

Education and Training Inspectorate

A Follow-up Evaluation of the Implementation of the Revised Curriculum in Primary, Special and Post-Primary Schools: 2009

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Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Over the course of the implementation of the revised curriculum, first introduced in September 2007, the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) published two evaluation reports on the arrangements and their impact in primary, special and post-primary schools; the first of these in December 2007, covering the period 2006-2007, and the second in April 2009 covering the year 2008. From September 2009 the changes have been introduced to every year group from year 1 to year 12.

1.2 This third Inspectorate evaluation report follows-up on the 14 recommendations (see Appendix 1) in the Inspectorate's report on the 2008 year and assesses the progress made since January 2009 when the findings were reported orally to the Department of Education (DE) and to the Partnership Management Board (PMB¹).

EVIDENCE BASE

1.3 The evidence base, collected during 2009, and analysed for this follow-up evaluation comprises:

- performance levels from 106 lessons (40 primary, 58 post-primary and 8 special schools) focused, through visits by district inspectors in September 2009, on the curriculum changes.
- performance levels from 2721 lessons in the 2009 inspection programme in 94 primary, 19 post-primary key stage (KS) 3 and eight special schools;
- semi-structured interviews with selected Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) officers from the primary, post-primary and special education sectors;
- semi-structured interviews with Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) officers;
- briefing by Classroom 2000 (C2k) officers on related e-learning developments;
- observations by Inspectorate assessors on PMB and its sub-groups for the primary, post-primary and special sectors;
- documentation from the PMB and from DE; and
- an online survey of Boards of Governors of primary and post-primary schools with response rates of 22% and 29% respectively.

¹ The PMB is a planning group, responsible for the implementation strategy and represents the Education and Library Boards (ELBs), the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and their key partners, including C2k, the Regional Training Unit (RTU), the General Teaching Council (GTC), the teacher unions, the initial teacher education providers and school principals.

1.4 It is important to bear in mind, when interpreting the findings based on the lessons seen during 2009 that, in contrast, the data collected for the 2008 survey was gathered during a “*transition year*” during which the Inspectorate’s protocol was to “*encourage teachers and report good or excellent practice*”². Furthermore, in the focused district visits carried out in September 2009 schools were asked to identify effective practice for inspection.

A number of quantitative terms are used in this report. These terms should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	more than 90%
Most	75% - 90%
A majority	50% - 74%
A significant minority	30% - 49%
A minority	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision for the curriculum, inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1.5 The findings summarised below take account of the context of the Minister’s statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly on 1 December 2009 which set out transitional governance and management arrangements for the period up to the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA).

FINDINGS ON STRATEGY

1.6 The 2008 report made six recommendations (Appendix 1) about the development and the communication of strategy; this section reports progress based on evidence from 2009.

POLICY CONNECTIONS

1.7 Many stakeholders and school leaders generally, identify the publication of *Every School a Good School: a policy for school improvement*³ on 30 April 2009 as a significant step which clarified both direction and purpose in education policy and, to their mind, set out expectations about schools in a clearer and more coherent way.

² Letter of the 30th September 2008 to schools from the Chief Inspector and the Deputy Secretary of DE.

³ http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/03-schools_impvt_prog_pg/03-every-school-a-good-school-a-policy-for-school-improvement.htm

COMMUNICATION

1.8 The evidence reflects a considerable improvement in effectiveness of the communication strategy; the communications officer has brought consistency to external communications; clearer and more consistent messages have been given to schools. Circulars issued by the Department on pupil reporting have set out the statutory arrangements. The Big Calendar, LinkEd, the www.nicurriculum.org.uk website, together with case-study materials published on the BBC NI education website, NEELB TV (produced by the North-Eastern Education and Library Board), and the increase in published case study and exemplary materials all make a positive contribution to staff development in schools.

CO-ORDINATION; ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND A UNIFIED PLAN

1.9 In 2008, schools reported that each support agency appeared to operate autonomously with no real integration of purpose. Partnership Management Board stakeholders have made efforts to address fragmentation in roles and responsibilities through a number of shared operational actions. Planning documents from different stakeholders have been forged successfully into a single action plan for training and support and there is a unified approach to the monitoring and reporting of progress and the analysis of risk. Collaborative actions have been most evidently effective between CASS, CCEA and C2k in the special education sector, where the model created demonstrates effective collaboration in design, in review and in evaluation.

1.10 In schools, there is a range of views of how effective these steps have been; the predominant perception is not one of a single programme being provided by a unified agency. Furthermore, the various stakeholder groups within PMB vary in the extent to which they perceive the effectiveness of a joined up approach.

MEETING INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL NEEDS

1.11 In 2008, schools reported that they would prefer a more personalised approach to their support. This remains a theme for them in the current period.

ASSESSMENT AND TIMESCALE

1.12 While inspection evidence indicates that changes in curriculum and teaching have been introduced in their initial stages in most schools, as reflected in Inspectorate findings about teaching and learning, the one issue about which schools express most concern is assessment. Their concern is heightened by the need for interim arrangements which will add to the complexity of managing changes to the assessment of cross-curricular skills and by delay in the announcement of decisions which is restricting the release of training guidance and support.

1.13 While it is evident that implementation, which brings teaching and assessment together, will continue until 2013, survey findings indicate that the schools have little sense of the strategic direction of travel after 2010.

2. RECOMMENDATION ON STRATEGY

2.1 While the actions taken by PMB have brought about some strategic improvement, they point up the need to design a support structure within which all policy components which bear on curriculum, teaching and assessment are considered in terms of their inter-relationship and their inter-dependency. This should include, for example, literacy and numeracy, the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) strategy, the

Entitlement Framework, area-based planning, the review of teacher education and school leadership development.

A primary school operates successfully two teams to lead and manage strategically the implementation of the curriculum. A management team comprising curriculum co-ordinators leads professional development in curricular areas, supports staff development individually and in key stage groups and evaluates the impact of the changes in pedagogy on the children's learning experiences and attainment. All staff are involved in the training of their colleagues in-school, which builds effectively the capacity for change. The leadership team comprises the principal, vice-principal and the heads of key stages. They provide an over-arching perspective on the incremental, connected and measured implementation of the curriculum through the school development plan.

2.2 Inter-dependency needs to be expressed through a single-purpose, accountable organisational design which consolidates all of the components to create a unified plan, from the outset. It will be essential that the other teacher education partners (initial teacher education providers, schools, the teacher unions and General Teaching Council) are fully involved.

FINDINGS ON PRACTICE

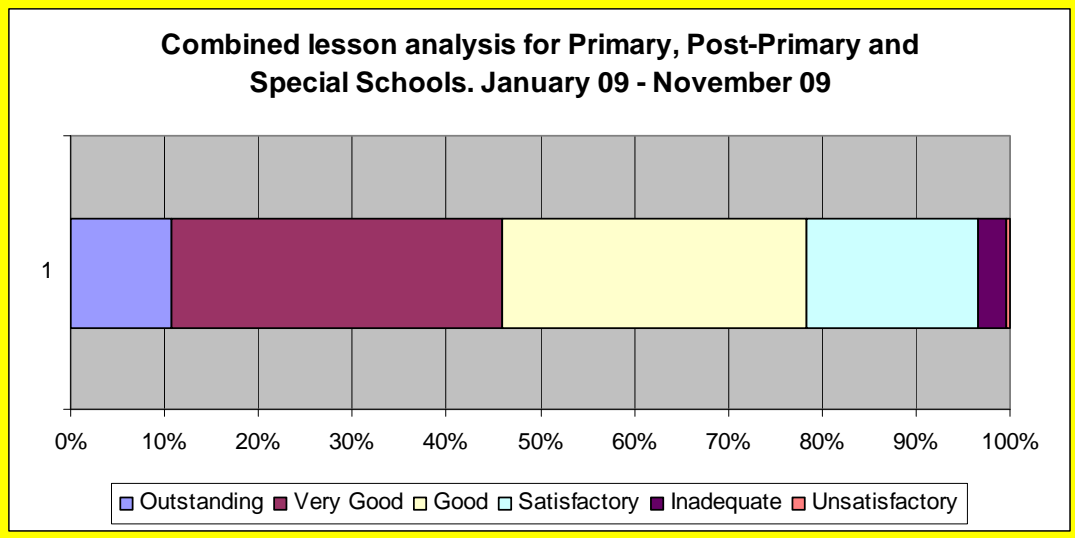
2.3 The 2008 report made six recommendations (Appendix 1) about the development and dissemination of practice and two further on curriculum planning and school accommodation. This section reports progress in the course of 2009.

2.4 There is a broad similarity in the quality of learning and teaching inspected in 2008 and 2009 through visits by district inspectors. Furthermore, when taking into account the evidence from the inspection programme from January to November 2009 (including those year groups where the revisions to the Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC) had not yet been introduced in the period from January to June 2009) the pattern remains similar, even though the lessons rated as *outstanding* and *very good* lessons are 20% lower.

2.5 Interpretation of the whole evidence base gives confidence that:

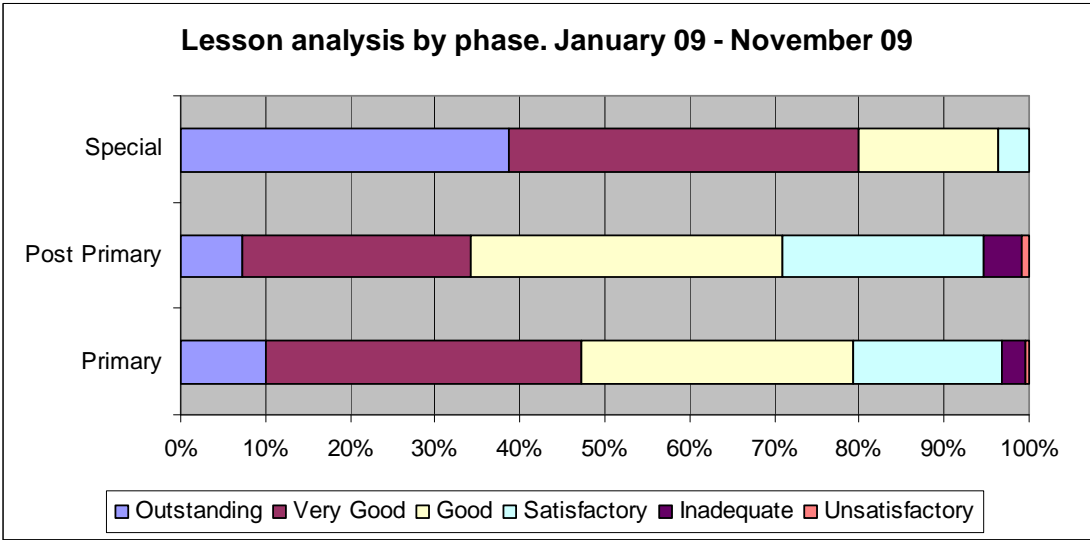
- i. while effective practice is being seen in district visits targeted on the year groups involved in the NIC, the pattern remains evident in the majority of schools, although less strongly, when whole school inspections are taken into account;
- ii. changes in the curriculum and teaching are being addressed on a whole-school basis by most schools.

The teacher explained the learning intention in appropriate terms and involved the pupils in active learning by discussing objectives; the pupils were invited to, and were able to direct the other pupils in turn. The pace of the lesson was well timed and it offered pupils a challenge and opportunities to think and make good decisions. They discussed their activities and were able to evaluate their learning at the end of the session.



QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

2.4 Three-quarters of schools are beginning to move past the process of introducing changes to the curriculum and are focusing on improving learning.



2.5 In the primary phase, the quality of the teaching was good or better in most of the 2079 lessons observed, which were mainly in literacy, numeracy, play-based learning and the World Around Us.

The corridor outside the year 1 classrooms is imaginatively decorated to announce the theme of Explorers – jungle plants, theme boxes for outdoors, Wellingtons, a den area created with camouflage netting with books and collections of (toy) insects, animals, taped jungle sounds playing in background. In the outdoor play area, there is space for dramatic role play – the children are building a den using a collection of real items such as ropes, tarpaulin, tyres and logs. The staff have provided some real camping items, including a mini barbeque. Some children are building a water supply with guttering and pipes. There is a small digging area, with tools, scientific equipment and an explorer’s kit.

2.6 The quality of the primary children’s learning experiences were characterised by:

- their levels of motivation, which were evaluated as good or better in most lessons;
- their involvement with the assessment for learning strategies being good or better in two-fifths of schools; it is an area for development in a majority of schools; and

- the development of the children as independent learners able to apply their skills and understanding to new situations in a majority of schools; it remains underdeveloped in one-third of schools.

2.7 In the 608 lessons observed at KS3 in post-primary schools, a majority of the lessons ranged from good to outstanding. Importantly, nearly a third of the lessons were evaluated as only satisfactory or less than satisfactory.

The children are motivated and articulate. There is strong emphasis on oral language – the adults engage in realistic discussions with children. The teacher worked outdoors for the entire session – through highly skilled interventions helping to extend the children’s thinking. Rain did not stop play! The teacher turned the change in weather into another learning opportunity. The classroom assistants were clear about the learning intentions and their interactions were supportive.

2.8 In contrast, in the sample of 140 lessons in special schools, almost all were assessed as good or better.

2.9 In the most effective special, primary and post-primary lessons, the main enabling factors are:

- teaching which is challenging, interesting and engaging and focuses on making the learning real and relevant for the pupils;

The teacher uses well-chosen photographs, video clips and newspaper cuttings as a stimulus to initiate a well-paced lesson on the topic of prejudice. The success criteria are negotiated and agreed at start by the teacher and the pupils; working in groups, the pupils agree their own roles and responsibilities and focus on different aspects of the topic. The teacher skilfully provides individual and group support. The various activities are sufficiently differentiated to assist the less able pupils to progress and the more able pupils to write independently. The plenary session is well timed and structured to enable the pupils to debate specific points, and for the teacher to assess the extent of the pupils’ learning.

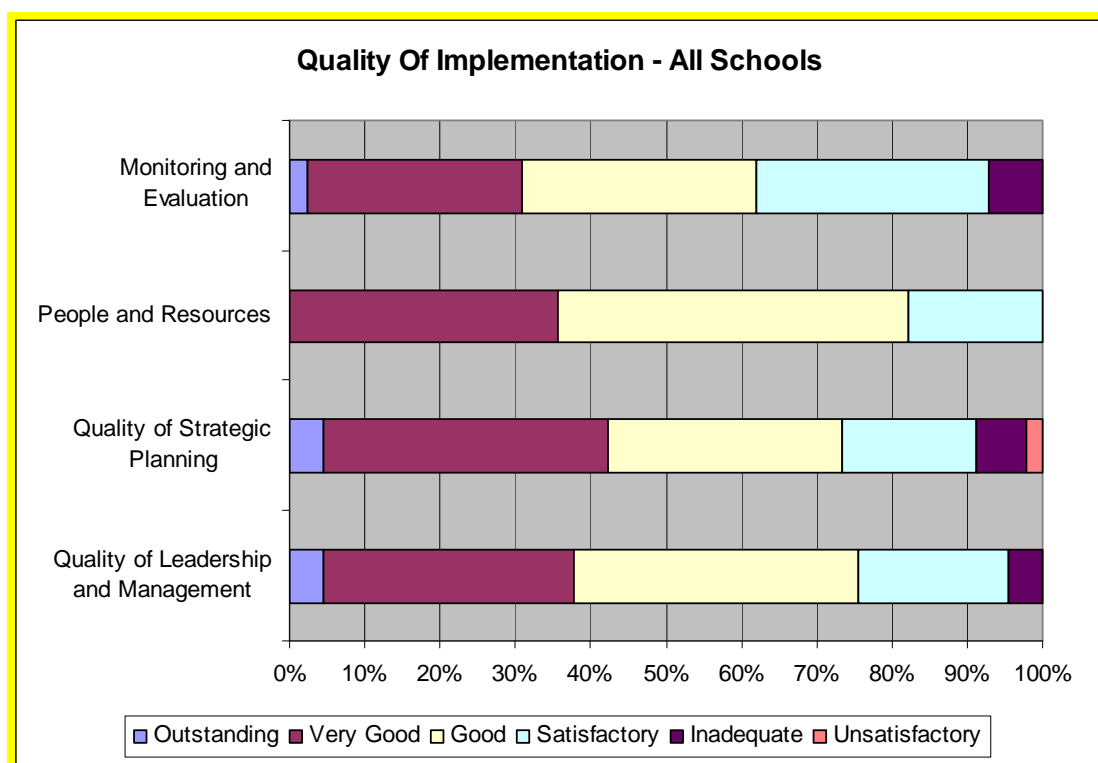
- effective linkages across the curriculum which build on the learners’ experiences; and
- the effective and skilful use of questioning and discussion between teacher and learners, including effective monitoring and feedback, amongst themselves and with classroom assistants (where relevant) which promotes and consolidates their understanding.

2.10 As a consequence, in the most effective learning, observed in special, primary and post-primary lessons, the learners: display good levels of confidence; communicate effectively; are fully engaged with the lesson; can organise and manage their own work; work independently when appropriate; work with others to complete a task and give feedback to each other.

2.11 Furthermore, the learners show that they can: develop new skills and expertise; take risks; experiment with and refine ideas; reflect on their learning, what they understand and how they need to improve; display a sense of responsibility and present high standards of work in their books.

The ‘Devenish Project’ involves all year 8 classes in collaborative learning across art, history, RE and English. The well planned learning activity uses a range of interesting, contextualised local resources to build understanding across key cross curricular themes identified in the planning. Throughout, the pupils are actively involved through individual, paired and group work which supports well the development of their thinking skills and of team work. The pupils’ contributions are valued by the teachers who support effectively the different ability ranges of the pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION IN SCHOOLS



2.12 Good, or better, practice in leading and managing change, which is evident in some three-quarters of schools, is characterised by:

- a clear sense of purpose and vision, which is presented and communicated effectively by the principal, as the lead learner, with the school community and governors;
- a clear embedding of change in an overall school improvement strategy, as shown in school development plans;
- action planning based on the curriculum changes and aligned to target-setting to raise standards;
- adaptive changes to leadership and curriculum coordination arrangements;
- staff development which generates debate about pedagogy, shares good practice and builds capacity within the school to the point where the school can sustain its own improvement;

A large post-primary specialist science school has developed effective curricular links with several of its local feeder primary schools on a range of science topics. Year 6 children use the specialist science facilities of the school on a weekly basis to engage in practical science in a theme from the 'World Around Us'. The children worked in teams and produced a simple soap-based product which was packaged and marketed to parents to raise money for charity. This collaborative arrangement allowed the teaching staff involved from both phases, to observe, share and model good classroom practice.

- collaboration between schools through clusters, learning communities, with some evidence of role of specialist schools, in some instances; and
- appropriate links between post-primary, primary and specialist schools.

2.13 In contrast, in all schools, the process of monitoring and evaluating implementation remains the most significant issue, with a significant minority of schools evaluated as either satisfactory or inadequate in this regard.

2.14 In special, post-primary and primary schools where the monitoring and evaluation was evaluated as good or better, schools are developing their procedures well to identify good classroom practice. An emerging trend in a few schools is the development of criteria to enable the pupils to evaluate aspects their work to help improve their learning.

2.15 While more than half of the schools surveyed are using quantitative and qualitative data effectively to monitor and evaluate the impact of curriculum change, there is still no significant quantifiable evidence emerging from these schools relating to improvement or otherwise in the attainment of the pupils. For example, the findings in primary schools indicate that in one-third of all classes, the quality of the children's knowledge, skills and understanding of literacy and numeracy is less than satisfactory.

A newly-appointed post-primary school principal created a curriculum team comprising teachers from different subjects to lead, monitor and evaluate the implementation. All teachers who attend courses complete a short report on the usefulness or otherwise of courses for the staff. The principal reports that the biggest gain is the capacity building of staff and their expertise to deliver school based staff development.

THE QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

2.16 In approximately three quarters of the special, primary and post-primary schools, the overall quality of the schools implementation process was evaluated as good or better. The evidence indicates that the extent to which the external training was successfully applied to individual classroom practice is linked inextricably with the school's capacity to lead and manage curricular change.

2.17 The quality of leadership and management in implementing the curriculum ranges from good to very good in 70% of primary schools and 83% of post-primary schools; in 75% of special schools it ranges from good to outstanding. In these schools, the principal and staff have a clear and unified plan for the strategic implementation of the curriculum; this plan is communicated effectively to and shared by the governors.

There is good communication with parents through curriculum meetings, hands-on workshops and an open-door session to allow parents to see the type of work their children undertake. The implementation of the curriculum is a PRSD target and the governors are involved in the process; they attend curriculum training sessions in the school.

2.18 In those special, primary and post primary schools where the leadership and management is less effective in implementing the curriculum, the main characteristics are the same as those identified in the 2008 survey and include:

- inadequate strategic planning to support the evaluation of the implementation including its impact on the pupils' learning and the standards they achieve; and
- lack of a common purpose demonstrated in unclear roles and responsibilities for the curriculum leaders within the school.

2.19 The main enabling characteristics of implementation identified in the good, or better, special, primary, and post-primary schools include:

- clear connections established between the implementation of the NIC and the school's overall improvement strategy, particularly in the effective use of the school's development planning processes and Professional Review and Staff Development (PRSD) to help teachers focus on the pedagogy; and
- increased capacity building among staff to plan and deliver bespoke internal staff development to meet the specific needs of the school, including the growing confidence of teachers in sharing and modelling good practice with their peers.

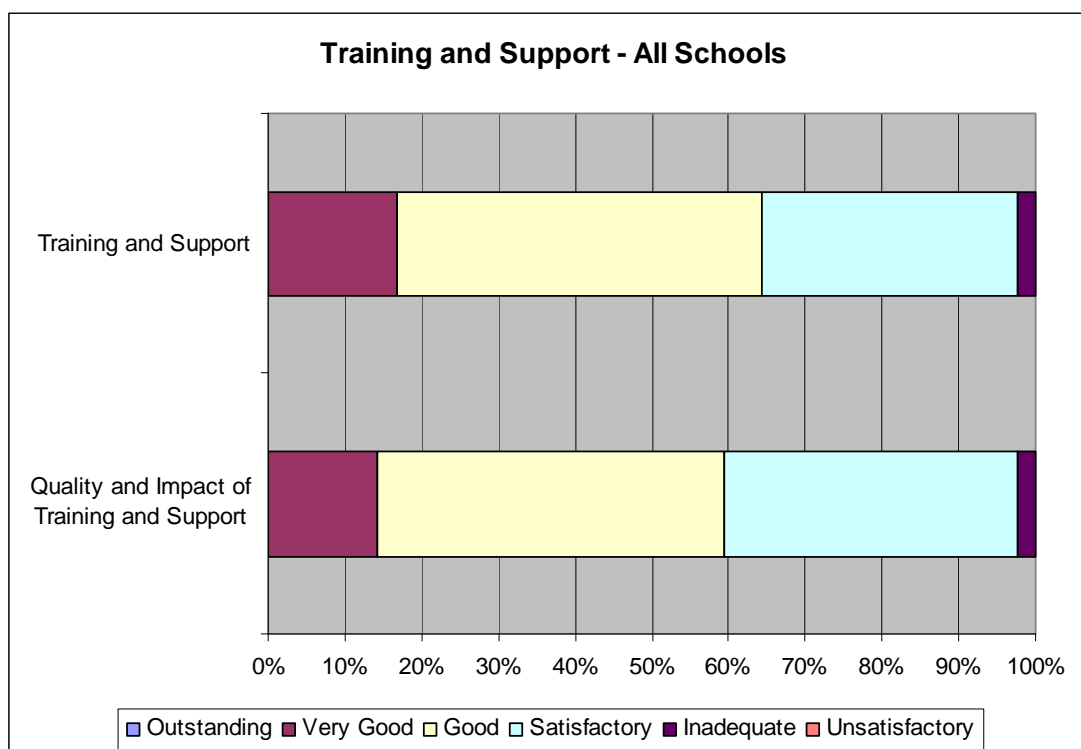
2.20 There are examples of good and evolving collaborative arrangements fostered with other post-primary schools and organisations through the Area Learning Communities (ALCs) and the Specialist Schools' project to enable schools to work together on a range of school improvement matters, including the review and dissemination of classroom practice.

The principal monitors the planning regularly and consistently through a web-based planning system and can see how effective each department and teacher is in implementing the NIC. She analyses the data and identifies strengths and gaps in provision as a basis for discussion about improvement with teachers. The principal and vice-principal carry out classroom observations, monitor books and talk to the pupils.

2.21 In the special education phase, the Curriculum 'S' group, a sub-group of the PMB, organises training and support arrangements for Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) schools as a separate group; Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) schools join the mainstream training for the primary or post-primary phase; the schools believe that more targeted training for the MLD sector would be more appropriate given the complex needs of their pupils. The PMB group consulted extensively with teachers and principals from SLD schools and planned and further reviewed the training jointly with the schools concerned; they also collaborated effectively with CCEA and C2k. Associate teachers and curriculum leaders from SLD schools contributed well to the delivery of the training which included face to face, online learning, clustering and collaborative discussion elements. These experiences led to further dissemination of the training within schools; this resulted in effective capacity building within schools. The training and support is valued by the schools.

2.22 While the achievements and progress of pupils with learning difficulties are difficult to measure, given their often slow rate progress, it is clear that the pedagogy of the NIC is common practice in the majority of special schools.

SCHOOLS' EVALUATION OF TRAINING AND SUPPORT



2.23 The majority of primary schools report that the CASS training, which took place from January to June 2009 and related to the development of the curriculum in years 3, 4 and 7, was good or better. In addition, the schools report that the clustering of year groups 2 and 6 with support from the CASS officers was an effective way of clarifying key messages about pedagogical change and responding to the individual needs of the teachers during the implementation year.

2.24 The post-primary schools assessment of the quality of the training and support is evaluated as good to very good in over two thirds (67%) of the post-primary schools surveyed. This is an improvement of almost 12% from that recorded in the previous survey. However, the schools' evaluations of the impact of the training and support show a slight decrease in quality with well over half (56%) being evaluated as good or very good compared with just over three fifths (63%) in the previous survey.

2.25 The main strengths of the training and support provided to post primary schools, as reported to the Inspectorate, reflect those identified in the previous survey and include:

The school interviewed a range of employers and people in the local workforce to identify the skills that they are looking for in young people seeking employment. The school captured the employers' viewpoints in a DVD to provide a real life context for learning. The school's CASS link officer presented the key aims of the revised curriculum to parents and year 8 pupils spoke to parents about their experiences. The curriculum team report that the pupils were very clear about the skills they had developed through their knowledge and understanding and the sense of enjoyment gained from their learning.

- effective use of collaborative training events facilitated through the ALCs, particularly in sharing good practice; and
- very good, well focused and contextualised support provided by the CASS link officer to individual schools.

2.26 The schools judged by the Inspectorate to be the most effective in implementing change are putting a greater emphasis than other schools on building their own capacity within the school by sharing good practice.

2.27 Where schools in all three phases report deficiencies in the training and support, the main contributing factors identified include:

- a perceived lack of strategic and operational co-ordination between the support agencies and confusion over the messages they deliver, particularly in relation to assessment;
- the quality of some of the training, which is seen as repetitive and not sufficiently targeted or contextualised to the needs of the individual school;
- the need for a third of teachers in primary schools with management responsibilities (curriculum team leaders/coordinators) to develop their capability to monitor and evaluate the implementation of a skills-infused curriculum; and
- the need for the training offered to MLD schools to address sufficiently the complex needs of their learners.

SURVEY OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS

2.28 An online survey of school boards of governors, conducted by the Inspectorate for the purpose of this evaluation, provides an insight to their role in supporting curriculum change.

2.29 Twenty-two percent of primary school Boards of Governors (BoGs) and 29% of post-primary BoGs responded to an online survey. The returns from both phases were similar in most cases, except on questions of staffing, target-setting and self-evaluation based upon monitoring.

External agencies are used appropriately to deliver part of the curriculum. There is an appropriate emphasis on a range of practical skills and knowledge. For example, the city council provide a citizenship workshop for the pupils. The pupils find and collect leaflets available in the community on healthy lifestyles. Strong links are developing - including a special school pupil who travels to a post-primary school for GCSE course and post-primary pupils who attend the special school for home economics and occupational studies lessons.

2.30 A significant minority of BoGs report being very well informed, and a majority well informed, about revisions to the curriculum. A minority (9% said that they had a little knowledge and 6% did not answer the question) reflected a lack of engagement. Forty-seven and a half percent of post-primary school BoGs and 44% of primary school BoGs were represented by at least the chairman or a nominee at least one or more related training event run in 2007, 2008 or 2009.

2.31 Most BoGs (79% of post-primary and 73% of primary school) report having to address resource and/or accommodation challenges arising from curriculum revision. Whereas 88% of post-primary and 61.5% of primary and schools report that they made decisions about changes in staffing and/or management responsibilities as a direct consequence of implementing the NIC.

2.32 When it came to their involvement in school self-evaluation of the curriculum change through target setting, 48% of primary BoGs report that they are directly involved in setting targets for improvement and 61.5% say that they receive and consider evaluation reports based on monitoring data. In the post-primary schools those who are directly involved in setting targets rises to 62.5%, although only 55.5% report that they consider school-evaluation reports based on monitoring these targets.

2.33 Based on the evidence of this survey and including discussions with school principals, there is a clear challenge to develop, in more depth, the understanding of school governors of *Every School a Good School*, its implications for them and its connection to curriculum change and their own engagement with the processes of target setting, progress monitoring and self-evaluation.

As part of the school's approach to connected learning, and to enhance the school's focus on its EAL pupils, the school organised an international day of culture including music, drama and food from different European countries. The evaluations highlighted interesting observations by the pupils: a year 10 Latvian pupil said: "While I have really enjoyed my three years at this school, it was only after the international day, that I really felt that I truly belong to the school community".

E-LEARNING

2.34 There have been significant advances during 2009 in the take up and use by teachers of blended online/face-to-face delivery of information and advice. Effective examples include the course on effective questioning provided by CASS to primary schools and the online provision in special education, where practitioners and specialists provide support through LNI. Furthermore, CCEA has drawn up and trialled some well-conceived plans for blended e-learning for professional development in the assessment of cross-curricular skills and a further online course in the effective use of data in primary schools has been prepared by CASS and the Inspectorate working together.

2.35 There are also signs of improved cooperation with C2k in discussing the wider use of different e-learning platforms and their relationships. Appropriate evaluation is either being conducted or is planned for these initiatives. It will be important for all partners to share their experience and lessons learnt to ensure that a successful contribution can be made by blended approaches to professional development.

REMAINING AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

2.36 This evaluation report documents progress with many aspects relating to practice; however the position with three areas for improvement identified in the 2008 report remains substantially the same as before: the KS3/GCSE interface; curriculum mapping and accommodation.

KS3 AND GCSE

2.37 A small number of schools report that they plan a skills-infused approach to enhance teaching and learning at KS4 and beyond, most post-primary schools still report a lack of alignment between the skills-infused curriculum at KS3 and the knowledge content specification and assessment approaches predominant at GCSE level. It is apparent that this issue is more critical in some subjects, less so in others; further investigation on a subject by subject basis is recommended.

CURRICULUM MAPPING

2.38 There is a continued growth in the use of curriculum mapping tools in schools. There is a need to evaluate the use and the effectiveness of these tools, especially as assessment arrangements are combined with teaching and learning. The need to map the coverage of curriculum topics across the curriculum and the learners' experience of active learning methods and to track the progression and continuity of skills development through connected learning becomes increasingly important. The need for curriculum planning, mapping and learner tracking tools which reflect the NIC should be reflected in management software specified for the next refresh of C2k systems in schools.

The senior leadership team is reviewing its timetable allocation and auditing staff and pupils on a change to a 50 minute period from 35 minutes. The post-primary school suspended the use of bells to signal the end of a lesson period. Evaluations indicate less noise, no interruptions to the flow of lessons, particularly during double periods, improvement in pupil behaviour, and better pacing of lessons to ensure that they do not over-run.

ACCOMMODATION

2.39 There remains a concern among a minority of schools, that issues relating to accommodation are hindering their capacity to implement fully the curriculum. Most primary and post-primary governors report having to address resource and accommodation challenges arising from curriculum revision particularly in the provision of specialist accommodation and the need for more flexible working and teaching spaces. The main concerns in post-primary schools are related to the lack of appropriate specialist accommodation such as drama and home economics and, in both post-primary and primary schools, principals report the need for the provision of bigger classrooms and more flexible spaces to facilitate curricular and pedagogical changes. These issues are more prevalent in older school buildings; there were very few accommodation concerns expressed by the principals and governors of more recently built schools.

3. RECOMMENDATION ON PRACTICE

3.1 Taking into account the findings from 2009 reported here, the Inspectorate makes the following recommendation on practice.

3.2 While, on the one hand, assessment remains a major concern for teachers, the consistently weakest aspect of leadership and management reported here is that of monitoring and evaluation. There would be a considerable advantage, therefore, in bringing together, for professional development purposes, the development and use of learner assessment evidence with the use of assessment evidence to enable teachers to monitor progression, to evaluate their own effectiveness and to raise standards in learning through well-founded target-setting.

Learning intentions are written up and success criteria shared with the pupils. Evidence from the use assessment for learning methods is on display throughout the school. A consistency of approach is evident in all of the classrooms. Resources were well organised, the development of thinking skills and personal capabilities is evident in the teaching. The pupils keep on task and clearly enjoy learning, working well individually and in groups.

3.3 Furthermore, training and support for assessment combined with that for monitoring and evaluation should be set firmly within the context of support for a whole school approach to improvement, as a timed priority over the three years 2010-2013, accommodating the transition through the interim arrangements from levels of attainment to the levels of progression.

3.4 A further priority within the whole school improvement heading should be to enhance the role of school governors to become involved more meaningfully in target-setting, monitoring and evaluation.

3.5 Finally, a whole school context needs to be established on an area-planned basis, providing better coordination to ensure continuity and progression from key stage to key stage (and especially from KS2 to KS3) using school clusters and harnessing expertise from leading schools, including some of the specialist schools, for capacity building.

4. OVERALL CONCLUSION

4.1 The Inspectorate report for the period 2008 stated that a shift of emphasis for the final phase of implementation would be needed to ensure:

- simpler communication to schools about the purpose of and the main elements of curricular change;
- a differentiated approach to support for schools, based on audit of need, to enable them to continue to improve practice in the context of whole-school improvement;
- improved collaboration between CCEA, CASS and, where appropriate, C2k during 2009-10, on their path of convergence to ESA; and
- forward planning for the continued development of pedagogy, learning and assessment, arising from curriculum reform, beyond 2010.

4.2 The follow-up evidence indicates that most progress has been made with the first aspect (communication); and that while important steps have been taken on the third aspect (co-ordination) the findings highlight the importance of establishing a unified plan with single accountability from the very outset.

4.3 Regarding the second aspect (differentiated support), it is recognised that the focus on planning and delivering an implementation support programme had reduced considerably the scope for CASS link officers to provide intensive school support; the findings are that schools which need more personalised support have welcomed recent increases in individual support.

4.4 With respect to the final aspect (a medium-term plan), the most pressing need is to remove the uncertainty and confusion in schools over assessment arrangements and to set a clear path for the next three year period, within the context of the increasing capability in schools to engage in whole school improvement, which has both assessment *and* evaluation at its core.

4.5 Based upon the findings reported here (as well as those for the year 2008) the emphasis for the next period to 2013 needs to be upon:

- understanding the continuing implementation of curricular change, and especially the embedding of assessment, in the context of whole school improvement for the purpose of raising standards and improving outcomes for learners;
- An accountable convergence of services for schools, bringing together support for continued improvement in teaching and in assessment in a fully unified and co-ordinated way;

- building the capacity of teachers (individually and collectively) to undertake self-evaluation of their teaching effectiveness and outcomes, which informs school improvement and can also provide evidence, at the system level, of improvement; and
- developing the capacity of schools (individually and collectively) to cooperate in shared collegial professional development and in planning and providing educational provision collaboratively.

TABLE OF INSPECTORATE RECOMMENDATIONS - DECEMBER 2009

There is a need for a unified support structure within which all policy components which bear on curriculum, teaching and assessment are considered in terms of their inter-relationship and their inter-dependency.	CASS, CCEA, C2k, RTU, DE
A single-purpose, accountable organisational design is needed which consolidates all of the components to create a unified plan. It will be essential that the other teacher education partners (initial teacher education providers, schools, the teacher unions and GTC) are fully involved.	DE
There would be a considerable advantage, therefore, in bringing together, for professional development purposes, the development and use of learner assessment evidence with the use of assessment evidence to enable teachers to monitor progression, to evaluate their own effectiveness and to raise standards in learning through well-founded target-setting - set firmly within the context of support for <u>a whole school approach to improvement</u> , as a timed priority over the three years 2010-2013.	CASS, CCEA, C2k, RTU
A priority should be to enhance the role of school governors to become involved more meaningfully in target-setting, monitoring and evaluation.	CASS, CCEA, C2k, RTU
A whole school context needs to be established on an area-planned basis, providing better coordination to ensure continuity and progression from key stage to key stage (and especially from KS2 to KS3) using school clusters and harnessing expertise from leading schools, including some of the specialist schools, for capacity building.	DE, CASS, CCEA, C2k, RTU
There is a need to evaluate, and provide guidance for, the effective use of curriculum mapping tools.	PMB Schools
There is a need to address the mismatch between the KS3 skills-based curriculum and the content-based GCSE specifications.	CCEA DE
There is a need to review the schools' schedule of accommodation arising from the impact of curricular and pedagogical change.	DE

INSPECTORATE RECOMMENDATIONS - JANUARY 2009

DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGY	ACTION BY
9.1 Review the roles and responsibilities of PMB and consider how best to address collectively, promptly and effectively the recommendations in this report.	PMB and Stakeholders
9.2 In the context of the path of convergence to ESA, create a <i>unified</i> plan for differentiated implementation support across the relevant agencies for schools for 2009-10.	DE PMB
9.3 Plan a strategy to support the embedding of NIC practice in the context of continued improvement in schools from 2010 - 2013	PMB (ESA: CASS & CCEA) DE
COMMUNICATION OF STRATEGY	
9.4 Clarify the current complexities about the arrangements for assessment, especially in light of Circular 2008/27.	DE
9.5 (i) Promote better understanding of the connections between DE policy priorities and (ii) create manageable implementation plans to support school improvement.	DE (i) PMB (ii)
9.6 Implement the new PMB communication strategy so as to secure clearer, more coherent messages for those working in schools.	PMB DE
DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTICE	
9.7 Focus on the assessment of learning outcomes for children and young people and the standards achieved <u>for the purpose of</u> evaluating the benefits which arise from improvement through curriculum change.	Schools
9.8 Manage more efficiently the deployment of teacher time in schools over a longer timescale to 2013 in order to continue to develop and share effective classroom practice and raise standards.	Schools PMB Department
9.9 Increase collaboration within the area learning communities (i) to ensure more effective progression at transition points (ii) to harness the role of Specialist Schools to support the implementation of the NIC.	Schools
9.10 Evaluate, and provide guidance for, the effective use of curriculum mapping tools.	PMB Schools
DISSEMINATION OF PRACTICE	
9.11 Continue to disseminate models of good practice, make greater use of good practitioners in NIC development training; disseminate further the lessons learnt in pilot schools.	PMB
9.12 Ensure that teachers are well-prepared and supported for the judicious (and evaluated) introduction of e-learning to support professional development.	PMB (CCEA, CASS & C2K)
CURRICULUM	
9.13 Address the mismatch between the KS3 skills-based curriculum and the content-based GCSE specifications.	CCEA DE
SCHOOLS	
9.14 Review the schools' schedule of accommodation arising from the impact of curricular and pedagogical change.	DE

SCHOOLS SURVEYED**Primary**

Blessed Patrick O'Loughran Primary School	503-2463
Brackenagh West Primary School	501-6098
D H Christie Memorial Primary School	301-2284
Donegall Road Primary School	101-6060
Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach	304-6684
Killowen Primary School	301-2237
Olderfleet Primary School	301-0646
Omagh County Primary School	201-2691
Milltown Primary School	501-1651
Moneynick Primary School	303-0815
Portaferry Integrated Primary School	405-1601
Presentation Primary School	503-6586
Randalstown Central Primary School	301-0816
Sacred Heart Primary School	203-2721
St Anne's Primary School	403-3008
St John the Baptist Boys' Primary School	103-6092
St Kieran's Primary School	403-6480
St Mark's Primary School	403-6134
Windmill Integrated Primary School	506-6554
Woodlawn Primary School	301-6225

Post-Primary

Devenish College, Enniskillen	221-0305
Down High School, Downpatrick	441-0085
Drumglass High School, Dungannon	521-0231
Fort Hill College, Lisburn	425-0072
Hunterhouse College, Belfast	142-0265
Limavady Grammar School,	241-0048
Lisnagarvey High School,	421-0051
Lisneal College, Londonderry	221-0306
Mount Lourdes Grammar School Enniskillen	242-0041
Parkhall High School, Antrim	321-0207
Portadown College, Portadown	541-0067
St Benedict's College, Randalstown	323-0308
St Colmcille's High School	423-0102
St Genevieve's High School, Belfast	123-0155
St Joseph's College, Belfast	123-0275
St Joseph's College, Coalisland	523-0192
St Mary's High School, Lurgan	523-0070

Special

Belfast Hospital School	131-6560
Castletower School, Ballymena	331-6676
Donard School, Banbridge	531-6520
Elmbrook School, Enniskillen	231-6601
Erne School, Enniskillen	231-6234
Harberton School, Belfast	131-0014
Lisanally School, Armagh	531-6577
Oakwood School and Assessment Centre	131-6582
Park School and Resource Centre, Belfast	131-6500
Parkview School, Lisburn	431-6515
Rathore School, Newry	531-6519
Torbank School, Dundonald	431-6517

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