual pupils and on improving provision for Information and Communication Technology (ICT), writing in Irish and in

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English, and special educational needs.

The current debate within the sector about the place of English in the IME curriculum is a positive process. It needs to be supported by careful reflection on when and how English should be introduced, and the approaches adopted to develop it. All in the sector need to agree a vision for IME that includes educational and linguistic aims and also addresses the sector’s role in promoting a more inclusive society.

12. A dedicated unit within Stranmillis University College, funded by the Ulster-Scots Agency, has developed an Ulster-Scots curriculum with materials for teaching in primary and post-primary schools and a programme for adult learners. These developments have the potential to contribute positively to learning about, and respecting, the diversity within traditions, language, culture and history in Northern Ireland.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Diversity and Mutual Understanding

WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE DURING THE PERIOD 2004-2006? ■■■

- NIPPA – The Early Years Organisation (NIPPA) and the Peace Initiatives Institute¹⁶ have collaborated to develop multi-media materials for use in pre-school centres to help children to become aware of others who are different from themselves, to understand what it feels like to be excluded, and to be more willing to include others. These materials are being disseminated to pre-schools in the voluntary, private and statutory sectors.
- The teachers in most primary and post-primary schools are working hard to respond to the challenge of meeting the diverse needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language and to make effective use of a range of teaching strategies to support the pupils' language development. The schools show commitment to establishing a positive ethos and providing opportunities for the pupils to participate in all aspects of school life. In addition, the senior management teams (SMTs) and the relevant staff within further education are also making strenuous efforts to keep pace with the huge increase in demand from learners whose first language is not English.
- In the post-primary schools surveyed by the Inspectorate¹⁷, suitable progress has been made in the learning and teaching of Citizenship. Good quality in-service training (INSET) and resources have been developed. Most of the pupils are interested, well-motivated and willing to venture opinions, and they are gaining a good awareness of the issues being considered.
- In further education, DEL has funded pilot projects aimed at identifying successful strategies for the promotion of good relations and mutual respect in every aspect of college life. The Department is supporting the wide dissemination of best practice identified through the pilots, including, for example, induction programmes focusing on cultural diversity, and effective methods of recruiting a diverse group of students. Inspection evidence shows a strong commitment from colleges' senior management to the development of an ethnically rich environment with examples of good practice in the development and implementation of anti-bias and anti-discrimination policies and procedures. There has been a good start to the exploration of sensitive and controversial issues with more mature students on higher level programmes.
- The youth sector has been proactive in focusing on issues of equality, diversity and inter-dependence through the core values of the youth curriculum. Specific projects have been designed to encourage co-operation and a shared understanding among communities.
- In teacher education, all Bachelor of Education (BEd) and post-primary Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) courses include well-designed and challenging units on Citizenship. There are opportunities for some students to develop the skills to deal with controversial issues in the classroom. The two university colleges have progressively developed their inter-college Diversity and Mutual Understanding programme, providing opportunities for student teachers from differing backgrounds to consider jointly a range of issues relevant to being a teacher in a divided and increasingly diverse society.

16 The Peace Initiatives Institute, Boulder, Colorado.

17 A Survey of the Introduction of Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stage 3 in a Sample of Post-Primary Schools, Jan-Feb 2005. The report on the survey is available on the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk

KEY RECURRING THEME

Diversity and Mutual Understanding

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE FURTHER? ■■■

- Given the continuing increase in the number of learners, at all levels, whose first language is not English, greater attention should be given across the education and training system as a whole, including teacher education, to developing a co-ordinated range of strategies to meet the learners' needs more effectively, and on a regional basis. Post-primary schools need to make better provision for these pupils within their current assessment and careers arrangements, while in further education there is a need for more suitably qualified staff to meet more fully the diverse needs of adult learners.
- Action is needed to increase the participation of primary and post-primary pupils in the SCRP.
- Post-primary schools are implementing the Citizenship programmes at KS3 mainly through specific lessons. Teachers need to do more to identify how other subjects can contribute to the Citizenship curriculum and to encourage pupils to tease out the complexities of topics rather than focus on providing them with information.
- In further education, there remains a substantial challenge in promoting positive attitudes to diversity among younger students from a variety of social and community backgrounds. The outcomes of the DEL-funded pilot projects highlight the need for colleges to do considerably more to develop and sustain policies and practices on good relations and inclusivity.
- Important issues of equal opportunities and cultural diversity, as defined in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998¹⁸, need to be addressed more effectively within the college development plans of further education colleges and the quality improvement strategies of training providers.
- In teacher education, better strategies are needed to increase the extent of the contacts between student teachers from different community backgrounds. All student teachers should have opportunities to develop their teaching competences in a more diverse range of schools through flexible teaching placements. The work begun in initial teacher education related to living and working in a shared society needs to be built on more effectively during the subsequent phases of teacher education through better collaboration between the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the Inter-Board SCRP Support Panel.

18 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 refers to the promotion of equality of opportunity. Full details can be obtained from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, www.equalityni.org.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Special Educational Needs

OVERVIEW ■■■

13. Special educational needs (SEN) remain a priority issue for all organisations which educate and train young people. In schools, some 14% of pupils (over 50,000) remain on special needs registers and approximately 5% of students in further education have been designated as having additional needs. The growing responsibilities for meeting special needs within mainstream schools, the greater diversity of the school and college population and the intention to end academic selection present significant challenges for teachers and trainers. Evidence from inspections and surveys indicates that most organisations are beginning to implement the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SEND0). Staff and managers show commitment to providing a supportive, caring and positive ethos and work hard to help children and young people overcome their difficulties.
14. Those who provide initial teacher education and continuing professional development

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have an essential role to play in promoting positive attitudes towards the integration of pupils with diverse needs into mainstream classes and in ensuring that teachers and trainers develop the necessary expertise to respond effectively to their needs. In addition to working with learners who have significant literacy and numeracy difficulties or physical disabilities, staff increasingly have to deal with additional needs arising, for example, from dyslexia, autistic spectrum disorders, and behavioural, social and emotional problems. They also need support to understand and help particular groups of young people at risk of failure, including looked-after young people and those who refuse to attend school.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Special Educational Needs

OVERVIEW ■■■

15. In response to the challenges facing schools and early years settings, DE is undertaking a review of SEN and inclusion, in order to develop a comprehensive, costed policy. It is consulting widely with partners and stakeholders, and drawing on the expertise of the Inspectorate, in considering the issues and possible ways forward. Among these are the shortcomings in early years provision, and the increasing reliance in schools on statements of SEN and on external support to address pupils' difficulties. The rise in drop out rates from mainstream schools has an accompanying demand for additional resources to educate these young people at home or in AEP. Inspection evidence points to the need to review the Code of Practice¹⁹ and to set a new framework, better designed to improve the outcomes for all learners with special or additional needs, or who experience difficulties that are a barrier to achievement.
16. DEL and the Association of Northern Ireland Colleges (ANIC) are taking appropriate steps to address staff development needs through the formation of an Inclusive Learning Project with participation from a range of other relevant organisations. The aim is to meet the special needs of learners within the sector in a well-planned and responsive manner.
17. The Review of Public Administration (RPA) provides both opportunities and challenges for the future implementation of policies on

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special educational needs and for ensuring that the needs of learners and teachers are met. There will be much greater potential to develop streamlined services and more integrated approaches both within education and with other statutory partners. It will be important to reduce the bureaucracy and inconsistencies of the present system and to direct efforts and resources towards providing the hands-on support that learners need to make progress.

19 The Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs

KEY RECURRING THEME

Special Educational Needs

WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE DURING THE PERIOD 2004-2006? ■■■

- The quality of SEN provision in the pre-school sector is improving noticeably in statutory nurseries where 65% have good or very good arrangements. Across all types of pre-school centres, 80% now provide satisfactory or better provision.
- There is a small increase in the percentage of primary schools where provision is good or very good and, in post-primary schools²⁰, there is a significant improvement in the provision and outcomes for many pupils with SEN. In both phases, education plans (EPs) are more often drawn-up effectively to guide an appropriate programme of support.
- The further education sector has responded positively to the introduction of the SENDO legislation through workshops on inclusive classroom practices. Colleges are usually able to provide appropriate specialist equipment or learning support for students who experience severe difficulties.
- In the further education and training sectors, there is evidence of good learning and teaching on almost all the Jobskills Access programmes and Pre-Vocational Access programmes, which enrol learners with moderate learning difficulties (MLD).
- In teacher education, the HEIs report that a significant proportion of the student teachers on the primary BEd courses have taken the final year option in SEN and have improved their competence in this aspect of teaching. All the HEIs have begun to review and improve how they prepare student teachers to teach in more inclusive classrooms. Collaboration between teacher educators from Northern Ireland and from the Republic of Ireland, through the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS), has identified a set of appropriate principles to guide further developments.
- The Special Educational Needs Cross-Border Professional Exchange Programme²¹ has enabled teachers, educational psychologists and other professionals to exchange experiences and models of best practice in meeting learners' needs related to autism and dyslexia. The collaboration has facilitated the production of relevant classroom resources of a high quality.

20 A Survey of the Provision and Outcomes for pupils with SEN in Post-Primary Schools, 2006.
The report is available on the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk

21 The Programme was funded under Measure 5.5 (Education, Cross-Border School and Youth Co-operation) of the European Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (Peace 11).

KEY RECURRING THEME

Special Educational Needs

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE FURTHER? ■■■

- A more effective strategy is needed to support the development of better quality provision for special educational needs in voluntary and private pre-school centres, and to address the major inconsistencies in funding, staff training, support and access to specialist services across the sector.
- There has not been a reduction in the proportion of both primary and post-primary schools (some 20%) where the provision for SEN has important shortcomings. There is a need for planning and support to be more concerned with measurable improvement. In post-primary schools, stronger leadership is needed to develop appropriate whole-school policies and practice, and to ensure that the funding intended for SEN is used for that purpose. Improvements are needed in the liaison between primary and post-primary schools and with other support providers.
- There is a need for better liaison between further education colleges and schools to improve the transition arrangements from school and to develop further a greater culture of inclusion. Colleges need to co-ordinate more effective learning support services across their provision, to put in place better review and evaluation procedures, and to provide a structured programme in special needs issues for all staff.
- One of the continuing challenges for training providers is the inclusion of young people with special needs in mainstream training and ensuring that they have a balanced programme that increases their employability, confidence and independence.
- The examples of good practice in the inclusion of young people with special needs should be developed further to improve the provision for them across the youth service.
- The providers of initial teacher education need to consider how best to ensure that all student teachers have appropriate opportunities to follow a course in special educational needs. All student and beginning teachers need training in managing effectively the work of special needs classroom assistants. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the Curriculum, Advisory and Support Services (CASS), the educational psychology services (EPS) and relevant voluntary bodies should collaborate more effectively to provide the continuing professional development and support that teachers need to improve the achievements of young people with SEN.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Achievement: Closing the Gap

OVERVIEW ■■■

18. The Chief Inspector's Reports of 2002 and 2004 highlighted the need to raise the achievements of those young people, particularly boys, who were not succeeding in the education, training and youth sectors in Northern Ireland. Many of the difficulties are linked to social problems and are not resolved easily. However, low- and under-achievement are not confined to organisations in areas of high social disadvantage.
19. It is widely accepted that, in order to have the best chance of progressing into employment or higher education, young people need to gain 5+ GCSEs (or equivalent) at grades A*-C. It is good that the percentage of pupils reaching this level of attainment in Northern Ireland has risen to 61% and that there is a decrease in the number of non-selective schools where less than 30% of pupils do so. The latest figures remain ahead of the corresponding statistics for England or Wales.
20. It is clearly important that pupils' GCSEs include English and mathematics. In June 2005, approximately 50% of pupils in Northern Ireland attained 5+ GCSEs (or equivalent) at grades A*-C in subjects including English and mathematics, compared to 44% of pupils in specialist schools in England and 34% in non-specialist schools²². Northern Ireland's performance is also good when benchmarked against the 41 participating countries in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the OECD²³.
21. Although standards are undoubtedly improving, there remains a wide variation in the achievements of organisations and learners. The gap between Northern Ireland and England in public examinations is steadily closing. Based on the latest available figures, at the end of KS2, nearly one quarter of children do not reach level 4 in English and are likely to experience difficulties in making good progress at their post-primary schools. After 12 years of compulsory schooling, nearly 40% of pupils do not gain 5+ GCSEs (or equivalent) at grades A*-C. Around 4% of boys do not gain any qualifications. If Northern Ireland is to meet the social and economic challenges of the future, young people's attainments need to improve further and faster.
22. For various reasons, some pupils consider schooling and the school curriculum to have little relevance to their lives. Alternative education provision is being made for some 900 pupils who are not attending school. More needs to be done to help these young people stay engaged with their education within a mainstream school. The increased flexibility planned as part of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC), and the Professional and Technical Programmes planned by DEL, have the potential to assist

²² National Outcomes and Value Added by Specialist Schools: 2005, The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust 2005.

²³ The Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Achievement: Closing the Gap

OVERVIEW ■■■

schools seeking to retain their pupils and give them relevant and fulfilling educational experiences. In addition, the effective methods that have been developed by some AEP settings for re-engaging these young people in learning should be disseminated more widely.

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23. There are significant differences in the achievements of individual schools, not all of which can be related to the levels of advantage or disadvantage among the pupils, or to their prior attainments. Inspection evidence shows that some schools, both selective and non-selective, do considerably better than others in ensuring that the pupils make the best possible progress. Schools need to develop more effective methods to evaluate how well they improve the learning outcomes for individual pupils and use this information better to address under-achievement.

24. While DE's School Improvement Programme (SIP) has had some success in raising quality and achievements across the primary and post-primary sectors, results are inconsistent. It is appropriate that DE is currently reviewing its policy to build on the successes and to tackle more rigorously the areas of remaining weakness. Inspection shows that all schools need to work to improve their performance, not just those in the more disadvantaged areas with poor examination results. In schools in all phases, while results may appear good, they do not always reflect the high ability of the pupils.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Achievement: Closing the Gap

OVERVIEW ■■■

Further details of the School Improvement Programme are given in the section, Additional Challenges in Education, Training and Youth Work: Improving Education and Training.

25. DEL's Quality Improvement Strategy, Success Through Excellence²⁴, responds to the challenges of raising achievement through setting-out a vision of excellence in which the further education and training sector is responsive to meeting the needs of learners, employers and the wider community; is committed to continuous self-improvement; has high quality leadership and management; and has ready access to a coherent framework of support and guidance. Central to the Strategy are a culture of self-improvement and a proportionate programme of inspections based on shared performance indicators. DEL acknowledges that the success of the Strategy is dependent on effective partnerships with the Inspectorate, the Learning and Skills Development Agency, Northern Ireland (LSDA (NI))²⁵, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), and the providers of further education and training.
26. Social and economic disadvantages are related closely to low achievement but are not excuses for young people not attaining as well as they could or should. Inspection evidence and comparative data show that, in disadvantaged areas, there are some outstanding organisations that achieve

results well above those of others in more favourable circumstances. That said, research and inspection evidence indicate that for the most disadvantaged young people, multi-agency support is often needed, and education, training or youth organisations, on their own, may not have the capacity to intervene successfully. Raising achievement in the most difficult circumstances needs a range of agencies, such as health and social services, and youth and community organisations, to work together well. Inspection shows, for example, that youth work can complement the more formal teaching in schools and AEP centres. The good practice of youth workers in engaging with the most disaffected young people helps to bring about improvements in behaviour and increases their ability to cope with conflict.

27. Good governance is a key feature of school and college improvement and effectiveness. There is little evidence to show that Boards of Governors and Governing Bodies are consistently involved in, or aware of their school's or college's programme for improvement. DE is developing a range of strategies to improve the governance of schools, including annual conferences to enable direct communication between the Department and Governors about key policy issues.
28. There is a wide variation in the quality of governance within the voluntary/private pre-

²⁴ Success Through Excellence: A quality Improvement Strategy for the Further Education and Training System in Northern Ireland: DEL 2007. Available from [www.delni.gov.uk/quality improvement strategy](http://www.delni.gov.uk/quality%20improvement%20strategy).

²⁵ The LSDA NI is part of the Learning and Skills Network (LSN) and is contracted by DEL to focus on quality improvement initiatives in the further education and training system.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Achievement: Closing the Gap

OVERVIEW ■■■

school and youth sectors. Relying largely on parents and other volunteers, management committees often struggle to cope with the day-to-day running of the organisations and very rarely have the skills and confidence to become involved in self-evaluation or self-improvement activities.

Further details of governance are given in the section, Additional Challenges in Education, Training and Youth Work: Governance.

29. The economy in Northern Ireland faces major challenges from the growing competitiveness of globalisation and there remains a high level of economic inactivity among its citizens: some 28% of the working-age population fall into this category. These members of society often have low levels of skills and many experience social exclusion and ill health. Improving the skills and capabilities of working-age citizens generally, and of young people in particular, is not only important to their personal well-being, but to the future of the economy as a whole.
30. In response to the challenges of raising achievement, DEL published the Skills Strategy²⁶ in February 2006. The implementation of this strategy in the further education and training sectors includes the policy developments within FE Means Business²⁷ and Training for Success²⁸. Both of these supporting policies aim to ensure

that the working population will have appropriate skills to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

31. In March 2006, the CYPFP aimed at reducing underachievement and addressing the barriers to learning that many face. The emphasis on an integrated approach from a range of services is a very positive feature of the initiative. The Inspectorate has lead responsibility to evaluate the effectiveness of the CYPFP and will develop a range of inspection procedures to monitor the benefits to young people.
32. It is clear that preventing failure is better than trying to remedy it. There needs to be a better focus at all levels on individual children and young people and on making sure that each one makes the best possible progress in their learning and development. A concern for every learner should be reflected in a joined-up, focused approach to addressing, from the earliest possible stage, disadvantage, low- and under-achievement, and disengagement, and to harnessing the efforts of parents/carers and communities to improve outcomes.

26 Success through Skills: The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, DEL 2006. www.delni.gov.uk

27 Review of Further Education: FE Means Business, DEL 2006. www.delni.gov.uk

28 Training for Success: Professional and Technical Training, DEL 2006. www.delni.gov.uk

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Achievement: Closing the Gap

WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE DURING THE PERIOD 2004-2006? ■■■■

- Pre-school centres have improved even further their work with parents and the quality of their early literacy programmes. In a few instances, good links between pre-school centres and Sure Start projects have created well co-ordinated approaches to early preventative work.
- In primary schools, there have been improvements in the learning and teaching of mathematics and a continuing increase in the percentage of children reaching level 4 in the subject at the end of KS2.
- In post-primary schools, the percentage of year 12 pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs at grades A*-C has increased gradually since 2002. There has also been a significant increase in the proportion of pupils achieving three or more GCE A level subjects at grades A to C. During 2004-2006, fewer pupils left school without qualifications.
- The review of further education has created a sharper focus on raising the attainments and enhancing the employability of young people and adults. There is increased collaboration with other sectors of education, and with business and industry. There are improved attitudes to learning among many of the participants on VEPs and an increased understanding of vocational pathways.
- In most of the further education colleges, the provision for adults with literacy and numeracy difficulties continues to improve. DEL's target for essential skills qualifications has been exceeded.
- There is evidence that the new Pre-Vocational Access Programme, piloted in training organisations, has improved the trainees' attitudes, behaviour and attendance, and increased the number who progress to employment and further training.
- Research has highlighted the success of AEP in helping well over three-quarters of the young people attending such provision into employment, training or further education²⁹.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Achievement: Closing the Gap

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE FURTHER? ■■■■

- Across all phases there are similar messages.
- All organisations need to work to improve their performance and the achievement of the learners. Organisations that perform well should provide a benchmark for others to evaluate their success. The teachers* need to do much more to track the progress being made by individual learners and to take action that helps each learner to succeed.
- Effective and sustained Government strategies need to be clearly targeted at bringing about improvement in individual organisations and in the overall achievements of young people. Methods that work should be implemented widely and the lessons learned from research and short-term projects integrated into normal practice.
- Inspection findings show clearly that good teachers* generally get the best from young people. Where teaching, training or youth work is not good enough, leaders and managers should take swift and rigorous action to improve it.
- Better inter-agency collaboration is needed to address factors that disadvantage young people and which are outside the control of the education, training and youth service.
- Much more attention should to be given to the transition of learners from one phase to the next, and to greater flexibility within sectors, so that the individual needs and prior achievements of young people are well understood and they are provided with an appropriate curriculum or learning programme to engage their interest and meet their needs.

* The term 'teacher' is used to include lecturers, trainers, and early years and youth workers.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Teaching^o - Improving Learning

OVERVIEW ■■■

33. At the heart of any agenda to improve learners' achievements is the need to ensure the highest possible standards of teaching, training and youth work. Effective teachers* build relationships of trust and respect with learners and:

- raise the learners' expectations of what they can achieve;
- motivate them through skilfully planned learning activities that interest and challenge them;
- build on what they have already learned and ensure they make good progress;
- make them aware of what more they need to learn and how they can improve;
- create meaningful connections to the world the learners know and experience;
- identify gaps in learning and provide the support that learners need to progress; and
- recognise and celebrate their achievements.

34. Inspection evidence continues to highlight the need for teachers to make better provision for learners' individual needs, to develop more relevant and appropriate

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learning tasks and to use assessment more skilfully to track and support learners' progress.

35. Extensive change is being introduced across the school, further education, training and youth sectors with the aim of providing a more flexible curriculum that young people will find relevant and stimulating and which will increase their opportunities to develop the skills necessary for life and work in the 21st century. These changes will require teachers to gain additional skills in different areas to ensure good outcomes for learners.

* The term 'teacher' is used to include lecturers, trainers, and early years and youth workers.

^o The term 'teaching' includes the work of lecturers, trainers, early years and youth workers.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Teaching* - Improving Learning

OVERVIEW ■■■

36. The revised NIC for primary and post-primary schools aims to place a greater emphasis on transferable skills, to prepare learners better for life and work and to give them a greater understanding of their role and contribution to society. There is the potential to bring about major, positive changes in teaching approaches in schools. However, inspection evidence shows that teachers and subject departments will have to make substantial changes in their methods in order to implement fully the revised curriculum. The changes will not come easily, especially where teachers will no longer have the security of subject content. There is little experience of planning and teaching more generalised skills, and there are potential benefits and drawbacks from reducing specialist subject teaching.
37. The piloting process for the revised NIC has been helpful in highlighting successful approaches as well as underlining the challenges. There have, for example, been pockets of good practice within the Assessment for Learning³⁰ pilot and a raised awareness in some schools of individual pupils' different learning styles. However, inspection
- continues to highlight on-going assessment as an aspect of teaching that requires significant improvement across primary and post-primary schools.
38. There remains some concern in schools, and more generally, about future assessment procedures to accompany the revised NIC. The current key stage assessment procedures are optional from 2006-2007. Given the emphasis now placed on developing better use of performance data by leaders and managers as part of the schools' self-evaluation and self-improvement processes, it is important that comparative information on performance continues to be available to schools.
39. Although there is evidence that teachers are beginning to think and plan for the revised NIC, the sustained effort and support that will be needed to make the necessary changes in every classroom should not be underestimated. The implementation process needs also to support the schools' continuing efforts to raise standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT. From 2007, as the curriculum is phased in, the Inspectorate will monitor, evaluate and report on its implementation.
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30 Assessment for Learning is a key component of the revised NIC. Further details are available from www.pmbni.org.uk

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Teaching* - Improving Learning

OVERVIEW ■■■

40. The establishment of the Partnership Management Board (PMB)³¹ brings together the key education partners and support providers to plan the implementation of the curriculum changes. This constructive development seeks to deliver a joined-up strategy to support teachers and schools.

Teacher education plays a fundamental role in ensuring that teachers develop the abilities to implement curricular change, both at the initial stage and through continuing professional development. HEIs have not, in the past, been involved sufficiently with other providers of support to ensure that teachers use the best methods, for example, in developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The inclusion of initial teacher education providers in the PMB is a positive development.

41. The development of 14-19 education and training has been given new impetus by the proposals for the Entitlement Framework³² which becomes statutory in 2009. The Framework aims to provide all pupils at KS 4 and at post-16 with a broader and

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more flexible curriculum, including traditional academic courses and a wide range of vocational subjects. Inspection evidence shows that there is variable progress towards the future implementation of the Entitlement Framework. Teachers will need to develop new knowledge and skills to ensure that the learners have access to an appropriate range and quality of courses and that, when the curriculum is delivered in different types of organisations, the young people experience a coherent programme.

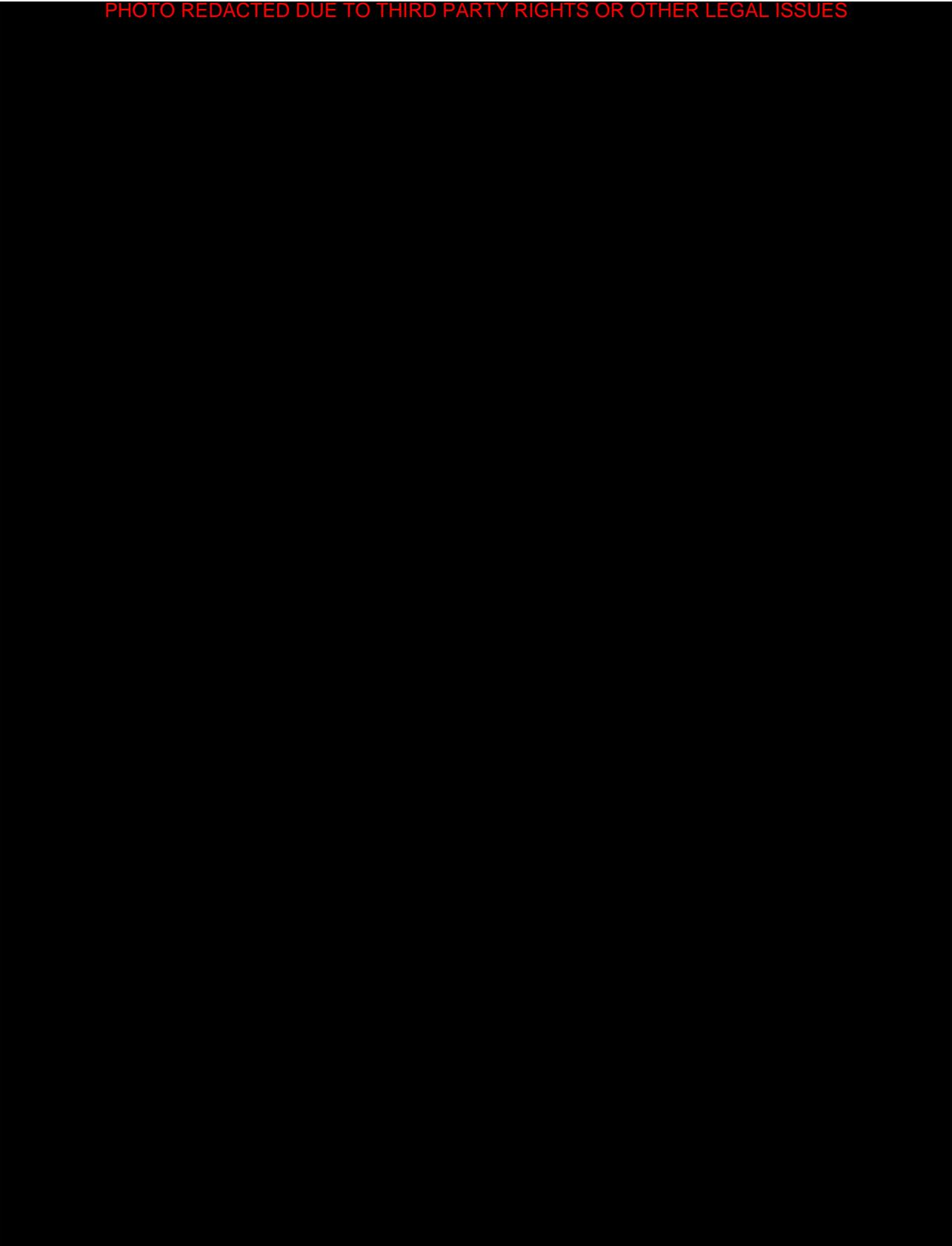
42. Improving the quality of youth work is central to DE's Youth Work Strategy³³ developed through the involvement of the statutory and voluntary youth sectors and consultations with young people and youth workers.

31 The Partnership Management Board (PMB) is a strategic planning group representing a range of education partners. It was formed to plan for the coherent and efficient implementation of the revised curriculum.

32 Circular 2005/18: The Entitlement Framework and Circular 2006/20: Entitlement Framework – Further Guidance, DE. www.deni.gov.uk

33 A Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work in Northern Ireland, Department of Education, 2005. www.deni.gov.uk

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KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Teaching^ø - Improving Learning

WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE DURING THE PERIOD 2004-2006? ■■■

- Teaching standards in pre-school education have improved overall and almost all of the work observed is now of a satisfactory or better quality. Assessment arrangements have also improved in most centres and involve more skilful observation and recording of children's progress.
- The quality of teaching in primary schools continues to be good with significant strengths in 38% of the lessons observed during inspections. Rigorous planning helps these effective teachers to meet the children's needs and provide appropriate challenge in the work.
- There has been an increase in the proportion of teaching in post-primary schools that has significant strengths. Twenty-seven percent of all lessons seen were of a high quality. The most effective teachers identify clearly the lesson objectives, make the pupils aware of what these are, and take time to consolidate the pupils' understanding.
- In around 84% of the work inspected in the further education sector, standards in learning and teaching continue to show more strengths than weaknesses. In the 25% of teaching showing significant strengths, lecturers achieve an appropriate balance across the course in developing the students' specific curricular skills and their transferable skills.
- In the training sector, the inspection of Jobskills Programmes shows that the overall quality has improved and there are similar findings across the individual occupational areas inspected. The organisations make better use of initial assessment to identify learners' strengths and needs, provide appropriate flexible programmes, and ensure more relevant workplace training.
- There have been improvements in the development of the special schools as centres of expertise. There is effective planning of lessons and the teachers have high expectations of the young people in their classes.

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KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Teaching^ø - Improving Learning

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE FURTHER? ■■■

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- Across pre-school education, schools and further education, there is a need to place a greater emphasis on improving teaching that, while it has more strengths than weaknesses, may tend more towards the adequate than the good. Often, this teaching provides insufficient challenge for some of the learners and does not involve them enough in understanding the learning outcomes intended. In further education, the quality of teaching is limited when lecturers concentrate on fulfilling the minimal requirements of the course specifications.
- There has been no decrease in the proportion of less effective teaching in post-primary schools. While only 1% of lessons is poor, one in six has weaknesses that outweigh strengths. The work does not take adequate account of the pupils' abilities and interests, and teachers use a narrow range of approaches which do not motivate or involve the pupils.
- Within the training sector, a significant minority of Jobskills trainers do too little to develop further the trainees' personal skills, or their essential skills. Across the New Deal areas of learning, trainers need to plan programmes more skilfully and make greater use of individualised training targets. There is a need for the implementation of national standards for the professional development of trainers in order to improve their teaching skills.
- There is a wide variation in the quality of youth work with considerable weaknesses in a small minority of organisations. Some part-time staff and volunteers need further training and more support from full-time staff and managers. The work of full-time paid staff is not always of a high enough quality, particularly where they are not involved sufficiently in direct work with the young people.

^ø The term 'teaching includes the work of lecturers, trainers, early years and youth workers.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Leadership and Management

OVERVIEW ■■■

43. Inspection evidence makes it clear that a high quality of leadership and management is key to improving standards in the education, training and the youth sectors. Good leaders generate a strong positive ethos for learning and achievement. They know how well their organisation is performing, what more it needs to do to improve, and how best to motivate and support the staff and learners to bring about improvement. Good leaders focus on, and have high expectations about, what learners and staff should achieve, and are skilful in convincing them to share these aims. They see it as their business to ensure that the quality of teaching^o is high and that every learner progresses and achieves to his/her best.
44. Improving leadership and management, therefore, must remain at the heart of strategies for improving all organisations. The new approaches to inspection introduced during the period 2004-2006, emphasise more strongly than before the key role of leadership and management in all sectors, and the capacity of individual organisation to evaluate and improve the quality of their own work. This closer attention to the skills and qualities of leaders has resulted in more focused evaluations of their contribution to improvement.
45. In all phases, leaders face increasing challenges arising from demographic change, and the implementation of new legislation and Government initiatives. While the leaders' expertise, expectations and personal commitment are key to successful organisations, other factors, including the quality of external support and the attitude of parents and the wider community, play a significant role. There needs to be a wider dissemination of the skills and expertise displayed by those leaders whose efforts have made a fundamental, positive difference to the performance of their organisation, lifting it well beyond what might have been expected.
46. Inspection shows that improvements in the quality of leadership and management have been uneven across education, training and youth work. There is evidence that in a minority of organisations, the skills and abilities of leaders and managers are not keeping pace with the challenges facing them. The successful implementation of the large and growing number of curricular and organisational changes needs the highest quality of leadership and management. It is vital that the management of these changes does not distract from leaders' core business of improving learning and teaching^o. The quality of leadership and management needs to improve further if Government policies are to succeed and organisations are to achieve better outcomes for learners.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Leadership and Management

OVERVIEW ■■■

47. Self-evaluation reports have increasingly become an integral part of inspections, and, in particular, of those to follow-up areas for improvement. Across all sectors, there are common indicators of good practice in self-evaluation.
- Effective self-evaluation leads to observable improvements for learners.
 - There is an accurate assessment of the organisation's strengths and areas for improvement based on solid evidence.
 - This evidence includes an analysis of relevant data, both qualitative and quantitative, and it is used effectively to assess what improvements have been made.
 - The efforts of management and staff are focused on learning and teaching^o and on improving achievements.
 - The process engages the support of managers, staff, learners and, where appropriate, parents/carers and other stakeholders.
48. The development of leadership and management skills in serving and aspiring school principals is crucial to improvement. The Regional Training Unit (RTU) provides a range of courses for school leaders including the preparation for headship programme. Leadership and management

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issues identified by inspection, including, for example, the use of performance data by post-primary schools, have been incorporated into a few RTU programmes. There is a continuing need for inspection findings to influence positively the training provided for leaders.

49. Among the key objectives of DEL's Quality Improvement Strategy, Success through Excellence, launched in January 2007, are the development and embedding of a culture of self-improvement and the promotion of strong and innovative leadership and management at all levels of the further education and training system.

^o The term 'teaching includes the work of lecturers, trainers, early years and youth workers.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Leadership and Management

WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE DURING THE PERIOD 2004-2006? ■■■

- Leadership and management remain good or very good in well over half of all pre-school centres. Most have made a start to self-evaluation and self-improvement and a minority, mainly in the statutory sector, have developed very effective approaches.
- There has been an increase to just under 50% in the proportion of primary schools with good or very good leadership and management. The effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation procedures has also improved overall, with good practice evident in nearly one quarter of schools.
- In the third of post-primary schools where leadership and management is good or very good, principals and senior management are making better use of data and benchmarking to inform the School Development Planning (SDP) process and the actions to bring about improvement.
- There have been improvements in the quality of the strategic planning in a majority of further education colleges, including the increased use of the Northern Ireland Colleges Information System (NICIS) to plan and review provision, and the more effective use of data generally to aid decision-making.
- The quality of leadership and management within training organisations providing Jobskills Programmes has improved considerably with a much smaller proportion reported to have important shortcomings than previously. There are higher standards of self-evaluation and more effective development plans.
- In over a third of AEP settings, the leadership and management are strong features of the overall good or very good provision.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Improving Leadership and Management

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE FURTHER? ■■■

- The increased inspection focus on the quality of leadership and management, which includes the capacity for self-improvement, has highlighted an increasing proportion of schools and pre-schools where these aspects of provision are not good enough. In 10% of pre-school centres and 15% of primary schools, weaknesses in the leadership and management outweigh strengths. In almost one third of the post-primary schools inspected, there are similar shortcomings in the quality of the Principals' leadership, and in the same proportion, these shortcomings are evident within senior and middle management.
- Many schools and pre-school centres need to do considerably more to develop a culture of self-evaluation and self-improvement. In post-primary schools this culture is needed both within individual departments and across the whole school. Schools need to have a better focus on raising the learners' achievements and make more, and better, use of comparative data on performance to inform priorities and actions.
- More also needs to be done in the further education sector to develop the capacity for effective leadership, in particular for self-evaluation. In a significant minority of colleges, management information systems are not well-developed or used effectively to guide decision-making and improvement planning. Better strategies are needed to evaluate and improve important cross-college provision, including that for SEN and disabilities. A significant minority of college development plans (CDPs) do not take sufficient account of the learners' needs, and data relating to performance is not used well in self-evaluative course reviews.
- Better self-evaluation is needed in a minority of training organisations providing Jobskills programmes with more use of information on trainees' performance to inform improvement planning. The quality of leadership and management in New Deal providers inspected has weakened compared to those inspected in the previous period. The Department has engaged the services of LSDA (NI), to help address these weaknesses.
- In special education there is a need to develop further the arrangements for monitoring and evaluation, including the appropriate use of benchmarking, to ensure that standards are appropriate and that pupils' achievements improve.
- In over half of the inspections across the youth sector, issues related to inadequacies in leadership and management have been identified. There is a need for a better focus on strategic planning, and on evaluating and improving the quality of the staff's work and the outcomes for young people.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Information and Communication Technology³⁴

OVERVIEW ■■■

50. Both DE and DEL have invested significant funds in developing ICT and ILT across schools and colleges of further education. The positive results are most noticeable in the good quality of the infrastructure across the sectors. Pre-school and youth provision have not benefited from this investment.
51. The quality of teaching using ICT and ILT is improving gradually. The effective use of presentational technologies such as digital projectors and electronic interactive whiteboards is becoming more widespread. A majority of leaders and senior managers are committed to developing further the use of new technologies in order to improve the teaching and learning processes, and the management of their organisations.
52. More frequent use of ICT and ILT does not necessarily enhance the learners' experience. The most recent inspection evidence shows clearly that only a minority of the further education colleges and post-primary schools have embedded ICT and ILT effectively to enhance students' learning
- across a sufficiently wide range of curriculum areas or subjects. In a majority of the schools and colleges, the potential of new technology to enrich learning remains relatively under-exploited.
53. There needs to be a clearer understanding of the ways that e-learning can be integrated effectively with more traditional teaching methods in all curricular areas to add value to the learning process. Teachers need to have good personal experience of learning enhanced by ICT or ILT so that they understand the process as a participant. The rapid developments and advances in new technologies create an on-going challenge for all teachers.
54. ICT is mostly used well to support management and administration across the schools and further education colleges. An increasing number are using ICT innovatively to improve the management of the learners' performance. They record and analyse data to track the progress of individuals and groups of learners, and use this information to set appropriate targets for progress.
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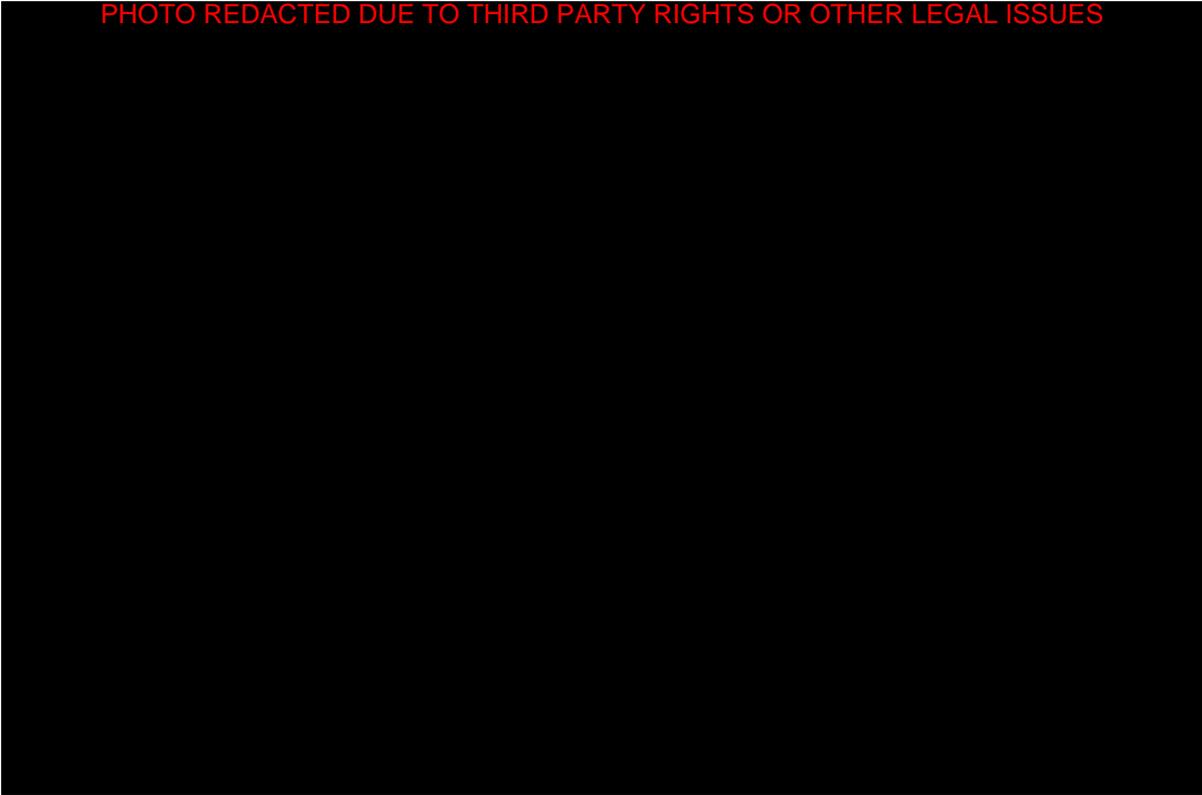
³⁴ Including Information and Learning Technology (ILT) in further education and training.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Information and Communication Technology

OVERVIEW ■■■

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55. There are clear indications that the ICT competence and capabilities of most young people are developing year-on-year. Their growing, and increasingly sophisticated, use of ICT outside of school or college, and the associated skills and enjoyment, need to be better harnessed to complement and reinforce the learning process. Most young people are involved in on-line learning and social networking at home as well as in education or training settings. The effective use of ICT allows young people to access up-to-date research and information in a way which can overcome social and

geographical disadvantage. It should not be assumed, however, that all young people have access to a computer at home. Teachers need to be well placed to help them engage in a safe and purposeful way with ever more sophisticated technology and collaborative software applications.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Information and Communication Technology

WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE DURING THE PERIOD 2004-2006? ■■■

- In most primary, post-primary and special schools, there has been an increase in the teachers' competence with, and willingness to use, ICT to support learning and teaching. However, primary schools have made better progress than post-primary schools in incorporating ICT applications successfully into learning and teaching. In special schools there is evidence of greater innovative use of ICT, including assistive technology, to help pupils to access the curriculum.
- In colleges of further education, the levels of staff confidence and competence with ILT have also improved. The use of blended learning, involving both online and face-to-face methods, has become more prevalent across the curriculum areas, and there is clear evidence of a more widespread use of ILT resources by students to support and extend their work.
- In the training sector, the quality of provision is mostly good for trainees on vocational ICT programmes designed to meet the needs of the information technology industries; the work-placements provide adequate opportunity to develop an appropriate range of ICT skills.
- All students in teacher education now have the opportunity to gain competence with the resources commonly provided to schools by C2k. There have been innovative developments in the use of on-line based learning in the initial teacher education and induction programmes for further education, and in a few of the courses for teachers in schools.

KEY RECURRING THEME

Information and Communication Technology

WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE FURTHER? ■■■

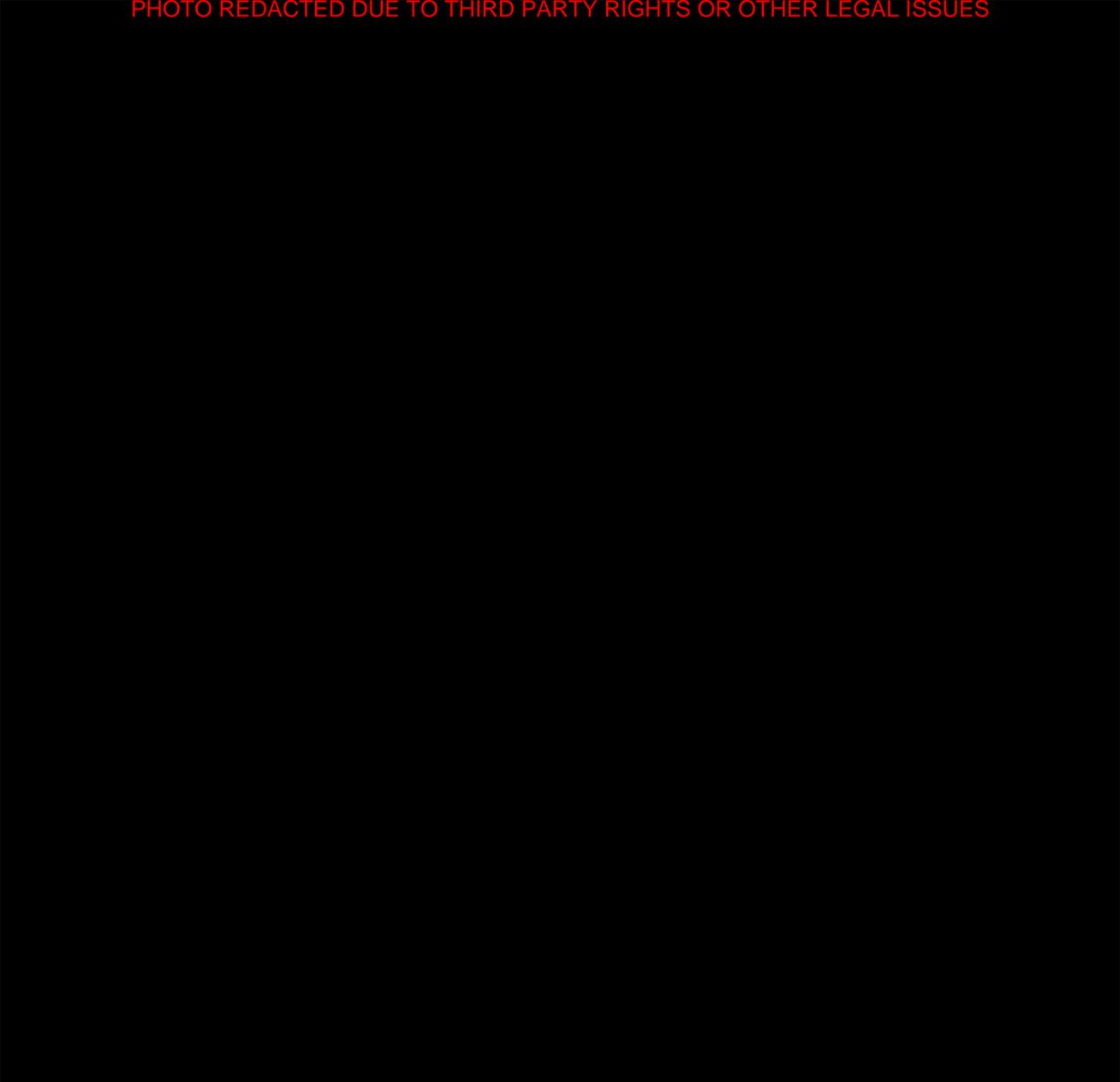
- The lack of on-line facilities in nursery schools needs to be addressed if ELBs and Government Departments continue to increase their use of ICT to provide information to, and communicate with, schools.
- In primary and post-primary schools, progress in the enhancement of learning through ICT has been constrained by limited advisory support structures, INSET for teachers, and collaboration among the key stakeholders. There needs to be better strategic planning and delivery of professional development opportunities for teachers to build effectively on the foundations laid by the NOF³⁵ training initiative.
- In further education, staff development in ILT is a key area for improvement. There is a need for colleges to do more to maximise the considerable investment in ILT and to ensure that it is used effectively to enhance and extend the quality of learning and teaching across the colleges and the curriculum areas.
- On training programmes that are not ICT-related, there is an over-emphasis on the assessment of ICT as a formal key skill rather than on its development and application. Trainees need to have more opportunities to develop and apply their skills in order to enhance the quality of their vocational work.
- A clear vision and strategy, underpinned by adequate investment, is necessary to improve the poor provision for, and the use of, ICT across the youth sector.
- In teacher education, much more needs to be done to realise the full potential of the technology both to enhance the work of lecturers and the skills and understanding of student teachers. Better use needs to be made of ICT resources and on-line services to support teachers' continuing professional development.

B. ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH WORK

INTRODUCTION

This section of the report provides an evaluation of particular issues that present growing challenges to both practitioners and policy-makers. The Inspectorate has provided advice on these issues based on the findings of inspections and surveys undertaken during 2004-2006.

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56. DE, DEL and DCAL place a high priority on the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Since the previous Chief Inspector's Report, DE has introduced four new circulars concerned with the recruitment and vetting of teachers and other staff in educational settings. The Department also recognises the need to update its current guidance on child protection contained in Circular 1999/10 to take account of changing circumstances and new legislation.

Figure 1: DE circulars on recruitment and vetting

Circular 2006/06	Child Protection: Recruitment of People to Work with Children and Young People in Educational Settings.
Circular 2006/07	Child Protection: Employment of Substitute Teachers.
Circular 2006/08	Child Protection: Training Requirements for School Governors on Staff Recruitment and Selection Panels.
Circular 2006/09	Child Protection: Criminal Background Checking of Staff in Schools: Programme to Extend Coverage.

57. DEL requires that all its contracted provider organisations adhere strictly to its vetting procedures as required by the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order (POCVA), effective from 1 April 2005 and has stressed that the legislation complements, rather than replaces effective recruitment or placement processes. All training provider organisations entrusted with the care of children must undertake the full range of pre-employment checks and have robust staff selection, training and appraisal processes in place.

58. DCAL has taken steps to raise awareness among relevant staff of the implications of recent legislation, and the Inspectorate is working with the Department to undertake an audit of existing child protection arrangements in sponsored organisations.

59. In general, schools (including pre-school centres), further education colleges, training providers and youth clubs make good provision for the pastoral dimension of young people's education or youth work experiences, including their physical, personal and emotional welfare. Nearly all pre-school centres and schools implement fully DE's existing guidance on child protection³⁶ and have effective arrangements for safeguarding the pupils. This aspect of the provision is generally a strength in these organisations. More work needs to be done on consulting with parents and pupils over schools' policies for preventing bullying. There are significant weaknesses in child protection

36 Circular 1999/10 Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection and Circular 2003/13 Welfare and Protection of Pupils Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003.

PASTORAL CARE AND CHILD PROTECTION

arrangements in youth provision, particularly within the voluntary sector.

60. All types of organisations report that they deal with increasing numbers of young people who have complex needs. Often, the time and staff resources available are not adequate to meet the range of difficulties.
61. The findings of the Inspectorate's Phase 3 Counselling Survey³⁷ highlighted the strong sense of commitment within the ELBs to the provision of services to supplement and support the schools' pastoral care systems and to provide the additional counselling help needed by some pupils. It was clear that the ELBs were unable to sustain the services in the face of growing demand from schools and the increasing complexity of pupils' needs. Funds have been allocated within the CYPFP to develop a more effective, regionally-based counselling service.
62. The findings of the survey of educational provision for school-age mothers³⁸ considered the support available to enable them to access education and health care and to provide a personal development programme to meet their needs. Good inter-agency work is highlighted as an essential element of effective provision. In the best practice, there is a whole-school approach, a non-judgemental commitment to supporting young mothers to continue their education, and a range of appropriate support services. Access to these services and facilities varies across ELBs. There is a need to develop a single regional approach for Northern Ireland as well as better partnerships among schools, and with health and social services, to improve the provision for these young people. Greater clarity is needed about the future role of the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) which has been shown to play an important role in the provision.
63. Members of the Inspectorate joined with other Inspectorates and professionals to undertake a multi-disciplinary inspection of child protection arrangements in five Health and Social Services Trusts (HSSTs). The findings showed that, from an educational perspective, the current system does not always work as effectively, or as quickly, as it needs to in the interests of children. The main issues identified by the education inspectors relate to gaps in the HSSTs' arrangements for responding to schools that report concerns about individual children, and the consequent risks to the young people. In addition, the weaknesses identified in the support structures for children in need, and particularly for those in residential care, limit these children's ability to take full advantage of educational opportunities.
64. While some steps have been taken to develop multi-agency, collaborative working related to child protection issues, such approaches are rare and generally on a one-off basis. Too often, the structures, requirements and protocols across different Departments and services do not facilitate joint working. The arrangements for the protection of children and young people are

³⁷ The report of the Phase 3 – Counselling Survey can be obtained from the ETI website, www.etini.gov.uk

³⁸ The report of the Survey of Educational Provision for School Aged Mothers in Northern Ireland 2004-05 can be obtained from the ETI website, www.etini.gov.uk

seldom audited on a multi-disciplinary basis. Evidence from across a range of inspection work indicates that the relevant Departments need to work together more strategically to ensure that the needs of vulnerable young people are met.

65. In the past two years, around 6,700 parents in the primary sector and 2,400 in the post-primary sector have responded to parental questionnaires³⁹ as part of the inspection procedures. Overwhelmingly, parents are supportive of the schools which their children attend and of the work done by the staff to support them.
66. Almost all parents feel that the schools encourage young people to behave well, to develop their personal and social qualities and to respect and value the opinions of others. In the primary sector, the parents are positive about the schools' communication with them but are less so at the post-primary stage. In both sectors, parents would like more information about their children's progress and how they can help them with their school work. In the post-primary sector, they feel that improvement is needed in careers advice.
67. The parents' responses indicate a need for better information to be given about child protection arrangements. Nearly all parents feel their children are well settled in school and most are happy that the staff deal effectively with difficult situations. In line with inspection findings, they are less positive about the schools' arrangements for preventing bullying, reflecting the work that schools still need to do in consulting with parents and pupils about the content of related policies.
68. Inspectors place a high priority on talking with young people as a planned part of all inspection activities. Nearly all young people are supportive of their organisation and, in those instances when they are critical, they usually provide a reasonable solution. A strength of AEP is the involvement of young people in the development of rules and curriculum content. Schools are beginning to listen to the voices of pupils by forming school councils, although these are still the exception rather than the norm. In the further education sector, student questionnaires are used to give young people an opportunity to express their views. As part of their annual self-evaluation process and development planning, training providers are required to include the opinions of trainees. In the best practice, focus groups of trainees are organised to provide regular feedback on the quality of the training programmes and to identify issues that may inhibit their progress.
69. While these are very positive steps, leaders and senior managers need to do more to involve young people in a meaningful way in making decisions about, and taking responsibility for, the life and work of their organisation.

³⁹ Technical difficulties prevented a full analysis of the parent questionnaires completed as part of pre-school inspections. Findings are available for individual centres only.

IMPROVING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

70. A determination to improve quality and raise standards lies at the core of DE's overall education strategy and DEL's recently launched Quality Improvement Strategy, and is reflected clearly in the Inspectorate's mission statement.
71. In further education and training, DEL's Strategy sets out to ensure 'a coherent approach to quality improvement, and the raising of standards across the system, working collaboratively with the key partners.' The Strategy formalises the Department's vision for the further education and training system to be responsive to the needs of learners, employers and the wider community; to promote continuous self-improvement and to ensure a coherent framework of support and professional development. It sets out clearly the roles of the Department, the Inspectorate, LSDA (NI) and LLUK in ensuring that providers of further education and training bring about necessary improvements and strive for excellence. The strategy has evolved in part, from the Inspectorate and DEL working closely on evolving and implementing a proportionate approach to inspections, post-inspection planning and follow-up inspections, and to monitoring college development plans and training provider contracts. Much of what is included in the strategy has already been effectively put in place over the past 12 months. The Inspectorate is currently reviewing with DEL and the further education and training sectors its performance indicators and the form of inspections, to ensure that they meet the aims of FE Means Business and the new professional and technical programmes.
72. DE's School Improvement Programme (SIP), first introduced in February 1998, consists of a number of elements, including the School Support Programme⁴⁰ (SSP) and strategies to improve the standards achieved in literacy and numeracy. The ELBs have been responsible for implementing the Programme. The Inspectorate has, over a period of years, reported on specific elements, most recently through quality assurance inspections of the ELBs' implementation of the Northern Ireland Literacy and Numeracy Strategies⁴¹.
73. The success of the Northern Ireland Literacy Strategy (NILS) is questionable not least because of the variable approaches across the different school phases and ELBs. Too little is done to assist the schools to identify underachievement and plan for improvement. While there is clear evidence of significant improvement in the learning and teaching of mathematics in primary schools as a result of the Northern Ireland Numeracy Strategy (NINS), such improvement is not evident in the post-primary phase.
74. The SIP has been successful in raising standards to an extent but the overall level of improvement is not sufficient. While some schools have grasped the opportunity provided by the SSP, to raise achievement, in a significant number, pupils are still not achieving acceptable standards of performance. In general terms, performance has not increased enough and the gap between high and low performing schools has not narrowed sufficiently. When some schools have left the SSP, their improvement has been short lived with their

⁴⁰ SSP provided intensive support for identified low-achieving schools.

⁴¹ The reports of the Quality Assurance Inspection of the Northern Ireland Literacy Strategy, 2004 and the Northern Ireland Numeracy Strategy: Quality Assurance Report, 2004 can be obtained from the ETI website, www.etini.gov.uk

performance reverting to its previous poor pattern.

75. Although the SSP has strengths, including the development in a number of the schools of a culture of self-evaluation leading to sustained self-improvement, and awareness of the importance of raising standards, the current approach to school improvement requires change because:

- the existing legislative framework lacks clarity in terms of the respective roles and responsibilities of the school (and its Board of Governors), the ELBs, the employing authority and DE, consequently there are issues in relation to accountability;
- school improvement is perceived to apply only to certain schools - schools not performing at an optimum level are not identified and are therefore not involved;
- intervention powers, in terms of what the authorities can do, are limited and there is a lack of effective sanctions for schools which show little or no improvement;
- there is still insufficient emphasis on raising standards; and
- there are weaknesses in target setting arising from deficiencies in the range of performance data available and from the existing data not being used appropriately.

76. It is timely, therefore, that DE is currently undertaking a review and bringing forward

proposals for a new and revitalised school improvement policy. The review is drawing on inspection evidence and on the Inspectorate's professional advice, and includes consultation with schools and other stakeholders. The Inspectorate supports strongly the principle that all schools, including both selective and non-selective post-primary schools, should be concerned with raising standards and, therefore, a wider concept of school improvement is needed for the next decade. The review accepts that the shortcomings in the current approaches outweigh the strengths and that changes need to be made. Crucial to the success of any proposals will be the future role of the ESA in providing the necessary expertise, challenge and support for schools, and the deployment of adequate resources to implement DE's revised school improvement policy.

77. The revised policy will be consulted on widely and is scheduled for implementation from September 2007. It needs to bring a clear sense of coherence to school improvement, including the contribution of recent Government initiatives. DE has, for example, established a pilot to test the extent to which specialist schools can contribute to providing greater choice for parents and pupils, and raising standards through whole-school development. In addition to identifying and building on their particular curricular strengths, specialist schools are also required to co-operate and collaborate with other schools, further education colleges, businesses and the wider community. The Inspectorate will evaluate and report on the outcomes of the pilot.

GOVERNANCE

78. Good governance is a key feature of organisational improvement and effectiveness. Boards of Governors of schools, and Governing Bodies of further education colleges, have a collective responsibility for making sure the organisation helps all its learners to achieve of their best. In addition to ensuring there are good systems of control and accountability, they have a key role in determining the future development of the organisation and overseeing the action that is taken to achieve its aims and bring about improvement in quality and standards.
79. In other sectors, the arrangements for governance vary and may include the work of management committees, boards of directors or individual proprietors. The members of these management groups generally show a high level of commitment to their responsibilities and give their time willingly to help manage the organisation. Particularly in voluntary organisations, the role of management groups may not be well defined, or fully understood, by the staff or the management group members. There is often little support to help them improve on what they do.
80. School Governors make an invaluable contribution to education in Northern Ireland. Their role is of increasing importance in developing stronger schools and helping them to meet the many challenges presented by demographic changes and new directions in educational policy. In recognition of this role, DE is reviewing the arrangements for school governance in Northern Ireland in order to strengthen the recruitment, support and training of governors.
81. In 2006, as a first step in establishing more systematic communication with governors to support them in their key role in schools, the Department and the Inspectorate jointly hosted a conference for school governors. The conference, School Governance Matters, acknowledged the good work of Boards of Governors and aimed also to develop a better understanding of their changing role and of the support available to help them. DE plans to arrange further conferences to communicate directly with governors about current and future policy developments.
82. As part of DE's review of governance, the Inspectorate carried out a survey⁴² in primary and post-primary schools to provide evidence-based advice and recommendations on policy. The ELBs have a legislative remit to provide governor training across all schools, irrespective of management type. The Inter-Board Governor Group (IBGG) determines the focus of the support to be given and reviews the nature and scope of the training.
83. Almost all governors feel that they have received valuable training in a variety of appropriate topics. However, the survey found that the training courses were of variable quality. Governors need increased support and better training to help them manage finances effectively, particularly in the circumstance of falling enrolment; to meet the requirements for Performance

42 The report on the survey, *Promoting Better School Governance in the Interests of the Learners 2004-2005*, can be obtained from the ETI website, www.etini.gov.uk

GOVERNANCE

Review and Staff Development (PRSD); and to manage effectively the increasingly complex range of human resource matters.

84. Governors are not involved frequently in matters concerning the schools' policies and, while a majority of Boards of Governors are aware of external examination outcomes, most are not familiar with data or processes relating to monitoring standards, setting targets or school development planning. Governor training places insufficient emphasis on the processes of self-evaluation and school improvement.
85. There is a need to recruit governors with a greater variety of professional skills and expertise and to provide them with good quality induction programmes. Governors need much higher levels of skill, knowledge and confidence to demonstrate good governance in the core business of the school; that is in improving provision and raising standards of achievement for learners.
86. The Governing Bodies of further education colleges, like the boards of governors of schools, have a crucial role to play in monitoring the organisations' performance and ensuring high quality provision for students. ANIC and the LSDA (NI) have provided a range of training for members of governing bodies. LSDA (NI) has also been instrumental in helping Governing Bodies conduct a health check of their development needs. The focus of training has been

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primarily on the impact of recent important legislation in such areas as equality, disability and the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Governors have exercised limited oversight of the curricular provision or management's quality assurance procedures in the colleges. The appointment of new Governing Bodies for the six new area-based colleges has enabled DEL to review the role and remit of governors and the training they need.

87. The declining school-age population in Northern Ireland will continue to affect all education and training organisations over the next decade and present challenges to leaders and managers, employing authorities and policy-makers. Competition among organisations⁴⁴ is increased and this situation hinders greater sharing and co-operation. Individual organisations may become unviable with resulting staff redundancies and loss of morale. These factors need to be considered as part of the backcloth against which widespread changes in the curriculum and the organisation of post-primary education are being implemented.
88. As part of the inspection process, the Inspectorate considers how the enrolment patterns and viability of organisations, and the quality and sufficiency of the available staff and accommodation, affect the educational provision for learners.
89. Demographic forecasts for the period 2005 to 2015 indicate a decline of nearly 11% in the projected number of school-age children. However, in planning for the future provision and organisation of education and training, the unpredictable increase in the number of children of incoming workers from the EU also needs to be considered. It has been reported that this factor has caused substantial growth in the school population in some specific areas of Northern Ireland. In 2005-2006, the school census showed 1,771 children in primary schools whose first language was not English.
90. Over the two years of this report, the total number of children attending pre-school centres has changed little. The sharp decline in the three year old population between 2000 and 2004 has lessened with a further fall of about 1% predicted over the next ten years. The population changes are projected to occur unevenly across Northern Ireland with significant reductions in some areas and increases in others.
91. The enrolments of pre-school children into reception provision in primary schools have fallen and within the statutory nursery sector, two year olds still make up some 14% of the total numbers. The number of Government-funded voluntary or private pre-school providers has dropped by about 5% while there has been a small increase in the number of statutory nurseries. Where voluntary centres have small numbers of funded children, the lack of job security and the additional burdens of fund-raising to cover essentials, such as wages and rent, can limit the development of high quality provision.
92. During the period 2004-2006, the number of children attending primary school decreased by over 4,000 to 161,143. Of the 903 primary schools⁴⁵, nearly 40% have 100 or fewer pupils and 13% have fewer than 50 pupils. Thirty-two percent have an enrolment of over 200 pupils. The estimate of surplus places in the primary sector in 2005-2006 was just over 34,694, with a third of these places in the greater-Belfast area. The recommended size for replacement primary schools in urban areas is normally

43 The term 'viability' is used to indicate an organisation's ability to operate within its allocated budget. The term 'sustainability' refers to an organisation's capacity to continue to operate over the long-term, to live within its budget, and to provide a sufficiently broad and balanced curriculum or programme of learning/training.

44 'Organisations' is used as an inclusive term for pre-school centres, schools, colleges of further and higher education, and training providers.

45 Including Preparatory Departments

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SUSTAINABILITY

140 children and in rural areas, 105 children. There may be special circumstances when the building of a smaller school should be considered.

Figure 2: Primary schools by size

Number of primary schools 2005/06	Primary	Prep Dept
<50 pupils	115	1
51 to 100 pupils	232	2
101 to 200 pupils	257	12
More than 200 pupils	282	2
Total	886	17

93. All schools have to operate within their budgets and, where enrolments have declined, there have been teacher redundancies. There is inspection evidence that some principals in small primary schools have tried to support the school budget by not employing a release teacher to enable them to undertake important management tasks. Where primary schools struggle to remain viable, inspections highlight the need for the responsible authorities to consider the schools' long-term sustainability and their ability to provide educational experiences of a high enough quality across the curriculum.

94. During the period 2004-2006, the total enrolment in post-primary schools decreased by over 3,500 pupils. There were 18,708 surplus places recorded in 2005-2006. Over one third of schools have a total enrolment of under 500 pupils and fall below the size needed to provide pupils with the necessary broad and balanced curriculum, with a reasonable degree of choice at KS4, and the necessary specialist teaching expertise. The funding arrangements for schools have been modified to create a more equitable sharing of resources across phases, reducing the amount available to post-primary schools. This change has had important implications for small post-primary schools and their capacity to deliver an education of appropriate quality which suits the needs of the pupils.

Figure 3. Post-primary schools by size

Post Primary schools by size band 2005/06	
Number of pupils	Number of schools
<100	0
101-200	18
201-300	19
301-400	23
401-500	26
>500	144
Total	230

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SUSTAINABILITY

95. In 2005, DE issued guidance requiring any new sixth form provision to be the subject of a formal development proposal. The proportion of schools organising sixth forms with fewer than 80 pupils has reduced from almost 40% in 2002-2004 to 33% in 2005-2006. However, there are still too many schools providing unsustainable sixth forms. These schools offer limited curricular choice for the pupils and/or maintain very small classes in which there are inadequate opportunities for pupils to interact with their peers to maintain a high quality learning experience.
96. The Chief Inspector's Report for 2002-2004 identified serious shortcomings in accommodation in a majority of post-primary schools inspected. Although significant additional funding has been allocated to building new schools in both primary and post-primary sectors, and up-grading the accommodation in others, developments have been very slow in getting off the ground. Progress on projects funded through the Public Private Partnership (PPP) process is often particularly slow. At the time of writing this report, of the 132 new primary and post-primary schools planned since 2003, only nine have been completed and work has started on a further 13. During the long delay between announcing a project and the actual start of building, the enrolments in some schools have dropped and the schools' long-term viability has become uncertain. Sometimes, the condition of poorly maintained buildings undermines the standing of the school in its community.
97. Post-primary schools, further education colleges and training organisations all attract learners from a shrinking school-age population, creating a strongly competitive climate. There has been only a small increase to 16% in the proportion of young people in years 13 and 14 in schools, whose programme includes participation in a course provided by a further education college. Half of this provision forms part of an enrichment programme, often of short duration, and the remainder involves pupils who are following courses for the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) or GCE A levels. The minimal change over two years shows that, despite guidance and encouragement from DE and DEL, there is reluctance on the part of schools and the further education and training sectors to link effectively and, for example, provide accredited courses that complement the pupils' core studies.
98. The review and subsequent restructuring of further education has focused on the creation of a sector that is a key driver of economic development, an active agent of social cohesion and a major promoter of Life Long Learning. Proposals on new policies to support the restructured sector are currently the subject of consultation. These developments, along with the review of professional and technical training, should help in creating more clearly differentiated curricula for each of the schools, further education colleges and training organisations, particularly if accompanied by a regional planning strategy.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SUSTAINABILITY

99. The Independent Strategic Review of Education (the Bain Report) has examined the funding and structure of the schools' estate, including the wider provision for 14-19 year-olds. The Review considered demographic trends, new models of schooling and ways of integrating education to share resources. Subsequently, DE has published a Sustainable Schools Policy, which is currently out for consultation. The manner in which the challenging recommendations of the Review are interpreted and the extent to which they are implemented, will be of prime importance in accommodating diversity and choice within educationally and financially viable organisations that are sustainable in the long-term and which meet the needs of all pupils.
100. The Inspectorate's views on the issues addressed by the Review place paramount importance on the learners' interests and needs and their right to experience high quality education and training in a good school or organisation. Organisations should be inclusive in welcoming all learners and should work to establish an ethos of inclusion among the staff and young people. Better provision at 14-19 needs to be supported and the factors that encourage unhelpful competition among providers should be identified and addressed.
101. There is inspection evidence that short-term funding arrangements including, for example, those associated with particular initiatives, can defer necessary discussions and decisions about the longer-term viability of schools. When enrolments are clearly falling, there are better outcomes when issues are addressed and there is early intervention either to improve matters or to take appropriate action to prevent the school reaching a crisis point.
102. The current developments have the potential to ensure that the buildings and resources available in the future will support new and better ways of working and, in particular, the joining-up of provision and services for children, young people and their families. Proposals for change and collaboration need to be realistic and achievable, with good communication among all stakeholders recognised as vital to maintaining trust.
103. The changes that may be proposed, or already in operation, as a result of the Bain Report and the restructuring of further education are taking place at a time when a large number of other initiatives and changes are imminent. There are excellent opportunities for developing a better system and outcomes for learners but changes will not be without cost in terms of insecurity among staff and the possible loss of local provision. Staff and communities need time and support to come to terms with the implications of the changes, and there is a need for leadership, clarity of purpose and good systems of communication at all levels.

14-19 PROVISION

104. In line with the changes taking place elsewhere in the rest of the UK, education and training provision for 14-19 year olds in Northern Ireland is developing its own identity as a sector. There have been continuing changes over a considerable period of time in the provision for this age group, much of it in response to concerns about how well young people are being equipped to meet the demands and challenges of adult life. There has been an on-going concern that more needs to be done to motivate those pupils who see little of value in conventional curricular arrangements and to increase overall the participation of young people in education or training post-16. The school curriculum continues to be focused largely on the content and requirements of public examinations. Insufficient attention is given to meeting the specific needs of young people and, in particular, to developing the skills of literacy and numeracy which are central to much of all other learning.
105. The recommendations for improvement have included the provision of a more flexible, less prescriptive curriculum; increased opportunities for applied learning; and the development of skills necessary for life and work in the 21st century. It has long been recognised that schools and colleges of further education need to work more closely together.
106. The developments at 14-19 were given increased impetus by the proposals, in response to the findings of the Post-Primary Review, to introduce the Entitlement Framework as a requirement for all pupils at KS 4. The Framework is intended to provide these young people with access to a specified and wide range of courses from both the academic and vocational areas. In June 2005, DE set out the rationale and organisational features of the Framework, which is to be implemented by 2009 through effective collaboration among all phases involved in 14-19 provision. During 2005-2006, schools were advised to audit their provision and develop partnership arrangements to deliver the Framework.
107. Importantly, DE and DEL have started to plan collaboratively and to develop joint policies to support the coherent development of 14-19 provision across the phases, including careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). There is a need for clarity about the inter-relatedness of other Government initiatives and how they will contribute to 14-19 provision, including, for example, Training for Success, the Review of Further Education, and the Specialist and Extended Schools initiatives.
108. This work is progressing at a time of great change in education and training and there are many challenges to be overcome, including the greater prestige and earning power associated with academic education, the lack of clarity about the value of vocational qualifications, the separate governance and funding mechanisms across the providers, and the differing teacher education requirements for the various phases. The establishment of the ESA has the potential to bring greater cohesiveness to the development of the 14-19 sector and to ensure that effective arrangements are put in place at a sub-

14-19 PROVISION

regional level to support collaboration among providers.

109. Over the period of this report, the Inspectorate has placed an increasingly high priority on evaluating the provision for 14-19 year-olds to help inform the development of policy by DE and DEL. There have been surveys of the VEP and the KS4 Flexibility Programme⁴⁶ in schools, further education and training. In addition, a new model of inspection, the Area Inspection, has been introduced to evaluate the provision for 14-19 year-olds across all the schools and colleges within defined areas. Inspection teams have given greater attention to engaging in discussion about the findings, and the further action needed, with SMTs of schools and colleges, representatives of management groups and employing authorities, and other key partners, including DEL's Careers Service.
110. The VEP aims to support the Entitlement Framework and provide for school pupils, access to a wider range of accredited courses including professional and technical training in further education and training. Inspection findings have shown that, while significant numbers of young people benefit from the added breadth that the programme provides, a cultural gap remains among the sectors with a limited common understanding of one another's respective curricula, vocational qualifications, and arrangements for pastoral care and child protection. Many teachers in the school sector, for example, have little awareness of the nature of the colleges' day-to-day organisation. The quality of the communication between the colleges and the schools is very variable with few
- examples of consistently good, systematic management of the VEP Initiative. There needs to be better involvement of teacher education and continuing professional development in developing the skills and competences needed to support collaborative working among organisations.
111. The priorities of leadership and management too often place the interests of individual organisations ahead of developing the effective partnerships with others required by the Entitlement Framework. There is, for example, evidence that schools are using the VEP to support unsustainable sixth forms. They provide a narrow curriculum of those subjects in which their teachers have specialist expertise and for which the school has existing resources, rather than designing a programme to meet the pupils' needs in line with their career aspirations. Very few of the training organisations involved in KS4 Flexibility programmes have the necessary resources to offer pupils directly a wide choice of vocational programmes. Personal career planning is under-developed in the majority of schools and the current provision for careers⁴⁷ does not meet the needs of pupils.
112. Schools, colleges and training providers need to help young people and their parents understand the available pathways to further learning and employment. Above all it is important to ensure that the provision of subjects and courses at 14-19 creates a coherent curriculum experience for individual learners and helps them to achieve their goals and to ensure that they can make a positive contribution to the economic prosperity of Northern Ireland.

⁴⁶ The term 'VEP' is now used to cover both KS4 Flexibility and Enhancement courses for 16-19 year-olds.

⁴⁷ Including careers education, information, advice and guidance.

113. As the Entitlement Framework is introduced and the provision at 14-19 becomes increasingly complex, young people need to have access to a high quality programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) to help them make informed, appropriate and realistic decisions about education, training and employment options. The staff who work with them need to share an understanding of the contribution such a programme can make towards motivating young people and raising their aspirations.

114. In an environment where schools, colleges and training providers are competing to attract and retain young people, the interests of individual organisations should not interfere with the identification of the best possible pathway for each learner.

115. Evidence from the Inspectorate's surveys⁴⁸ highlights a wide variation in the content, organisation and time allocation for CEIAG across individual organisations and phases. The majority of young people do not have the opportunity to access an appropriate mix of the core careers components. A progressive framework is needed that clearly identifies the learning outcomes for self-awareness, career exploration and career management.

116. In all three sectors⁴⁹ the majority of young people do not experience a sufficiently coherent careers education curriculum as an integral element of their course or training programme. Personal career planning and the promotion of career management skills are under-developed.

There are inadequate assessment methods to track learners' progress.

117. The survey in post-primary schools found that a significant minority of schools have introduced the Education for Employability pilot at KS3 and the GCSE in Learning for Life and Work at KS4 as the major components of their careers provision. There is evidence that these elements, on their own, do not provide the range of learning experiences that should be included in a comprehensive and coherent careers programme.

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48 The reports of the surveys, Careers Education and Guidance in Jobskills Training Programmes, 2004-05 and Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in Post-Primary Schools, 2006 can be obtained from the ETI website www.etini.gov.

49 Schools, further education and training.

118. There have been significant changes in the structure and staffing of DEL's Careers Service. The careers service operates a differentiated service model of provision that focuses on those young people in most need and deemed to be at higher risk of disengagement. The provision of careers guidance in schools and the service provided by DEL are inadequately co-ordinated. It is appropriate that, as part of the Northern Ireland Skills Strategy, CEIAG is being reviewed and that DEL and DE are working together on a joint and comprehensive policy.

119. Almost all young people participate in work-related learning activities. Young people value these activities; they play an important part in their understanding of the world of work. However, the range of activities is often inadequately co-ordinated.

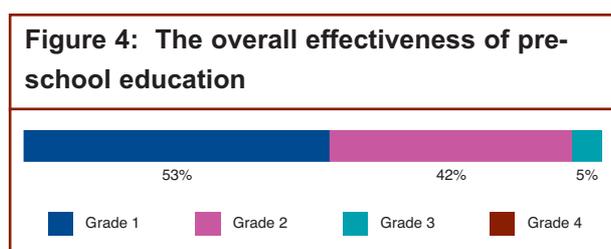
120. The quality of careers information has improved in the majority of schools and colleges. There is a need for better careers information in most training organisations. Across all three phases, there is a need to improve the use made of current and accurate labour market information and the accessibility of careers resources, including ICT.

121. There is a need to establish a national framework of standards for the continuing professional development of teachers, lecturers and tutors involved in CEIAG.

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C. SUMMARY OF THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH WORK

122. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION



- Standards of pre-school education are good or better in well over half of all centres and continue to improve. Further effort and better support are needed to increase the proportion of provision reaching this high standard.
- The key strengths are the sense of care and dedication to the children's well-being and protection, the good work with parents, the breadth and interest in the learning programmes, and the high achievements in language and personal, social and emotional development.
- There are particular improvements in the increasingly high quality of the teaching, and the better opportunities for learning related to early science and for outdoor play.
- Continued efforts are needed to improve the provision for SEN and for active physical play; to increase the focus on the progress

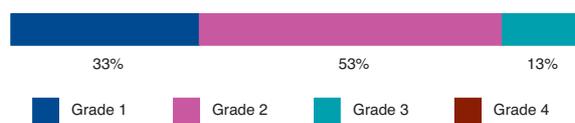
of individual children within the curriculum planning; and to develop further the self-evaluation and self-improvement processes.

- The announced transfer of early years responsibilities from DHSSPS to DE has the potential to stimulate a more integrated policy for the education, care and development of young children.
- More effective action is needed from the two lead Departments to develop a coherent policy and strategy to improve SEN provision across all types of pre-school education centres, and particularly in the voluntary/private sector.
- DE has stated its intention, appropriately, to raise the admission age in the statutory nursery sector to 3 years 2 months and to replace reception provision in primary schools with more appropriate pre-school education.

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123. PRIMARY EDUCATION

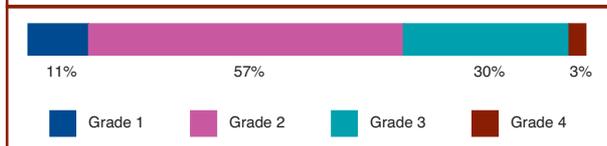
Figure 5: The overall effectiveness of primary education



- The good quality of the pastoral care and child protection arrangements provide a caring and supportive climate in nearly all primary schools.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in nearly all schools and has significant strengths in just under one third. There are positive benefits from the NINS, particularly in relation to the teaching of mental mathematics.
- The schools have sustained the good attainments in English and mathematics of all children at KS1 and have improved the mathematics attainments of pupils at KS2.
- There is an increase in the teachers' confidence and general competence in using ICT to support learning and teaching.
- There is a rise in the percentage of schools where the quality of SEN provision is very good. More needs to be done to improve the provision in around a fifth of schools where weaknesses outweigh the strengths.
- There is good leadership and management in almost half of primary schools and in one third there are significant strengths in school development planning. In a minority of schools (16%), weaknesses in leadership and management outweigh the strengths and are reflected in development plans that have an inadequate focus on raising standards.
- Improvements are needed in the strategies used to track individual children's progress, particularly in aspects of literacy and numeracy. Principals and teachers need to use this information better to improve further the standards achieved, particularly by boys, and more generally in English.
- Teachers need to do more to raise the standards of children's writing and to develop greater creativity and fluency in the work with more opportunities to write in all areas of the curriculum. In a minority of classes, more effective strategies are needed to improve the teaching of reading.
- Play-based learning of a higher quality needs to be developed across years 1 to 4.
- Better links should be developed with pre-schools and post-primary schools to ensure that the children's achievements are built on consistently when they transfer from one phase of education to the next.

124. POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Figure 6: The overall effectiveness of post-primary education



- There are significant strengths in the overall quality and effectiveness of provision in over 10% of the schools inspected, with strengths outweighing weaknesses in a further 57%. It is a concern that in over 30% weaknesses in the overall provision outweigh strengths.
- There is a caring ethos in almost all schools, in most instances underpinned by a good pastoral care programme. While the pupils are generally well behaved and co-operative, there is a growing number of disruptive and disaffected pupils who present a challenge for many schools. There is a need for more effective co-operation among schools, support services and AEP to disseminate the existing good practice in working effectively with these pupils.
- There is much good quality teaching, with an increase in the proportion of lessons where the practice is very good or excellent. Action is needed to reduce significantly the one-sixth of lessons in which the quality of teaching has important shortcomings, or is poor.

- There is a gradual improvement in the standards achieved by pupils in public examinations particularly for those achieving grades A to C in more than three subjects at GCE A level. The proportion of boys who leave school at 16 without any qualifications is falling. Although results in Northern Ireland are still ahead of those in England and Wales, the gap is narrowing. More needs to be done in post-primary schools to raise the standards in literacy and numeracy.
- There is evidence of improvement in the provision for, and the standards achieved by, pupils identified with special educational needs.
- C2k has provided schools with secure, reliable ICT infrastructures. The potential of technology to extend learning remains relatively under-exploited across the sector with evidence of extensive, consistent and skilful use in only a minority of schools.

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- While the quality of leadership and management is good in a majority of schools, there is also a need for better

monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and standards. In almost one-third of schools, the leadership and management are not effective enough.

- The post-primary sector is undergoing significant change and realignment and needs well co-ordinated, strategic support from both DE and DEL. All schools need to review their provision in response to the Entitlement Framework and the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC) and to adapt effectively to the demographic downturn and the necessary collaboration over provision for 14-19 year olds. Schools

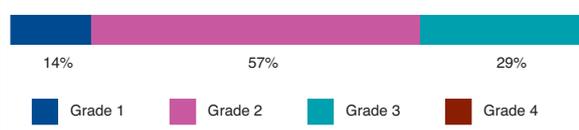
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need to ensure they provide pupils with better access to a good educational experience at sixth form level which will prepare them well for life and for work or higher education.

- Action is needed to address the many deficiencies in the accommodation in the post-primary sector which has seen little change from the position reported in the Chief Inspector's Report of 2002-2004.

125. FURTHER EDUCATION

Figure 7: The overall effectiveness of further education



- In the majority of colleges, the standards achieved by students on externally accredited awards are satisfactory or better. A key challenge is to ensure that the requirements of course specifications are interpreted broadly enough to include essential transferable skills and competences. More needs to be done to increase the percentage of provision within the priority skills areas and governed by externally accredited awards qualifications that are registered on the National Qualifications Framework.
- In almost all colleges inspected, the success and progression rates are good or better for those who complete their course of study. The success rate for learners following an essential skills course is consistently low. Retention rates within and across the colleges and courses remain variable.
- Eighty-four percent of all the lessons inspected had more strengths than weaknesses, with wide variations in quality across colleges. The percentage of lessons graded 1 (25%) has not improved substantially and the majority of teaching,

while satisfactory, tends more towards the adequate than the good.

- In the majority of colleges, strategic leadership is improving. There is an increased focus in college development plans (CDPs) on the implementation of strategies to improve learning and teaching, and raise standards.
- Leaders and managers need to do more to analyse the reasons for the wide variations in performance across curriculum areas and disseminate the existing good practice. They need to use more effectively all the available data on student achievements and important cross-college functions, and to improve their quality assurance procedures, to inform better decision-making and quality improvement.
- DEL's Department for Employment and Learning's significant investment in ILT has provided good quality infrastructure, and, to a lesser extent, improved the levels of staff confidence and competence. There is not yet a sufficient return from this investment as measured by improved performance, raised standards of learning and greater flexibility and innovation in teaching.
- The majority of colleges have made good progress towards increasing links with business and industry and responding to the needs of their local community. Rapid changes in technology mean there is a need for increased staff development to keep skills up-to-date.

- Both the further education and schools sectors have responded positively to the significant potential within the VEP for addressing the learning requirements of young people and developing closer collaborative working over the long term.
- The need for improved strategic planning at both local and regional levels, and for stronger relationships with schools and employers, has been recognised in FE Means Business and a number of projects are currently addressing the issues. It will be important for colleges to make more informed use of their own the data provided as part of the Review of Further Education in evaluating their effectiveness. These actions will be key to developing coherent and cost-effective provision, linked to the needs of local communities, industry and commerce.
- There continues to be significant investment by DEL in the further education sector's estates and resources which increasingly reflect the best standards in the world of industry.

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126. TRAINING

Figure 8: The overall effectiveness of Jobskills programmes

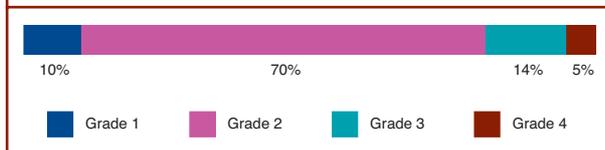
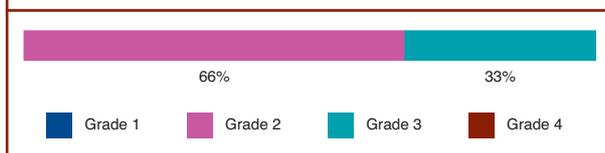


Figure 9: The overall effectiveness of New Deal programmes



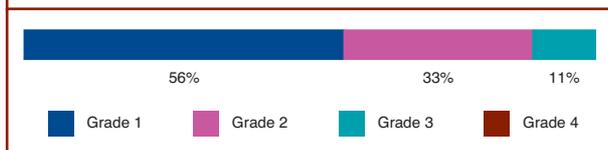
- There has been a marked increase in the proportion of Jobskills provision with significant strengths or strengths outweighing weaknesses and a corresponding drop in the proportion assessed to be less effective.
- Of the New Deal Consortia inspected, those in which the proportion of New Deal programmes with weaknesses that outweigh strengths has increased to one third.
- There are good relationships between most employers and Jobskills or New Deal providers.
- Most of the work-based experiences provided on vocational programmes, and the New Deal programmes to assist the long-term unemployed find a job, are well planned and provide relevant training and learning opportunities. A minority of

employers do not provide appropriate work-based training experiences.

- There are very variable rates of retention, achievement and progression to employment across providers of Jobskills programmes. On average, they remain too low across the training sector. There are low rates of progression from New Deal to sustained employment. An increasing number of participants start New Deal with complex barriers to employment, and many are returning for the second or more time.
- The majority of trainees on Jobskills and participants on New Deal programmes have fewer than four GCSEs at grade C. Many have significant weaknesses in literacy, numeracy and ICT, which inhibit their progress in learning.
- Young people and the unemployed do not have good enough careers provision.
- Following a fundamental review of DEL's Jobskills vocational training, the new proposed programmes are designed to provide greater flexibility, improved individual choice and a wider range of career pathways. DEL intends to review New Deal to provide a flexible approach to delivery to meet more effectively the individual needs of the participants and assist them into sustained employment.

127. SPECIAL EDUCATION

Figure 10: The overall effectiveness of special education



- The work in the special schools inspected is overall of a high standard. The schools' very positive ethos is a particular strength. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent.
- There are continuing improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The schools are keenly aware of their responsibility to ensure that all pupils make good progress academically as well as in their personal and social development. The staff scrutinise individual pupils' education plans, annual reviews and transition evidence in order to bring about improvement in the standards achieved and prepare each pupil for placement when they leave school.

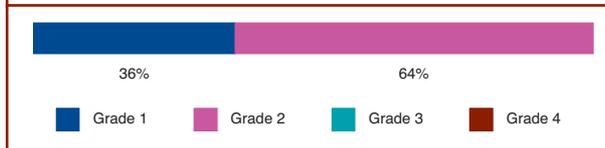
- The quality of leadership and management is increasing markedly with better whole-school planning and self-evaluation leading to self-improvement.
- The special schools are developing well their capacity to support mainstream schools. They have an important role to play as part of the continuum of provision for SEN within an increasingly inclusive education system. Special schools need to develop further as forward-looking centres striving for excellence, in partnership with mainstream schools and with one another, to support the development of inclusion and the promotion of even higher standards.
- There is inadequate joint planning and strategic action involving DE, DEL and DHSSPS to support the rapid development of more streamlined and effective provision for all children and young people with special educational needs across the education, training and youth service.

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128. ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROVISION

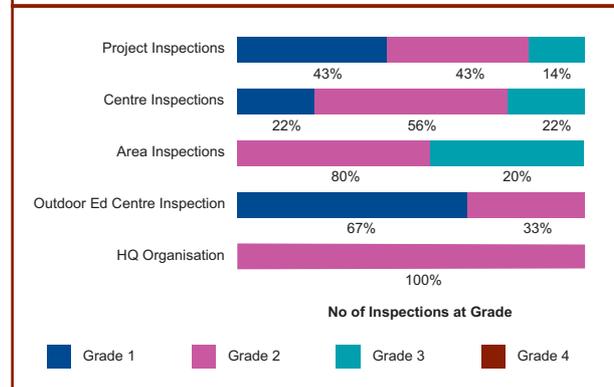
Figure 11: The overall effectiveness of AEP Centres



- It is a matter of concern that increasing numbers of pupils are opting out of mainstream education resulting in a growth of AEP. While the sector provides a valuable safety net, more needs to be done within schools to prevent young people becoming excluded.
- The provision in AEP centres is improving and generally meets well the needs of the majority of young people who attend.
- In the main, the referral systems for admission are now more rigorous and systematic, and stronger links have been established between community-based and statutory providers.
- Many young people gain accredited qualifications and the provision makes a positive contribution to the education of pupils who find difficulty in coping with school.
- A clearer policy is needed to ensure a coherent approach to young people at risk and to direct-funding and action more towards keeping them engaged and motivated to attend school.

129. THE YOUTH SERVICE

Figure 12: The Overall Effectiveness of Youth Provision



- The youth service makes an important contribution to the personal and social development of many young people in Northern Ireland. Currently there are some 130 statutory youth centres and approximately 2,200 voluntary youth settings catering for young people in a wide variety of ways. Increasingly, youth workers are called upon to support and enhance the provision in formal education and in AEP.
- In the period covered by this report, there were 25 inspections of various types of youth provision, including area inspections. While there is a need for care in considering data related to this small number, the findings indicate that there are examples of good practice in both the statutory and voluntary youth sectors, but also that there is a wide variation in the quality and effectiveness of provision.

- Of the seven youth projects inspected, three had significant strengths and a similar number had strengths that outweighed the weaknesses; in one project the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. Two of the nine youth centres inspected had significant strengths, five had strengths that outweighed their weaknesses and two had weaknesses that outweighed their strengths.
- Of the five area inspections, four demonstrated strengths that outweighed the weaknesses, and in one, the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The voluntary headquarter organisation inspected had strengths that outweighed the weaknesses. Two of the outdoor education centres had significant strengths and in the third, the strengths outweighed the weaknesses.
- In two of the three follow-up inspections of youth centres, significant improvements were noted, and in the remaining centre, a number of issues remained to be addressed.
- In the best practice, youth work makes a distinctive and valuable contribution to helping young people overcome barriers to learning and achievement, develop their social and personal skills, and better understand views and cultures different from their own. Key features of the work observed were the commitment of the volunteer workers; the effective outreach service; the purposeful links with schools; and the good quality of the outdoor education programmes.
- Action is needed to improve the management and leadership in about half of the youth settings and, in a minority, the child protection arrangements.
- Youth provision is suffering from a legacy of little strategic direction and low levels of Government funding over many years. The Strategy for the Delivery of Youth Work in Northern Ireland is a significant development but clearer priorities are needed to address the key deficiencies in the Service. These deficiencies include the funding arrangements; the infrastructure; the quality of ICT provision; and the management of the recruitment, training and

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support of volunteers. In addition, strategic direction is required for the future of outdoor education.

130. TEACHER EDUCATION

- The number of people applying to become teachers in the school sector remains buoyant in most subject areas and the work of the beginning teachers who enter the profession is generally of a good quality.
- Both initial teacher education and CASS are increasingly focused on preparing teachers to teach in a divided and more diverse society.
- More needs to be done to prepare teachers to deal effectively with learners who have special educational needs and those who are at risk of becoming isolated and marginalised.
- All the teacher education partners need to be involved more appropriately in improving teachers' capacity to bring about improvement in the quality of learners' literacy and numeracy.
- There are instances of innovative use of ICT to improve teacher education in both the schools and further education sectors. The effective use of ICT needs to be extended and embedded further in the work of teacher education.
- Teacher education needs to place a greater emphasis on improving teachers' pedagogical skills to meet the challenges of the revised NIC, the possible removal of selection at post-primary level, and the Entitlement Framework.
- The evaluation of the Post Graduate Certificate and Diploma in Further and Higher Education (PGCFHE and PGDFHE) and the pilot induction module for teachers new to further education shows strengths, which include the commitment of the university tutors to the provision of appropriate courses, the innovative use of e-learning, and the focus on improvement in learning and teaching.
- Improvements are needed in the partnership between the University and the colleges across all three stages of the provision; the focus on the specific needs of the teachers; the development and assessment of the teachers' classroom practice; the use of on-line learning; and the role and training of the college mentors and support personnel.
- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on aligning the teacher education of teachers in schools, further education colleges and training organisations to meet the challenges they face in working collaboratively across these different sectors.
- The increasing collaboration between teacher educators from Northern Ireland and from the Republic of Ireland is having a beneficial effect on teacher education generally. The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTC (NI)) has worked effectively to establish a Code of Values for teachers and to revise the teaching competences.

D. INSPECTION AND IMPROVEMENT

131. Inspection is primarily about contributing to improvement. It identifies what is going well in an organisation and what areas are in need of improvement, and it provides leaders and managers with priorities for bringing about change. Inspection also highlights the nature of good and poor practice, which can help others to aim higher and achieve more. The frequent and wide range of contacts that inspectors have with learners, teachers and leaders mean that they are well placed to advise on improvement. Inspection provides a strong evidence base for making policy and an objective evaluation of its outcomes.
132. The Inspectorate's previously published self-evaluation and self-improvement materials, *Together Towards Improvement*, and *Improving Quality: Raising Standards*, have become significant tools used across most sectors in compiling self-evaluation reports and development plans. Evidence of organisations' self-evaluation and self-improvement is now an integral element of an increasing proportion of the inspections, particularly follow-up inspections (FUIs). During 2004-2006, the Inspectorate built on the developing culture of self-evaluation and self-improvement by publishing and disseminating *The Reflective Teacher*, which provides comprehensive guidance to assist teachers in evaluating and improving their own work. In an independent survey of organisations inspected⁵⁰, over 90% of leaders reported the usefulness of the documents, *Together Towards Improvement* and *Evaluating Schools*.
133. During 2004-2005, the Inspectorate consulted on, and piloted, new approaches to inspection in all phases⁵¹, and these new models were implemented from September 2005. The inspection processes are now sharper and more streamlined, and have reduced the amount of preparation required of leaders and staff. There is a stronger focus on the quality of leadership and management, and on an organisation's capacity for self-evaluation and self-improvement, including, in the school sector, the effectiveness of the process of SDP. In the recent independent evaluation of inspection⁵² nine out of ten teachers rated the new short primary inspection as beneficial to their school. Inspection will continue to respond flexibly to new priorities and Government initiatives. The agendas

⁵⁰ Conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

⁵¹ Further details of the inspection models used in each phase are given in the Annex

⁵² Conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

set, for example, by the Fit Futures taskforce and new child protection legislation are reflected in all school inspections from September 2006.

134. During 2004-2006, changes were also made to the FUI process. In most phases, the period between the original inspection and the follow-up inspection has been lengthened and, during this time, there is increased contact between the relevant District Inspector and the organisation. An evaluation of the capacity of the organisation to bring about improvement is fundamental to the follow-up process in all phases. During the period covered by this report, 165 FUIs were carried out. In 94% there was at least satisfactory improvement in the areas identified by the original inspections and, of these, 13% of the organisations had made good or very good improvements.
135. There is a major role for inspection in influencing the work of others. The Inspectorate considers it important that the detailed insights gained through inspection benefit not only individual organisations and those who support and train the staff, but also those who make and implement policy. For example, inspectors provide advice, based on evidence, to policy-makers in DE, DEL and DCAL, and act as assessors and observers on many working and steering groups.
136. The Inspectorate takes seriously the need to consult widely on its work and, in this context, makes use of various methods including focus groups, e-consultation and questionnaires. Contact is maintained with a wide range of stakeholders so that inspection evidence can influence their thinking and action. In turn, feedback from these contacts helps shape the methods used to inspect, ensuring the process responds to change and remains fit for purpose.
137. During the period of this report, the Inspectorate published Service Standards for its work and that of the Inspection Services Branch (ISB) in DE. These standards will be evaluated and the outcomes published on the Inspectorate website⁵³.

138. The Inspectorate does not expect others to engage in self-evaluation without undertaking similar work itself through a number of initiatives and methods. The organisation considers it important to reflect on what it does and to seek to do it better. The Inspectorate has, for example, worked continuously to improve the quality of its service, and in December 2005 was successful in gaining recognition of that quality through the Charter Mark award for excellence in public service. The standards which are expected for Charter Mark are high, and working towards them has helped the organisation to identify what it does well and where further improvement is needed. The Award has been an incentive to maintain and strengthen the Inspectorate's effectiveness as a responsive and innovative organisation.

139. Having undertaken an in-house evaluation, and identified the need for more clearly defined processes, the complaints procedure was revised in 2004-2005. New guidance was published and implemented as part of every inspection. The annual review of comments, compliments and complaints received by the Inspectorate continues to be an important part of the organisation's self-evaluation and self-improvement processes, and changes are made as necessary.

140. The positive feedback received about inspections far outweighs the complaints that are made. Over the past two years, the number of formal complaints has fallen from a total of 23 in 2003-2004 to eleven in 2005-2006. A recent review of complainants showed that around three-quarters considered the complaints procedure to be effective or highly effective. Those that were not satisfied because their complaint was not upheld did, however, acknowledge that the published procedures had been followed closely. All said that they appreciated the detailed written responses they had received and the efforts made by the Inspectorate to resolve the complaint.

Figure 13: The evaluation of inspection: responses to some key statements in the questionnaires sent to leaders

Key statements	2003/2004	2004/2005
Leaders felt that the inspection was beneficial to the organisation.	92%	94%
Leaders were satisfied or very satisfied with the report-back session after inspection.	92%	94%
Leaders were satisfied or very satisfied with the procedures used.	92%	93%

141. An independent company⁵⁴ undertakes the formal evaluation of inspection through

seeking the views of every organisation inspected in each year. The evaluation includes the use of confidential questionnaires for staff and leaders, and in-depth interviews with a sample of organisations. The outcomes consistently show very high levels of satisfaction with the inspection process. The figures for 2005-2006 indicate that the satisfaction levels are being maintained and, for many aspects of the inspection process, have improved further. The Inspectorate takes note of any areas brought to their attention through the evaluation report and uses these to develop and improve inspection even more.

142. To a large extent, the Inspectorate's effectiveness is maintained through the continuing staff development programme. One of the priorities of the programme is to ensure consistency in inspection processes

and procedures. External contributors to staff development inform and challenge the views of inspectors and, on many occasions, practitioners from across the sectors provide insightful illustrations of their good practice in education, training and youth work. The Associate Assessor programme brings to inspection teams the perspective of experienced serving leaders. Opportunities have been introduced for inspectors to participate in mentorship schemes with business, and to work shadow in industry, in business and in further education colleges in other parts of the UK. All of these activities contribute to the continuous development of the Inspectorate, in line with the organisation's vision that it will be a highly regarded and influential body dedicated fully to the education and well-being of all learners.

Our vision is to be a highly regarded and influential organisation, fully dedicated to the education and wellbeing of all learners.

**Table 1: Inspection evidence:
number of inspections 2004-2006**

Inspections 2004 – 2006	
Pre-school inspections	184 inspections
Primary inspections, including preparatory departments.	126 focused inspections 26 short inspections
Post-primary inspections	44 inspections
Special school inspections	18 special school inspections
Further education inspections	7 college inspections 3 Centre of Excellence inspections
Training organisation inspections	30 Jobskills 5 New Deal 4 extended inspections: Jobskills & New Deal
Youth organisation inspections	9 youth centres 7 youth projects 1 uniformed group 5 area inspections 3 outdoor education centres
Alternative education inspections	14 centres
Follow-up inspections (all sectors)	165
TOTAL	651

**Table 2: Inspection evidence:
surveys undertaken 2004-2006**

Survey	Phases involved	Visits
<u>Department of Education</u>		
The Best for All Our Children: Special educational needs in the pre-school sector 2006	Pre-school	20 plus 10 consultation events
An evaluation of the Northern Ireland Music Therapy Trust 2004-2006	Special	38
Report of a survey of the provision and use of the School Library in a sample of Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2004–2005	Primary Post-primary	62
Phase 3 – Counselling Survey. February–June 2005		5
The Future Role of the Special School	Special	156 consultation events
Promoting Better School Governance in the Interests of the Learners 2004-2005	Primary Post-primary	50
ICT in Primary Schools: An Evaluation by ETI – May 2005	Primary	26
Provision in the Creative and Expressive Area of Study in a sample of Primary Schools in Northern Ireland 2005	Primary	77
The quality of learning and teaching and the standards and outcomes achieved by the learners in relation to the provision for English as an Additional Language Oct-Nov 2005	Primary Post-primary	22
Provision and outcomes for Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Post-Primary Schools – February 2006	Post-primary	21
Survey of Educational Provision for School-Aged Mothers in Northern Ireland 2004-05	Post-primary	14
A Survey of the Introduction of Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stage 3 in a Sample of Post-Primary Schools January-February 2005	Post-primary	14

Survey	Phases involved	Visits
Survey of Behaviour Support Team in the Five Education and Library Boards 2005-06	Primary Post-primary	40
Survey of the Effective Use of Assistants for Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools 2005–06	Primary Post-primary	27
Provision for Pupils in Hearing Impaired Units in Northern Ireland May–October 2005	Primary Post-primary	10
The Stages of the Code of Practice in Northern Ireland – Lessons from Practice	Primary Post-primary Special	10
Report of a survey: The Early Teacher Education of Teachers in the Creative and Expressive Area of Study	Post-primary Teacher Education	78
Survey on the Supply of Science Teachers in Post-Primary Schools in Northern Ireland, April 2006	Post-primary	35
<u>Department for Employment and Learning</u>		
The Provision for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Modern Languages in Further Education April-June 2005	Further Education	15
The Provision for Tutor Education within Essential Skills in the Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education (BIFHE), the North-East IFHE, the North-West IFHE and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) November 2004-February 2005	Further Education	55
Advanced Learning Systems – New Deal for Musicians – May 2005	Training	2
Survey of the Jobskills Pre-Vocational Access Pilot Programme - October 2005	Training	7
Modern Apprenticeship	Training	29
Survey of Careers Education and Guidance in Jobskills Training Programmes 2004-05	Training	11
New Deal Core Gateway Provision - June 2006	Training	8

Survey	Phases involved	Visits
KS4 Flexibility Programme offered by Training Providers	Training	12
Report of a Survey of Jobskills Provision in Childcare and Education - May 2006	Training	15
Survey of the Vocational Enhancement Programme in Colleges of Further Education - January/April 2006	Further Education	3
Report on the Induction and Post-Graduate Diploma in Further and Higher Education (UU) Courses - 2006	Teacher Education	23
Report on the Evaluation of the Cultural Diversity Pilot Projects - 2005	Further Education	11
Survey of the Key Stage 4 Flexibility Initiative in Further Education - 2005	Further Education	14
Survey of Learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties in Training Organisations and Further Education	Further Education Training	6
<u>Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure</u>		
An Evaluation Survey of Creativity Seed Fund Projects	Arts organisations	9
Report of a Scoping Study of the Contribution of Museums and Galleries in Supporting Education in Northern Ireland June-September 2005	Primary Post-primary	11
An Interim Report on the Creative Youth Partnerships – September 2005	Primary Post-primary Youth/AEP	22
Report of a Survey of the Work of the Education, Learning and Outreach Section of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland	Primary Post-primary FE	12
Report of an Inspection of Cinemagic November 2005	Primary Post-primary	6
Report on the Work of AmmA – The Armagh Multi-Media Access Creative Learning Centre December 2005-March 2006	Primary Post-primary AEP	10
Report of an Evaluation of the work of the Curriculum Development Unit for Ulster-Scots, Stranmillis University College January-April 2006	Primary Post-primary	9
Total visits (excluding interviews with personnel, officials, employing authorities)		839

Table 3: Revised inspection procedures from 2005

Sector	Main features of revised inspection procedures	New elements
Pre-school	<p>Shortened period of notification.</p> <p>Reduction in preparation required by leaders.</p> <p>Inspection process completed in one day.</p> <p>Short report.</p>	Questionnaires for members of staff and management groups.
Primary	<p>Short inspection focuses on the school's self-evaluation and agenda for improvement.</p> <p>Shortened period of notification.</p> <p>Inspection process completed more quickly.</p> <p>Short report.</p>	A self-evaluation pro-forma (SEP) completed by schools.
Post-primary	<p>Standard inspection focuses on leadership and management.</p> <p>Shortened period of notification.</p> <p>Inspection process completed more quickly.</p>	Questionnaires for teachers and ancillary staff.
Post-primary, further education, and training	<p>Area inspection assesses the effectiveness, within a defined area, of the provision of education and training for 14-19 year-olds in preparing them to progress to further education, training or employment.</p> <p>A more focused evaluation of leadership and management.</p>	
Special school sector	<p>Inspection focuses more closely on how learners' individual needs are met.</p> <p>More time is allocated to pre-inspection and post-inspection discussion and feedback.</p> <p>Shorter report.</p>	A self-evaluation pro-forma completed by Principal
Youth inspections	Area inspection provides a more comprehensive overview of youth provision within defined areas.	

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