

Chief Inspectors Report & 'Looking at our Schools'

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ETBI

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Chief Inspector's Report

January 2013–July 2016

Excellence in Learning for All



Chief Inspectors Report & 'Looking at our Schools'

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS CHIEF INSPECTORS REPORT

JULY 2013 – JUNE 2016

PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2018

Reflecting on the Role of the ETB School

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- As we consider the **Chief Inspectors Report** it is useful to remind boards of the distinct role of the board in an ETB School and how it differs from other models.
 - The ETB is the body corporate who then delegates school governance to the Board of Management, which is a sub-committee of the ETB.
 - A school board of management does not have responsibility for the employment or performance of staff (teaching or non-teaching) in a school.

Chief Inspectors Report

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- **CHAPTER 2: THE INSPECTORATE**

- **Key Messages**

- The inspections are focused on the key factors that influence the learning experiences of students. Primarily, these are the **quality** of teaching and learning, and the **quality** of leadership and management.
- Inspections also consider the **capacity/ability** of the school to **drive** improvement and change.

Chief Inspectors Report – Chapter 2

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- *The Inspectorate will seek evidence that the Board has the skills, competence and desire to ‘drive’ improvement.*

Figure 2.1 from the Inspectors Report



Chief Inspectors Report – Chapter 2

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Inspectors describe the quality of provision in schools along a quality continuum with which Boards should be familiar.

Table 2.2: The Quality Continuum

Categories used in this report	Quality Level	Example of descriptive terms
Very good	Significant strengths	Excellent; of a very high quality; very effective; highly commendable; very good; very successful; few areas for improvement
Good	Strengths outweigh weaknesses	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; fully appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Less than satisfactory/ Not appropriate	Weaknesses outweigh strengths	Fair in certain areas but with evident weaknesses that are impacting significantly on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory in some areas; experiencing difficulty
	Significant weaknesses	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties

Chapter 5 – Quality of Teaching and Learning in Post Primary Schools

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- **Key Messages: The Inspectorate consider the following when evaluating the quality of learning in all inspections:**
 - Learner outcomes
 - Learner experiences

Chapter 5 – Quality of Teaching and Learning in Post Primary Schools

- The report outlines very positive findings for post-primary schools. The overall quality of teaching in post-primary schools was evaluated as good or better in between 88% and 94% of lessons.
- The report details favorable developments on the teaching of English and Mathematics. However, it is noted that challenges persist with regards to the quality of teaching and learning in Irish. While there was some improvement, learning in Irish remains an area for concern.
- Lack of differentiation in lessons is noted across the three core subjects of English, Mathematics and Irish.

Chapter 5 – Quality of Teaching and Learning in Post Primary Schools

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The Quality of Leadership and Management in Post-Primary Schools

In this period, inspectors judged that the overall quality of management and leadership was good or better in 91% of the WSE-MLLs inspections completed. Most boards of management were described in the report as having a **clear vision** for the school with a **well-chosen focus on the development of teaching and learning.**

Chapter 5 – Quality of Teaching and Learning in Post Primary Schools

In the more effective schools, inspectors noted that the boards of management engaged in a **collaborative and communicative** manner with key stakeholders in the school including staff, the parents' association and the student council. Most of these boards were also described as having **a well-chosen focus** on the development of teaching and learning in the school including, in some cases, strongly endorsing and supporting professional development opportunities for staff. **These boards of management also had a clear vision for the school with established priorities for development.**

Chapter 5 – Quality of Teaching and Learning in Post Primary Schools

Inspectors found that schools were very good at communicating with parents about school policies and in keeping parents informed about student progress.

Schools were less successful in communicating information in relation to subject and curriculum choice at key transition points.

Chapter 5 – Quality of Teaching and Learning in Post Primary Schools

- Inspectors found effective senior management in the majority of schools inspected. Parent questionnaires indicate that in the majority of schools, student behaviour is very good and that there are good student management systems in place.
- Schools are doing good work to tackle bullying and there is a marked improvement since the last report in the percentage of parents and students that are confident that schools will deal with bullying promptly and effectively. Of note 85% of students expressed confidence that they could get help from a teacher or adult if they were being bullied in school.

CHAPTER 6: SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENT

Key Messages:

- **School self-evaluation** - A very significant reform in the quality assurance of the education system has been the introduction of school self-evaluation (SSE) which is being actively promoted by the Department and the Inspectorate.
- Schools have begun to engage with SSE and are increasingly becoming familiar with the six-step SSE process.

The Six Step Process

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CHAPTER 6: SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENT

- Challenges related to;
 - **Data,**
 - **Target Setting and**
 - **Reporting to Parents and the School Community** remain to be addressed.

CHAPTER 6: SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENT



- **Follow-through inspections** - The Inspectorate is implementing systematic follow-up procedures to check that inspection recommendations have been implemented by schools. These include Follow-Through inspections for schools to monitor the progress schools have made on addressing the recommendations in previous inspection reports. Overall, the data shows that schools take recommendations in inspection reports seriously. Data from Follow-Through inspections show that the majority (76%) of schools make good or very good progress in implementing recommendations made in inspection reports.

CHAPTER 7: LOOKING FORWARD

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- **Themes for the Future:**
 - Maintaining a strong focus on improved outcomes for learners.
 - Building the professional practice of teachers.
 - Working with and supporting the quality of school leaders.

Chapter 7 – School Leaders

- The role of school leaders in leading learning and building a collaborative culture in the school is critical. A key barrier that prevents school leaders from engaging in leadership for learning is management capacity within Irish schools and within the boards of management of these schools.
- *Looking at Our School, A Quality Framework for Schools*, published by the Inspectorate in 2016, sets out for the first time a comprehensive set of standards for Irish schools to guide the schools in its self-evaluation processes. This will help support the leadership of teaching and learning in schools. The Inspectorate are also using the standards in our inspections. By shared use of the standards, internal self-evaluation in a school and external inspection by the Inspectorate will act as complementary **quality assurance processes**.

Chapter 7 – Final Comments

- The report points out that if we are to achieve the goal set in the *Action Plan for Education 2016 -2019* to be the best education system in Europe within the next decade, we need to ensure that our learners experience very good, not just good, teaching and learning, that satisfactory provision becomes better, and that **excellence in terms of learning experiences** and standards is achieved. Looking to the future, the Inspectorate, plans to embed the standards for educational provision that have been set out in *Looking at Our Schools 2016* in inspection and advisory work. *Looking at Our Schools* will be used to communicate a systems-wide understanding of what good practice in schools looks like.

Recent WSE Reports – ETB Schools



- In light of the insights offered by the Chief Inspectors Report it is useful to consider some of the recommendations made by the inspectorate made in respect of ETB Schools;
- *‘The board of management should take a stronger governance role in leading and developing a school plan which identifies clear goals and expectations for the school while also addressing issues of compliance such as policy development and review, accuracy of the school self evaluation (SSE) mandatory checklist, and provision of the minimum weekly tuition time for students on the timetable.’*

Recent WSE Reports – ETB Schools

- *‘The board of management should oversee the drafting of a more complete school plan which will guide the development of the school and its community over the coming years’.*
- *The board must have an ‘oversight role’ by taking a more proactive ‘critical friend’ role.*
- *The board should be involved in over seeing progress.*
- *‘The board should extend its leadership to a broader range of areas including oversight of DEIS targets, analysis of student outcomes and further development of the school’s priorities.’*
- *‘The board should focus on progressing all of their identified priorities; in particular teaching, learning and assessment, and school self-evaluation (SSE).’*

Recent WSE Reports – ETB Schools



- *‘The board of management provides effective leadership but its role in relation to teaching and learning is underdeveloped.’*
- *‘The board meets monthly and maintains excellent links with the parents’ council. Roles and responsibilities are understood by board members and carried out effectively. Members have accessed training for their roles. Decision-making procedures are open and decisions are made in the best interests of the school community. The board has adopted mandatory policies as required.’*

New Academic Year

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- **As Boards commence a new academic year they should have 2 documents in their hands:**
 1. Their most recent WSE/MML to ensure full follow through on recommendations.
 2. Looking at our Schools to measure themselves against the Statements of Practice.



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‘Looking at our Schools 2016’

LOOKING AT OUR SCHOOL 2016

A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools

A QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

